

welfare, children & families: a 3-city study
the family life project



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FINAL REPORT¹

HOUSING INSTABILITY: TOWARD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF FREQUENT RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY AMONG AMERICA'S URBAN POOR

SUBMITTED TO THE CENTER FOR HOUSING POLICY

FEBRUARY 3, 2010

BY

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¹ This project would like to thank Jeffrey Lubell and staff members at the Center for Housing Policy for their support through this grant, CHP-001-09. The project also acknowledges core support to the *Three-City Study* from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development through grants HD36093 and HD25936 and the National Science Foundation through grant SES-07-03968 as well as the support of many government agencies and private foundations. For a complete list of funders, please see www.threecitystudy.johnshopkins.edu. Most importantly, the project thanks the families who graciously participated in the research documented in this report. The efforts of Whitney Welsh, Clara Holder-Taylor, Raymond Garrett-Peters, Dawn Witherspoon, Earl Smith, Carol Stack, and Linda Burton in the data analysis and writing of this report are also greatly appreciated. Finally, thanks to the reviewers as well as personnel at the Center for Housing Policy who offered great insight to the revision process.

HOUSING INSTABILITY: TOWARD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF FREQUENT RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY AMONG AMERICA'S URBAN POOR

This report details the work completed on Project No. CHP-001 entitled "Housing Instability: Toward a Better Understanding of Frequent Residential Mobility among America's Urban Poor." The report is organized into five sections: 1) rationale; 2) project objectives; 3) data analysis; 4) literature review; 5) results and; 6) conclusions.

I. RATIONALE

Low-income families have multiple stressors that contribute to their impoverishment. A major stressor among low-income families is housing instability which includes frequent moves, difficulty paying rent or mortgage, overcrowding, and denied housing resulting from discriminatory practices, family size, criminal background, bad credit, or past evictions. Research has documented that frequent mobility into high poverty neighborhoods places families and children at risk for other negative outcomes such as inaccessibility to jobs, inadequate healthcare, school-related problems, and dissolution of social networks. While studies have concluded that low-income families exhibit high rates of residential mobility, less research has examined the processes and variability surrounding frequent mobility among the poor. For example, why do some families in high poverty neighborhoods exhibit relatively stable housing over their lifetime while others in the same neighborhoods experience high rates of residential mobility? In other words, when families who have similar demographic characteristics, live in similar neighborhoods, and have the same accessibility to affordable housing, what other factors are driving housing instability? Further, why do some families experience periods of housing stability interspersed with bouts of housing instability? Answers to these questions will help illuminate the variability in housing stability found among the poor and provide a good foundation for determining how frequent residential mobility impacts children's and family development. The following report contributes to the housing policy arena by unraveling the residential mobility experiences of a group of families living at or below 200 percent of the poverty level in three U.S. cities in order to better understand the nuances of mobility between and within families.

II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

a. Dataset

Analysis is being conducted using the "Welfare, Children, and Families: A Three-City Study" (hereinafter *Three-City*) ethnographic dataset which began with recruitment in 1999 and ended data collection in 2006. The study assesses the well-being of low-income African American, European American, and non-white Hispanic children and families in the aftermath of the passage of the 1996



Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act which created the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, more commonly referred to as Welfare Reform. This mixed-method, multi-site study is comprised of three components: a survey sample of approximately 2400 households, an embedded developmental study of 734 children aged 2-4 in the survey sample, and an ethnographic study on 256 families in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio who reside in the same neighborhoods and are demographically similar to the survey sample (see Table 1 in the Appendix for a demographic table of the survey and ethnographic components).

This report focuses on data analysis and interpretation of the ethnographic component only. The aim of the ethnographic component is to learn how welfare recipients experience the various rules and restrictions of welfare reform, and how the decisions of low-income families are influenced by the welfare system. Researchers developed descriptions of social processes relevant to—and that have an effect on the success of—welfare policies. The primary focus is on the interaction of welfare policies, family behaviors, and child development. For more detailed information about the design and objectives of the study, see the website <http://web.jhu.edu/threecitystudy/index.html>.

The ethnographic component of the *Three-City* study follows 256 families in Boston, Chicago, and San Antonio. All families include a young child, generally between two-to-four years of age at time one of the study. Forty-five of the families include a child with a disability. Ethnographers had repeated (every 3 to 4 weeks) contact with the families over 12-18 months, studying them through participant observations and taped, in-depth interviews. After this intensive period, families were contacted for follow-up interviews every six months over the next two years. Participants were recruited through various means including through community groups—both formal and informal—and social service agencies, as well as, through introductions from other family members or friends. Participants in the ethnographic sample are similar to those in the survey and the embedded developmental study with respect to ethnicity, income level, residence, and TANF status.

The *Three-City* ethnography utilizes over 40 different protocols throughout the data collection phase as well as participant observations in respondents' homes, public assistance offices, grocery stores, local parks, court visits with families, weddings and other family celebrations. Ethnographers conducted, on average², one protocol per monthly interview session. The proposed study examined key protocols and interview notes that researchers focused on during data analysis. They are as follows:

The ***Residential Mobility*** protocol examines the patterns of residential mobility in adulthood (stability vs. instability) as well as the mother's³ feeling of belonging or attachment to her home as it relates to residential mobility. It documents the causes and consequences of past residential moves.

² Depending on the topic and context of the interview, a protocol could last over two interview sessions and shorter protocols could be conducted in one interview setting.

³ *Mother* refers to the primary caregiver of the focal child in the study. This person could be the biological mother, a grandmother, a foster or adoptive parent.



Potential causes are related to: quality and quantity of available housing; health hazards related to housing; and the homeplace (a sense of connectedness to a place of residence), and conflicts in social relationships. Potential consequences include: homelessness; an unwanted change in living arrangement; change in health status; and gains or losses in social and institutional connections.

The *Child Development* and the *Parenting* protocols elicit information detailing the mothers' understanding of the children's developmental progress including activity setting observations of children by the ethnographer; and the mothers' developmental goals and how the mothers support movement toward those goals.

The *Child Health* protocol documents the overall physical and mental health of children in the study including prenatal care, well-baby care and immunizations, major illnesses and hospitalizations, current medications, and health insurance coverage.

The *Child Typical Day* protocol provides an in-depth overview of the major patterns and routines in the child's life. It served as the mechanism for introducing all the other child specific topics throughout the study.

While these and other protocols are described as separate modules, it is important to note the overlap in topics and that data collected from a particular protocol was likely to surface in other interview topic settings. As such, all of the data were examined to increase validity.

b. Research Questions

This report contributes to the housing policy literature by examining the nuances and variability surrounding residential mobility among the urban poor. The following three questions are addressed:

- 1) What are the push/pull factors that drive mobility and to what extent is housing instability (e.g., housing that is of poor quality or unaffordable, unstable living arrangements, etc.) associated with high rates of mobility among low-income families?
- 2) What are the challenges and barriers as well as the benefits that families, especially children, face when experiencing frequent mobility?
- 3) Why do individuals and families with similar demographic characteristics and residing in the same communities exhibit different patterns of residential mobility? Further, why do individuals and families experience bouts of residential stability interspersed with periods of chronic residential instability over their life course?

III. DATA ANALYSIS

A grounded theory approach which is used extensively in the field of ethnographic research was adopted in this study. Kathy Charmaz (2006, p. 2) describes grounded theory as consisting of



“systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves.” The ethnographic data was analyzed at multiple levels in order to explore both the experiences of individual families and the similarities and differences between families of different races/ethnicities and those living in different cities. The analyses included case-study, cross-case, and cross-site approaches. Analyses were conducted (1) within family; (2) within race-ethnic group but across families; (3) within city but across families; and (4) across race-ethnic groups, cities, and families. Analysis of data at the within-case level permitted a detailed understanding of the experiences of a particular group, whether it was one family, several families within a particular ethnic group, or several families within a city. Analysis at the cross-case and cross-site level allowed for the comparison of experiences across families, ethnic groups, and geographic locations. Analysis protocols for the qualitative data, such as field notes and memos, required that within-case and cross-case analyses be conducted within each site. The purpose of employing within-case and cross-case analyses in each site was to thoroughly familiarize researchers with the data and to identify patterns unique to each case and site before trying to compare patterns across sites. In this type of analysis, data were examined for recurrent themes or concepts.

Initial analysis of the qualitative data involved the generation of graphic displays of the case-study data within each site. Cross-case analysis within each site helped us to extend the generalizability of findings within cases. In conducting analysis across cases within sites, we used the interactive synthesis approach, which involves a combination of variable-oriented and case-oriented perspectives (Huberman and Miles, 1994; Fischer and Wertz, 1975). With the variable-centered approach, we examined the relationship between variables, identifying patterns and discovering the correlations between concepts, but without information about individual cases. Conversely, the case-oriented approach allowed for an examination of the full history of a case, with pertinent information coded and sorted. We examined data from several cases for recurrent patterns, with the goal of identifying “clusters” of cases that have similar characteristics.

Matrices were developed visually displaying the aforementioned analytic processes. Several forms of data were used in the creation of the matrices including Residential History charts and family profiles, a chronological summary of all data collected on a respondent organized substantively with information about: 1) the physical and social environment; 2) interface with social services and institutions; 3) family experiences; and 4) individual experiences. Information was also obtained using the qualitative data software program, *nVivo*, in which the entire coded dataset which consists of more than 44,000 pages of narrative data had already been imported. Using the efficiency of the computer software enabled a more organized and thorough search through the data. Codes such as residential mobility history (RMH), home context (HCX), social networks (SNW), parenting practices (PAR), child development (CHD), and educational experiences (EDX) as well as word phrases were used in gathering information for more focused coding and building data matrices.

Visual representations of the entire dataset consisted of several spreadsheets. One spreadsheet was labeled “Reasons for Residential Movement”. Each city had a separate color-coded worksheet tab. Within each city, respondents were organized by race/ethnicity. Respondents’ residential mobility was organized and listed chronologically over their life course on the worksheet. The column headings included: number of reasons for mobility; number of moves; respondent identification number; interview/observation filename locator; from/to dates of residency,



number of residence; to/from place of residence and household members and relationship to respondent; type of housing (P=projects, 8=Section 8, V=private, S=shelter, H=homeless); reasons given for move; singular/multiple reason for mobility; categories and sub-categories delineating reasons for mobility. The last two categories which organized the data further were developed after combing through the entire dataset and patterns emerged surrounding the reasons why respondents moved. The four main categories are: family, unsafe/undesirable living conditions, financial, and other. See Table 2 in the Appendix for the category and sub-category topics. Another tab listed all of the public housing developments in which respondents lived across the three sites as well as the number of respondents by city and race/ethnicity who lived in public housing. Another emergent category showed the relationship of first pregnancy to residential mobility; thus, a table showing the respondent’s identification number, respondent’s data of birth, respondent’s first child’s data of birth, and respondent’s age at first pregnancy and at first birth— all organized by city and race/ethnicity of respondent.

Child development spreadsheets were also developed displaying the following data categories: number of children in the household; histories of adult and child domestic, sexual, drug, and alcohol abuse; household conditions including rodents, pests, lead paint, asbestos, overcrowding, split family living arrangements, and cohabitation; and parent and child educational attainment, school mobility, grade of mobility, reasons for mobility, held back, skip grades, special education, developmental and behavioral issues, and descriptions of pre-school and school readiness experiences. While direct causality could not be proven, a table listing changes in children’s development that may be associated with residential mobility was developed. Note, however, that this analysis remained incomplete due to the inability to ascertain whether a particular change in residency was associated with changes in children’s development as well as the various developmental stages at which multiple children in the household held. The categories outlined in this table included: social relationships, material, emotional/behavioral, health, and education.

From these data displays, further sorting and integration (Charmaz, 2006) of the data into case study grids was conducted. The findings in this report are presented using an exemplar case study approach commonly used by ethnographers in theory development (Burton et al., 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994). The exemplar cases shown below are representative of the emergent patterns found among the respondents’ experiences and serve to demonstrate the processes around residential mobility that are pertinent to the proposed research questions.

IV. INTRODUCTION

When reviewing the low-income housing research, studies show that poor people move often and that frequent mobility is harmful to children’s development (Crowley, 2003; Pettit and McLanahan, 2003; Pribesh and Downey, 1999; Astone and McLanahan, 1996). Pettit and McLanahan examined the impact of residential mobility on the social connections of poor families and found that “moving has a negative effect on social connections” and “...moving to a middle class neighborhood results in a greater loss of social capital than moving to a poor neighborhood” (2003: 636). Briggs (1998) showed in his housing mobility study of movers and stayers in Yonkers that while moving away from a poor neighborhood to a middle income neighborhood may result in



the loss of social support, it may also create opportunities in the form of social leverage. Other housing studies, however, show that many low-income families move within a small distance of their previous home into similar neighborhoods of concentrated poverty (Schafft, 2006, Fitchen, 1994). In a comparison of Latinos, Blacks, and Anglos, South et al. (2005) found that blacks exhibited high rates of mobility into high poverty neighborhoods followed by Latinos, especially Puerto Ricans and Mexicans. The authors argue that—

Structural barriers, including but not limited to low levels of wealth or access to financial resources from kin, might inhibit the retention of minority groups in lower-poverty neighborhoods. Racial and ethnic discrimination in the housing market might steer minority homeseekers into predominantly minority and, by virtue of their racial composition, comparatively poor neighborhoods. Alternatively, minorities' desires to live near members of their own racial or ethnic group, while generally lower than the in-group preferences of Anglos might perforce mean higher rates of mobility into relatively poor neighborhoods (2005: 894-5).

Similarly, Lewis and Sinha (2007) found in their study of 403 low-income Chicago families that while families experienced marked gains in income (although still below the poverty level) during the immediate aftermath of the 1996 Welfare Reform legislation, there were no discernable changes in racial segregation. In examining solutions to concentrated poverty, Crowley (2003) suggests school-based and housing-based interventions at both the community and federal levels which will provide the necessary resources for stable housing and schools for children and their families.

While the above studies reveal the racial, ethnic, and class disparities surrounding residential mobility patterns, there is a dearth in the literature showing both the nuances and variability in mobility both across groups and within individuals over time. This report directs attention to the varied contexts in which residential mobility decisions are made. It further conveys that decisions made regarding housing do not occur in isolation. The findings are conceptually guided at the micro-level by a social capital framework as discussed by Briggs who argues—

Social capital is what we draw on when we get others, whether acquaintances, friends, or kin, to help us solve problems, seize opportunities, and accomplish other aims that matter to us. As an individual good, there are two forms that should interest researchers and policy makers: *social leverage*—social capital that helps one “get ahead” and *social support*—social capital that helps one “get by” or cope (1998: 178).

This theoretical lens helps explain the decision-making processes of primary caregivers in the *Three-City* ethnography surrounding their patterns of residential mobility as well as shaping the environments in which these caregivers make for their children as a result of those decisions. Thus, a social capital perspective illuminates the strengths and weaknesses of ties parents can or cannot make for their children.



V. RESULTS

- a. What are the push/pull factors that drive mobility and to what extent is housing instability (e.g., housing that is of poor quality or unaffordable, unstable living arrangements, etc.) associated with high rates of mobility among low-income families?

Traditionally, the push-pull theory of migration literature indicates that there are several forces that motivate individuals to leave (‘push’) one area (e.g., country, state, county, and neighborhood) and relocate (‘pull’) to another. Push mechanisms include: warfare, religious persecution, lack of employment opportunities, barriers to quality social services, discriminatory practices, natural disasters, domestic violence, and high crime neighborhoods. Pull mechanisms comprise: stable nation-states, religious freedom, job availability, improved access to social services, and physically and environmentally safe neighborhoods. Analysis of the *Three-City* shows that residential mobility among families is driven (mostly) by negative (push) structural and social forces in families’ lives surrounding housing affordability, quality of housing and neighborhoods, social relationships and networks, and access to resources. Positive (pull) forces include acceptance into a public housing (including HOPE VI) or Section 8 program, employment opportunities, and union formation. Indeed, some forces act as both a negative force, for example, when conflict arises between individuals in the household resulting in relocation, and as a positive force, for example, when individuals decide to cohabit. HOPE VI implementation also acts as a positive force for those individuals who are successful in receiving a unit, while for those who are not successful in getting a housing unit or who become displaced as a result of the demolition of their former unit, the housing program is viewed as a negative force.

Across the sample, respondents gave a total of 900 reasons explaining their histories of residential mobility (see Table 2 in the Appendix). These reasons were grouped into four general categories (i.e., social relationships, housing and neighborhood quality, affordability, and access to resources). These general categories were further divided into sub-categories. Each general category and sub-category was tabulated across the entire sample. The *social relationships* category contains all residential moves that result from social interactions with members in the household and/or in household members’ social networks. The two largest reasons in this category are union formation or dissolution (Chicago = 41; San Antonio = 45; and Boston = 44) and family ties (Chicago = 42; San Antonio = 43; and Boston = 30). When examining unions, the data show respondents pushed into moving primarily because of a separation or divorce (Chicago = 14; San Antonio = 20; and Boston = 23). Respondents, however, were also pulled into housing for marriage (Chicago = 8; San Antonio = 10; and Boston = 10). Respondents relied upon their family ties (pull) when choosing to relocate (Chicago = 42; San Antonio = 43; and Boston = 30). In some cases, respondents moved in with other family members, while in other cases, respondents chose housing that was located near other family members who could provide much needed resources including childcare, help with security deposits, and information on housing opportunities. Similarly, respondents’ social networks outside of family aided in their search for housing (Chicago = 10; San Antonio = 11; and Boston =



13).

The following case study is representative of the *social relationship* pattern found in the data. This case demonstrates the connections between residential moves and union formation and dissolution. Note, however, that respondents' reasons for moving are quite diverse and do not all fall into any one category.

Delilah – Residential mobility and relationships

Delilah is a 43-year old mother of two adult daughters and two young children. She has moved 28 times over her lifetime, 22 of her moves occurred as an adult. At age 17, Delilah had been living with her grandparents in Chicago and wanted to stay but her mother said that “it’s too much responsibility” for the grandparents to care for Delilah and suggested that since Delilah had a boyfriend and “you love him, why don't you se get married? I'll sign for you.” So, Delilah got married and the couple moved into an apartment even though she was not in love with her partner. Six months later, Delilah was pregnant with their first of two children together. Delilah remained with her husband for almost 20 years. They moved a few times over the course of their marriage mostly due to opportunities to purchase better quality housing (pulls). Homeownership created stable periods of housing for Delilah, her husband, and their children lasting a maximum of five years in a single residence. Delilah explained that she “likes to stay stable for a good couple of years, especially when I feel comfortable and people treat me well.” She likes the change that comes with new apartments, but she doesn’t like the change to happen often. After 20 years together, Delilah left her first husband due to his increasing physical abuse. Still, she blamed herself, “I really devastated him a lot...He was going to commit suicide.” She lamented that “men get hurt more easily than women because they can get attached.”

After marrying her second husband, Delilah’s residential mobility increased dramatically. In their first year of marriage, they moved five times in one year. She explains that they moved so often because her husband was not stable. He, too, was physically and verbally abusive causing her at one point to quit her job as a switchboard operator at a bank because she did not want her employers asking her more questions about her abuse. When she tired of her husband’s abuse, she would leave him (push) and then the couple would re-unite and have to find another place to live (pull). In some cases, Delilah felt her only choice for housing was to re-unite with her husband and move in with her husband’s relatives. At other times, she lived with one of her adult daughters. Towards the end of the study, Delilah and her second husband had separated. Delilah had applied for and received a Section 8 voucher from the housing authority. She moved into a newly remodeled apartment; but only lived there for six months when she was evicted because the apartment building failed the Section 8 housing inspection by the housing authority, which subsequently stopped paying their portion (70%) of the rent; therefore, the owners evicted her for non-payment and refused to give her back the \$700 security deposit she placed on the apartment.

Delilah’s children, residential mobility and social relationships

Delilah has four children, two adult and two younger children. The two younger children (4-year old boy and a 15-month old girl) have lived with her and her second husband most of their lives. However, there was a period of time when her son lived with his father in Mexico during one



of the couple’s separations. Delilah was working in the U.S. and was sending remittances back to her husband in Mexico to help support him and their son. Delilah fears that the behavioral problems that her son has can be attributed to the absence of her husband in the household. She explains that “he is very close to his father.” Still, witnessing the physical and verbal abuse of his mother throughout his life also plays a role in his behavioral problems. Delilah remembers when her son was a year old and his father told him to hit Delilah. While he was very traumatized by this, Delilah says that her son shows signs of disrespect for women, including Delilah, his school teachers, and his younger sister. Delilah’s youngest daughter does not exhibit any developmental delays.

Samantha – Mobility and family ties

The next major group of reasons in the *social relationships* category is family ties and support. Samantha, a 26-year old mother of five children (ages: 8, 6, 3, 1, and 6 months) at the end of the study. Samantha displays a pattern of relying upon family support that is prevalent in many of the study’s Hispanic families. In most cases, this support falls under the *social support* dimension of social capital that Briggs (1998) describes as getting enough resources from one’s social networks that allow one to just get by. Samantha’s parents were migrant workers living in San Antonio and Florida when she was born. Her mother’s father and brother came to Florida and moved Samantha, her siblings, and her mother back to San Antonio while Samantha’s father was at work. Samantha, her siblings, and her mother lived with various (maternal) family members who resided in San Antonio. These family members not only provided housing for Samantha and her immediate family, they also provided protection against her abusive father whom they knew was going to come to San Antonio in search of his family. The moved between the homes of family members and the father eventually went back to Florida. Samantha’s mother eventually moved herself and her children into their own home in San Antonio.

Samantha had her first child at age 17. Her boyfriend lived across the street from Samantha and lived with his aunt and uncle. She eventually moved in with her boyfriend and his family who argued that, “You already have a child with him. You need to be with him.” Samantha didn't want to leave her mother, nor did her mother want her to leave. Her mother pleaded, “No, stay here, I'll help you. You're still getting your little check [referring to Samantha’s child support].” Samantha remembered, “Yeah, they were pressuring me. No, I don't want to get married. I don't, I didn't want to do nothing. I just, you know. Just the way I was, I wanted to live with my mom. And still be able to see him.” At 19, Samantha, pregnant with her second child, married her boyfriend. The couple and their children stayed with her in-laws for another year and then they got their own apartment (husband was working and Samantha was on TANF and received a housing subsidy), but only lived there for about five months. Her husband’s aunt and uncle thought they were paying too much in rent and wanted them closer, so the aunt agreed to rent the couple a small apartment she owned for \$200/month.

Eventually, Samantha’s spouse became abusive and she did not tell her mother and sister right away because she was embarrassed, and she knew they would advise her to leave right away, which she was not ready to do. Her husband kicked her and their children out of the apartment, forcing Samantha and the children to move into a shelter. Once her mother found out, she invited



Samantha to move back in with her. She and the children lived with her mother until Samantha received a public housing unit.

Children, residential mobility and family support

Samantha had two school-aged children during the study. She has always lived near family members (either her own or her in-laws) whom she can go to when in need. When choosing a place to live, living near family is very important. The eldest was having problems in kindergarten and was at risk of repeating the grade. In pre-school, it was feared that he was autistic; however, Samantha was adamant that he was “just a little slow” since both she and her husband had similar problems in school. After testing, her son was diagnosed with ADD and sent to another school that had better resources to work with him. Her younger son is doing well in school, but attends a different school than his older brother, making it difficult for Samantha to get the two oldest to school and the other children to daycare.

Because Samantha chose housing near her mother, she sees her mother daily and her family provides a great deal of support to Samantha and her children. Her family provides clothing (new and used) for Samantha’s children. Her sister and mother also watch the children while Samantha studies; on weekends; and help in raising the children. Family members have also provided transportation to work and offer to get Samantha’s children from school or daycare. Samantha’s husband continued to be a resource for their children even though the couple had separated. He did not contribute child support because he was not working, but he did watch the children and spend time with them. His aunt and uncle also help provide resources for the children.

Lila – Evictions

In the *affordability* category, the majority of reasons for residential mobility were due to forced moves (Chicago = 54; San Antonio = 55; and Boston = 29). In fact, forced move was the number one reason given across all categories. Forced moves (pushes) consisted of eviction, fire, foreclosure, and HOPE VI demolition. Evictions were the leading push factor out of housing given by respondents in this category (Chicago = 17; San Antonio = 23; and Boston = 8). Lila is a 28-year old mother of two children (a 6-year old son and an 8-week old daughter). Lila dates the father of her eldest off and on throughout the study. He treats Lila’s newborn as his own. The biological father of the baby was deported back to Mexico. Lila spent most of her early childhood growing up in the suburbs of Chicago before moving to San Antonio with her mother and siblings after her parents divorced. She dropped out of school in the tenth grade because of the disruption she experienced from her mother’s residential instability. She lived in various group homes because of her mother’s mental health problems. Lila was emancipated at age 17 when she moved to her own apartment but only lived there for about three months because she could not afford it. She moved in with her aunt for a few months before renting another apartment with a girl friend. Lila was not working but her friend was working and paid their \$150 rent. The two were soon evicted because they had too many complaints from neighbors about loud parties. She then moved with another

friend (male) who was living in his mother's five-bedroom house which was close to Lila's job (note: friend's mother was not living in the house when Lila moved in). Lila paid ~\$100 per month to her friend to live in the house. After a year, the friend's mother wanted to move back into her house, so she evicted Lila.

Lila had already been dating the father of her first child when evicted from her friend's home. Her partner asked his parents (with whom he lived) if Lila could move in with them and they agreed. She was two-months pregnant when she moved in with her partner and his parents. Once her partner got a job, they were able to get their own place. They lived together almost six years before the relationship went sour and the couple decided to split. Lila recalls wanting to leave him sooner but she "avoided leaving his [her son's] dad for a long time. I didn't want to have to start all over, pack everything up. It's hard to move." Ironically, eviction became a strategy to get out of the relationship. She explains the process as follows—

We lived in a house for six years, almost six years. Me and his dad lived in a house. I just got tired of him. He was drinking and drinking. That was the only way to get rid of him, because I couldn't afford the rent myself. We were paying almost four hundred dollars a month rent, and that's when I was working. Wasn't no way. So I started staying with my friend at first, and our stuff stayed there. He wasn't staying there; I wasn't staying there. But the rent was about to be due again, because...We paid the rent at the end of September, and it was already October, the rent was due again and I said I got to get a place fast because rent's due again and all my stuff's there. I don't think he was going to pay the rent. And he basically let me have everything. He just took a bed, and left everything else. My sister and my aunt gave me the money to move into here (public housing unit). I was just lucky, because when I moved out from there, I had just got this place, so I didn't have to get storage or anything. I just moved everything here. And I left my stuff here for like a week, because they didn't have the gas on and it was cold. So I stayed with my friend another week and eventually came here.

At a point in her relationship with her first child's father, Lila lived in a homeless shelter for about a month because she needed to escape her abusive partner and she had no other place to live. Her sister kept her son while Lila stayed at the shelter.

Evictions and children

Only Lila's eldest son was school-age during the study. Lila states that her son does well in math and spelling but was told by her son's third grade teachers that he needs help with his reading skills. He has dyslexia but because his IQ score is relatively high, it was recommended that he not be placed in a special education class. She requested that he be held behind in first grade as well as attend summer school but, her requests went unanswered. She blames his first and second grade teachers for his reading problems and wished she could have afforded to move to a different location that had a better school system or send him to a private school. She began researching school vouchers and believed that she would be eligible especially since they lived in the "worst, poorest...school district in San Antonio." However, when given an opportunity to move to a neighborhood with a better school system, Lila hesitated withdrawing her son from his school during the school year because he has so many friends at his current school and their residential mobility has caused a great



deal of disruption in her son's life in the past.

The choices that Lila has made with respect to her children's positive development are bound in contexts faced by many single mothers living in poverty—e.g., weighing the pros and cons of maintaining an unhealthy cohabiting union, disrupting children's daily routines and dismantling peer relationships, and/or moving from one high risk neighborhood to, perhaps, another. Within these contexts, decisions are made, often with little time allotted for planning resulting in unexpected outcomes. Thus, for more than six years, Lila stayed in an unhealthy relationship with her son's father giving her son daily access to both biological parents as well as his peers, yet educated in a low functioning school. At one point in her relationship, Lila took her son and moved into a women's shelter and then into a Salvation Army shelter to escape her partner's abuse. Her sister, after seeing Lila and her son's condition at the shelter, agreed to take Lila's son with her while Lila stayed at the shelter. Both sisters had spent most of their youth in foster care facilities and did not want their children to experience that type of living. Lila stayed away from her partner for about a month when she decided to move back in with him. Retrospectively, she describes her decision,

He can manipulate me really good. And I was always vulnerable to him, I don't know why. Sometimes I see myself...Like he still can...I don't know what it is. I know it's not love, or maybe it's just stupidity. But he still can make me think he's a better person when I know he's not.

Less than a month back in the same house, Lila realized that she made the wrong decision moving her and her son back in with her partner; so she—

started staying with my friend at first, and our stuff stayed there. He [partner] wasn't staying there; I wasn't staying there. But the rent was about to be due again, because... We paid the rent at the end of September, and it was already October. The rent was due again and I said I got to get a place fast because rent's due again and all my stuff's there. I don't think he was going to pay the rent. And he basically let me have everything. He just took a bed, and left everything else.

Because she could not afford to stay in the house without her partner's financial support, Lila was forced to find another place for her and her son to live. They lived with Lila's friend for a few weeks when Lila's friend encouraged her to apply for public housing. She did, and was given a two-bedroom unit right away. While she was tentative about moving into the neighborhood where the public housing development was located, Lila had no choice. She explains—

At first, I was kind of hesitant. I was like, I don't want to live out here...because I thought it was rowdy. Because a long time ago, this was a real bad neighborhood. The courts, you think, well, I don't want to live out in the courts, it's bad up there. I was hesitant...I was desperate; I needed a place to live, you know, for me and my son. I did, I moved out here. I liked it because I've been here and I stayed to myself, I didn't talk to nobody and it was good.

By moving into public housing, although located in an undesirable neighborhood, Lila was placed into a system of supportive services to assist her and her children. She participates in the Family Self-Sufficiency program which places a portion of her monthly rent into an escrow account for



future use in obtaining homeownership. She has also attended parenting classes and receives college tuition assistance through her participation in the program.

b. What are the challenges and barriers as well as the benefits that families, especially children, face when experiencing frequent mobility?

As described thus far, frequent residential mobility is shaped by ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors that shape both the challenges as well as the benefits that families must face in their new locations.

Margerita – Housing affordability

In the section above, I described respondents’ experiences with eviction. However, many respondents abandoned their housing before receiving an eviction notice because of affordability issues. Others were unable to obtain housing after an eviction because they could not afford the rental payments. Most choices around housing and affordability included sacrifices respondents had to make in order to provide shelter for the family. Margerita’s story is an excellent example of housing choices and sacrifice. Margerita, a 32-year old mother of three children (ages 15, 5, and 1) has been employed for 14 years as a full-time secretary paying \$13/hour. Margerita has lived on and off with the Jesus, the biological father of her three children. She has moved herself and her children out of the home when she felt she could no longer accept Jesus’s treatment. As an adult, Margerita has had more stable periods of housing than many in the study (6 moves over a 13-year period). At the end of the study, she had lived in her current residence for five years. She first moved in with Jesus at age 19 when she found out she was pregnant with their first child. They moved into an apartment with Jesus’s six roommates. Their relationship became fragile and Margerita moved into her own apartment with her newborn son. After two years, the building’s owner decided to sell the building forcing Margerita and her son to find another place to live, or pay the higher rent the new owners were charging. She first asked Jesus to pay more child support so she could stay in the apartment but he refused. When she could not locate any housing that she could afford, Margerita resorted to returning to Jesus who was living in a three flat home outside the city that he and his brother owned.

In moving back in with Jesus, Margerita felt she was giving her children an opportunity to grow up with their father and mother. Alternatively, she felt that life was harder and more expensive living outside the city. She explained that her home was “far away from everything...[and] it is exhausting and depressing and not really any cheaper to live there.” She paid for everything in the home except the mortgage which Jesus paid. She had to get up very early in the morning as well as feed her children dinner until after 7:30 p.m. due to her long commute. She was also away from her family and social networks.

Children and Housing Affordability

Due to Margerita’s inability to afford housing closer to her job and social networks, Margerita was often tired and felt she was not spending enough quality time with her children. She also questioned the quality of her children’s education outside the city, “The teachers in our area have no idea how to treat or teach children that are bilingual. I had to pull Sam [her oldest son] from one



school and re-enroll him another.” During her lunch break at work, she rushed to get her eldest son from school at 1:35 because she did not want him hanging out after school because of the gang members that hang out near the school to recruit kids into their gang. Margerita reported that two of her son’s classmates had joined the gang and she did not want to risk her son joining as well. After picking her son up from school, Margerita drove him one block to a park where he attended an after-school program. She stated, “Gangs are recruiting children at the entrance of the school if there is no staff or parents at the door. It is a big temptation for kids because they offer them things like bicycles.” Despite these obstacles and because of the value and advocacy she places on getting a good education, Margerita’s children did very well in school. Her oldest son was on the honor roll and received a scholarship for a summer program at Northwestern University.

Dina – “Too much space”

A third category of reasons for residential mobility is *housing and neighborhood quality*. Reasons in this category included neighborhood crime, drug sales and violence, and prostitution; rodent and bug infestation; building maintenance, construction quality, and building security; and space (both overcrowding and too much space). Each serves as a barrier faced by families experiencing frequent residential mobility. Space is the largest sub-category in this section (Chicago = 24; San Antonio = 19; and Boston = 34). When examining space, most studies focus on the overcrowded conditions that many low-income families reside in. Similarly, respondents in the *Three-City* ethnography lived in overcrowded conditions due to families having to double-up when housing is unavailable. Overcrowding also caused families to split, with children sent to live with different family members and friends. In extreme cases, children were taken out of the home and put into foster care as a result of overcrowding. But, in most cases, overcrowding fell under the radar screen of social services forcing families to create strategies to shelter themselves.

For a few families in the study, having too much space acted as a barrier to stable housing. In these cases, families were living in public housing developments that have regulations regarding the number of bedrooms allotted to families. For example, a family consisting of a mother and three children (two boys and a girl) would receive a three-bedroom unit (one for the mother, one for the two boys, and one for the girl). When family sizes are reduced or increased, the housing authority has the power to relocate families to a housing unit that is appropriate for their family size based on availability.

Dina was a 40-year old mother of four biological children (ages 5, 10, 15, and 20) and an adopted nephew (age 13). Dina and her children were living in a five bedroom public housing unit located in the same neighborhood that she grew up in and where other family members live. She preferred living in this neighborhood and described her attachment—“we were like family, all the kids in the building played together and there was a lot of advocacy taking place”. Despite safety issues, Dina argues that her apartment is close to transportation, a major supermarket, a health center, and other small commercial businesses. When her oldest child decided to move out of the home and get her own apartment, the housing authority gave Dina notice that she would have to move into a 4-bedroom unit. Dina felt that this was “tactic used by management to get rid of people in the building.” She and a group of other tenants organized to fight this practice. While



Dina still had to move, it did not happen right away she “requested to stay within my complex [and] because I have asked for this, management has to wait until a four-bedroom becomes available for me.”

Kareina – Neighborhood barriers

The second largest sub-category in the *housing and neighborhood quality* category consisted of the physical and social characteristics of neighborhoods that created challenges for stable housing environments (Chicago = 19; San Antonio = 10; and Boston = 24). In most cases, there existed a ‘tipping point’ whereby respondents lived in a neighborhood until they felt they had no other choice but to move away for the safety and development of their family. Kareina, a bi-lingual European American, was 37 when she enrolled in the study. She has two girls, ages three and four at time of enrollment. She has been married three times and was estranged from her third husband during the study. Kareina and her daughters lived in several of San Antonio’s low-income housing complexes throughout Kareina’s involvement in the study, three of the moves occurred over a two-year period. Her moves were related to incidents of neighborhood violence. Kareina has moved 9 times over her lifetime and experienced her first 20 years in a stable housing environment in Phoenix, Arizona. Kareina married her first husband and relocated to Florida where she lived for 12 years before moving to Mexico, and subsequently, to San Antonio. Kareina’s residential mobility in San Antonio was greatly shaped by neighborhood barriers. Her descriptions of these neighborhoods are listed below.

- Kareina’s opinion of the neighborhood children is that they’re very mean. She mentions a story involving another respondent’s son and him killing a cat. She also mentions other children who have killed animals or stolen people’s pets.
- In July 2001, Kareina mentioned that there was a shooting a few apartments down from her apartment. She believed the shooting was drug related. She did not let her daughters play outside in the evening. She said, “It’s been rough here. Veronica [a friend] got out at the best time.”
- Kareina wanted to move to another housing complex, but ran into difficulties with her caseworker at the housing office. She hoped to move into one of two other developments, preferring one over the other because “[apartment name] is such a small complex that everybody is in everybody else’s business.”
- Kareina described a shooting in her neighborhood, adding that the police took 30 minutes to arrive on the scene. She believed her neighbor’s boyfriend was involved with a

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gang, as he hung out with a lot of young men Kareina knew to be trouble-makers.

- To prevent the theft of her clothing, Kareina tied a rope across the living room for laundry to dry inside.
- Kareina moved into another housing development. The area was almost exclusively residential with modest brick houses and a few convenience stores. The complex's appearance was free of trash and debris.
- Kareina did not feel like she had much in common with her neighbors because she considered herself educated, having completed both high school and some college.
- Some of the teen-aged boys who live in Kareina's neighborhood threatened her and smashed in a bedroom window one night when the family was asleep in the same room. Kareina and her daughters were moving within days to another development due to this recent event. Kareina was concerned about living in this neighborhood because she was not familiar with it. Also, most residents living in the area were African American and Kareina believed she was going to be the only white resident. Her partner also protested this move because he did not want to move with her because the new complex is too far away from his brothers and he didn't want to live with "*los negros*". Here is how Kareina described her transfer—

This is like the bottom, this is the ghetto of all ghettos, and they don't want you to move up. It's like, if you're here, you're bad. To me they want to keep you down...they want to move me to [one of two predominately black housing developments]. In the Hispanic world, at least I speak their language, ok, and at least to them, I am not a total outcast. But to blacks in the Courts over there, I am taboo. Can you imagine me being the only person, my daughters being the only children in a completely...I mean there are no Hispanics; there is no integration over there at all. I have no prejudices, but can you imagine us being the only white or only other race in the [housing developments]? Can you imagine what my daughters would go through? That's where she wanted to send me. They're worse there then they are here. Constant shooting, constant stabbings, drug wars... so I am having a real hard time transferring."

- After moving to her last apartment (neither of the aforementioned developments) while in the study, Kareina said that stores were actually closer to her than they were before she was living in her previous development. She said the bus stops were closer to stores, so she had to walk less to and from the bus stops.



Not only did the conditions of neighborhoods matter for Kareina, she also described, in detail, how the conditions of her previous apartment and the barriers she faced in trying to find a better place to live for her family affected both her physical and mental health—

In a hoarse, low voice, coughing throughout the interview, Kareina states that she thinks her illness is connected to or at least aggravated by "the pigeons and the mites. They [Housing Authority] were supposed to come and put a repellent in and they were supposed to wash all the screens that same day and they never did. So I kept calling and it finally came back that they never washed these screens on the back of the house, never washed the mites out of them. I still find mites on the floors...What they did was, they came in and fogged for them, and sprayed the windows, but never washed the mites out of them first. So it pushed some of them inside and some died and some didn't, as with any spray. And I'm still finding mites inside..." The ethnographer asked her what the mites look like and she said, "Little gray or black bugs. And they kind of resemble fleas in a way. They're not fleas...So I complained that the pigeons are back, and they said, 'well there's nothing we can do about that.' I said, 'you were supposed to put the repellent up and they said, 'we have to order that, we don't have that.' They don't want to; what they are trying to do is evict me before they have to spend the money...If you get evicted, it's five years; you can't get back in. I'm trying to wait it out and then they have to do something...Once I am all caught up, because I am \$20 behind on my rent, that's all...so I figure once I get that paid, hopefully I'll have a phone and then I will call and call the main office and demand an appointment and to know why I can't be transferred."

Kareina describes the physical and emotional toll her housing situation has caused her—

And Graciano was home yesterday and he was like, 'what's wrong with you?' and I said 'this is what happens to me every day. This is what I have been doing all day, every day this week.' I can't get up, I start crying for no reason, I'm just like...I think a lot of it is just the stress from having to fight with the apartment complex, all these lights are out again [outside her apartment] and knowing that he [abuser husband] could be here and all of these things...I haven't even looked for a job this week. I have just been kind of...resting. That's how I got my cough some better is I stayed in bed for two days, I didn't get up. I got up, took them to day care, came back and went back to bed and just laid here. I was trying to watch TV, but I just fell asleep and slept all day for two days. And it made a big difference. Sleeping helps me a lot. It's really weird. But with depression also, you've got to keep your normal hours of sleep, a decent diet, a lot of things you have to do to help maintain along with the medication. And I've been trying to do that.

Kareina narratives reveal the complexities surrounding housing choices for low-income families. She demonstrates how the stressors of bad neighborhoods, sub-standard housing quality, and conflicts in intimate relationships are interwoven in ways that affect not only mental and physical health, but parenting and child development.

Neighborhood barriers and children

At the beginning of the study, Kareina's daughters attended daycare at a local YMCA.

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Prior to leaving San Antonio for Florida with her estranged husband, both girls attended this daycare; thus, Kareina was very happy they were able to get back in the same classrooms upon their return to San Antonio. Kareina explained that her youngest daughter did not like to be dropped off at the YMCA, and cried when Kareina left her there. The older daughter, on the other hand, loved to go to the YMCA.

Once settled into her housing, Kareina discovered that a new pre-kindergarten/daycare was opening on-site at the housing development. Kareina needed to bring all of the documents pertaining to her children's vaccinations and birth certificates to the childcare office before her daughters could be enrolled. Her biggest challenge was that she felt she could not afford what the YMCA office charges to make the copies; "it's a dime a copy, and I literally don't have any money." She was happy to take both her daughters to the center because it was near her apartment and, up to that point, she had not been able to get her girls into any other pre-K or day care other than the YMCA. Kareina stated, "I wouldn't have to get on a bus to take them there or nothing, and I could just get on a bus downtown [when conducting business or working] and it would take me here and I could just walk across the apartment complex."

Kareina wanted her daughters to attend a pre-K program rather than a daycare center "because [the pre-K] knows what direction that they are taking as far as the education and what's going to bring them to where they need to be when they start kindergarten." Kareina "would love to get her [oldest daughter] into a parochial school, because they are a lot more structured, and I think that that's what my girls need. They need that structure and not because of the religious background or any of that. I'm thinking of the structure that the school provides at least while they are there.

The girls were able to get in the new pre-K program located in Kareina's development; however, instead of full-time slots, they only received half-day slots. Kareina argued, "They were supposed to give me full days. They gave me half days. So in other words, if I find a job...it will be two weeks after I get that job before they can go full time. What employer is going to hire me if they need me right now and I have to wait two weeks to start...so then I found this lady who is willing to baby sit and she's only going to charge me a total of \$80 a week for the two of them...She said that she will do it and it really doesn't matter the hours, and I'm to the point that I don't care anymore." However, as was the case with most of what Kareina received in the form of public assistance, she was persistent in her efforts to get her and her children the best care possible. Kareina's caseworker was able to communicate to the center that Kareina had to complete 30 hours a week of job searching activities; thus, she was recertified for full-time [name of center] care for her daughters.

Living in this development provided not only easy access to a pre-K/daycare center, it also provided Kareina with a network of friends whom she relied upon to help care for her girls while Kareina was at work. For example, Kareina had a child care arrangement with her neighbor Katia. She left her daughters with Katia, who took them to their pre-school and then picked them up and watched them for the afternoon. While this set-up seemed to initially work, conflicts ensued—Kareina became concerned about Katia's child care practices because—

Today, [her oldest daughter] told me that Katia was going to spank her with a belt, because that's what she does to her own kids, I found out from her older daughter. And I told her, [daughter], if she ever lays a hand on you, you better tell me. Because I don't spank and if you



get a spanking, it's very rare, it's on your butt with my hand. And [it's done] by me and I'm not going to hurt you...So that kind of scares me that Katia would tell them that. So I talked to Cierra [another neighbor and friend] today and she says she wouldn't have a problem with them, just the only problem would be getting them to and from school. I don't know how I would pick them up. Well, Cierra's granddaughters are in a separate school...she's got custody of her granddaughters. On weekends now, though, I am going to take them to Cierra. And they seem to prefer Cierra actually.

After a full analysis of the *Three-City* ethnographic data, two patterns emerged: 1) residential mobility variability across the sample whereby some individuals experienced high rates of mobility while living in high poverty neighborhoods while others had more stable housing while living in the same neighborhoods; and 2) residential mobility variability within individuals in the sample whereby some individuals experience periods of housing stability interspersed with periods of housing stability.

- c. Residential mobility variability among and within families. Why do individuals and families with similar demographic characteristics and residing in the same communities exhibit different patterns of residential mobility? Why do individuals and families experience bouts of residential stability interspersed with periods of chronic residential instability over their life course?

Housing Instability across Race, Ethnicity, and Place

When examining the entire sample, patterns of residential mobility emerged between racial/ethnic groups, within racial/ethnic groups, and by city. The average number of moves across the three cities was: Chicago = 7; San Antonio = 8.6; and Boston = 6.3. However, moves across the three cities ranged from: Chicago = 1 to 28; San Antonio = 1 to 29; and Boston = 1 to 22. While these numbers appear consistent, there was some variability across cities and racial/ethnic groups. San Antonio European American families had the widest range in housing mobility with six families reporting five or less moves and four families reporting more than fifteen moves. African American respondents in San Antonio had mobility rates that fell mostly between 6 and 12 moves over the life course. However, seven families had more stable mobility in the one to five range. Latino respondents in San Antonio had more families in the lower mobility ranges along with nine families in the higher range of thirteen and above. Chicago respondents had mobility mostly in the low- to mid-mobility range. Interestingly, eight respondents (6 Latino and 2 African American) listed just one move over the life course. Boston families had less mobility in the low range, comparable rates in the mid-range, and less in the high-range when compared with our Chicago families. One explanation for these differences was the higher numbers of Chicago Latinos with private market rentals when compared to Boston respondents who relied mostly upon public housing.

Overall, African Americans had the lowest rates of housing mobility, followed by Latinos, and European Americans with the highest rates of mobility. First, African Americans across the three cities resided mostly in public housing developments. European Americans also mostly lived in public housing, however, to a much lesser degree than African Americans or Latinos. This may be due, in part, to the historical legacy of residential segregation that has shaped most urban enclaves



since the 1940s. Most public housing was built during the era of segregated housing. Unfortunately, post-segregation legislation did little in creating diverse public housing developments across our nation’s cities. Today, many older public housing developments remain racially homogeneous.

Second, housing type differed among ethnic groups in the sample. For example, most of the Latinos in Boston were of Puerto Rican descent; whereas, most of the Chicago Latinos were of Mexican descent—fifteen Latino respondents in Boston had lived or were living in public housing, while only one Latino respondent reported living in public housing in Chicago. I argue that as citizens of the U.S., Puerto Ricans have direct access to public assistance programs, including subsidized housing; therefore, one would expect to find more Puerto Ricans living in subsidized housing when compared with Mexican respondents who had to rely upon their husbands and partners for housing. Thus, the majority of the study’s Latinos in Chicago lived in private market housing. The data show several Mexican enclaves in Chicago where families owned multi-family homes and then rented out extra rooms to other family members. This housing resource was usually controlled by adult males in the family.

Section 8 (now the Housing Choice Voucher program) housing was quite prevalent among African Americans, especially in Boston where Section 8 voucher holders out-numbered public housing unit dwellers. Both African Americans and Latinos utilized vouchers more than their European American counterparts. The process of applying for Section 8 is similar to applying for public housing which may be a reason for lower rates of European American applicants. Also, the aforementioned problem of Section 8 housing stock being located in predominantly African American and Latino neighborhoods may be a factor.

In 2009, the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) housed “10 percent of the city’s residents through its programs” (<http://www.bostonhousing.org/index.html>, accessed April 2, 2009), and has 27 housing developments for families, 14 of which study participants resided in. In Chicago, respondents lived in 8 of the 20 family housing developments managed by the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) which “serves more than 36,000 families, making it the city’s largest single source of affordable housing” (<http://www.chacinc.com/voucher-program.asp>, accessed April 2, 2009). Of the 22 family developments managed by the San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA), respondents lived in 15 (<http://www.saha.org/affordable%20hou/html/nonprofit.html>, accessed April 2, 2009). The majority of the Latino and African American respondents lived in one of the fifteen San Antonio’s public housing developments. Thus, public housing was one of the stable housing options for low-income, minority families in San Antonio. On the other hand, while European American respondents lived in San Antonio’s public housing, they described the racial tensions that existed in the racially homogeneous developments across the city, which created a barrier to housing stability. Interestingly, European American respondents were as likely to live in shelters as they were to live in public housing.

I began this report with the premise that most respondents in this study have high rates of mobility, a finding that is documented in the literature. What is less discussed in the literature, which I hope to draw attention to here, is the episodic nature of residential moves driven by a range of structural and social forces with varying degrees of control held by the respondent. What are some forces that shape the variability of residential mobility for low-income families as outlined above?

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Childhood Housing Instability

A pattern of unstable housing throughout childhood emerged among some respondents that laid a foundation of future housing instability into adulthood. Childhood residential mobility was mostly the result of parental divorce, separation, or relationship conflict. Veronica’s childhood story demonstrates the ways in which relationship fragility shapes housing stability for children, a pattern which, in many cases, is repeated in adulthood—

Veronica was born in Rochester, New York and lived there until she was three years old. She has memories of the house, memories shaped by positive interactions with extended family. She reminisces, “I remember those times... the times when we used to get together as a family. Across the street from my house used to live my aunt, my father's sister. Behind the street where we lived, used to live my brother's godmother. Next street over lived my other aunt in her own house with two floors. I remember all of that because I used to walk around when I was little.”

From New York, Veronica and her family moved to Hartford, CT where she has good memories of the school two blocks from her house. The family lived in Connecticut for four years and then they moved to Pennsylvania. Veronica states that she did not like living in Pennsylvania and could not remember the street where they lived. She did remember, however, “at this house my mother and my father started having problems and they got separated. Her father was interested in another woman. We stayed in Pennsylvania but moved from that house. I didn't like the first, it was a big house, humongous; it was a two floor house and with attic. I didn't like the house at all.”

Veronica moved with her mother to another house. Her mother met and married another man and they moved back to Hartford, CT. Veronica lived there with her mother and step-father until the age of 14 or 15 when her mother and step-father moved back to Puerto Rico, leaving Veronica with a family friend. Over the next two years, Veronica’s father brought her to NY to live with him and then her mother returned from Puerto Rico and sent for her to come back to Connecticut. Her mother went back to Puerto Rico and Veronica came to Boston to stay with her brother. Veronica met her boyfriend, Miguel, at age 16 and when tensions rose between her brother and his wife, Veronica moved in the home with her boyfriend and his family.

Following this housing pattern of childhood residential instability, some respondents continued along a path of unstable housing into adulthood; others, like Veronica fought very hard to create stable housing environments for themselves and their children. Reflecting on her childhood experiences, Veronica explains that “When my mother left I changed. I felt bad; not like gangster but I was like rebellious. I did what I felt like doing; if they called my attention I misbehave. I think [that] is because she moved away and left me behind.” When asked how her childhood housing experiences influences the choices she makes regarding her children’s upbringing, Veronica states, “I don't want them to go through what I went through. I am very different with them in compare with my mother. I do things with them that she never did with me. My daughter is going for ballet classes. My 6-year-old child is going to go for karate. We do a lot of things together; we go roller skating, movies; we go to see shows on ice; and the circus; we share a lot together.”

Veronica lived with her husband for four years before splitting up due to Miguel spending too much time with his friends. After a year, the couple reconciled and were living together in a private



market rental apartment with their children at the end of the study. A home, for many like Veronica, is more than a place of shelter, it is also a place where memories can be made, daily rituals established, and identities formed (Burton & Lawson Clark, 2005). Others are unable to create such a homeplace, after growing up in highly unstable housing environments. Burton and Lawson Clark (2005) argue that the homeplace comprises individual and family processes that are anchored in a defined physical space that elicits feelings of empowerment, rootedness, ownership, safety, and renewal. Critical elements of the homeplace include social relationships that shape individuals' and families' sense of social and cultural identity.

Delilah, whom I introduced earlier, spent most of her childhood in Texas with her parents. When she was a baby, her father moved the family to Chicago where he had a brother. Unfortunately, the cold temperatures in Chicago did not agree with Delilah's father, so he moved the family back to Texas where most of Delilah's father's family lived. Around age 8, Delilah's parents began having marital problems and decided to send Delilah who was the eldest and her younger brother to Chicago to live with her maternal grandparents. Her two younger sisters stayed in Texas with Delilah's parents. After a year, Delilah and her brother returned to Texas where she states, "All hell broke loose" between her parents. At one point Delilah's mother tried to take care of all four children but then, she gave them to this lady. The lady watched a total of 12 children from the neighborhood. Delilah says that everyone looked for this lady because she lived across the street from the school. Delilah explained that her mother worked "way out across town" so this lady kept the children "day in and day out" for five years. While Delilah talked with her mother over the phone, she would go 4-5 months at a time without seeing her mother. Delilah's mother owed this woman a lot of money which went unpaid. Delilah later finds out that her mother was living with another man and that this man did not want Delilah and her siblings living with him.

When Delilah was 14, her mother left her common-law husband and moved Delilah and her siblings to Chicago. They lived with Delilah's maternal grandparents and aunt. Shortly after moving to Chicago, Delilah's mother sent for her common-law husband who moved to Chicago. Delilah's mother left the children with the grandparents and got an apartment with her partner seven blocks away. Delilah told her mother that she was "going to stay with her grandparents." She detested her stepfather and explained that the lady who used to care for her and her siblings in Texas "scared the hell out of me" by telling Delilah to "watch out because something can happen. He can force sex on you." After three years of living in Chicago, Delilah's stepfather got into some trouble and left Chicago to go back to Texas. Soon thereafter Delilah's mother followed.

Delilah and Veronica are two examples of the housing trajectories that were built upon childhood housing instability. One, Veronica, actively chose to change the cycle of unstable housing by creating a homeplace for her family. The other, Delilah, continued on a path of housing instability into adulthood. These stories offer a glimpse into the complexities involved in acquiring and maintaining stable housing that have diverse outcomes. Further, the stories demonstrate that housing instability and stability are multi-faceted and driven by a host of factors including interpersonal relationships, economic hardships, policy regulations, and personal choices.

The Stability of Public Housing

For those respondents who had relatively stable housing throughout childhood, I wondered



what their adult housing experiences looked like. First, I examine intergenerational public housing living. Many studies have examined the deleterious effects of living public housing developments, especially for children. Nonetheless, the *Three-City* data suggest that public housing continues to operate as a stable housing option for many low-income families. Many of our respondents grew up in public housing and relied upon it as a stable housing option. Janel, an African American mother of three, was 27 years old at the beginning of the study. Janel spent her first 19 years living with her mother in one of Chicago's public housing developments until her mother died. Janel had to find a place of her own to live after her mother's death. She was able to obtain a Section 8 voucher; however, had difficulty in finding a landlord that would rent to her. She described her experience, "Yeah, landlords sometimes do not want to rent out because of the person's age." She was about twenty-two years old when she first applied for Section 8. She explained that the landlords would give her problems while looking for an apartment by making excuses to not give it to her. For example, they would tell her that her credit did not pass or that they had already rented the apartment.

Janel was able to get a Section 8 apartment but complained to the inspectors that the apartment had rodents. She thought her complaints were going unanswered until one day a sheriff knocked on her door with eviction papers. She thought about arguing with the sheriff but decided that "it would only make matters worse." So, she moved in with her fiancée's mother for a few months until she could find another place to live. She described that living arrangement as "no problem...except that I don't like living in other people's houses." She described home as "a place where you feel comfortable. Mostly when I move that is what I look for comfortableness. You know transportation, everything is close because I don't drive, shopping areas, a place where you can move around, space, and be comfortable....Space, 'cause I like to have space so if my kids I get tired of them and they get tired of me I can go in my room and we just got our own space. Also, 'the way that it is made because I always wanted wooden floors instead of carpet. [Finally], having my own also added to that home feeling."

Janel, similar to Veronica above, is describing what Burton and Lawson Clark discuss in their homeplace article (2005). The stability of having grown up in one home all of her life has shaped Janel's concept of home as well as the decisions she makes when choosing a place to live. She continues her discussion of why she was so anxious to leave her fiancée's mother's home,

People have their own way of living that's why I like to be in my own house the way that she might do things I don't do things that way. And you can't control nobody house when your living there. I was just ready to go. Girl I couldn't find no U-haul, we drove for two hours until we found a U-haul. I was getting my stuff put out of there that day. As soon as the keys were put into my hands I was getting out of there...you can't go to nobody else's house changing stuff...I will pay whatever and do whatever to keep me and my kids. People try to raise your kids and they can't raise your kids because you already got your way set of raising your kids. When you move with somebody they look at things like she shouldn't raise her kids like that or they need a whooping for that...

Janel does not socialize much with others in her neighborhood and keeps a close watch on her children. She does allow her youngest daughter, Tanisha, (age 5 at beginning of the study) to go upstairs to her neighbor's house who has a little girl who does not take advantage of Tanisha



because Janel knows she will be safe there as well as over to her sister’s house. Janel instructs her daughter not to stop and talk with the boys lingering outside because they engage in “selling drugs, using profanity, and they just violent.” Janel says that she knows where her children are at all times. She prefers that they spend time in the house or in the backyard where Janel can see them. She has taught her children how to stay safe by encouraging them to stay alert—“if you see something about to happen, you better get away because you know you have no business being around that.” Janel is aware that the neighborhood she lives in is not the safest and she takes the necessary precautions in her daily activities as well as her oversight of her children. While she felt her previous neighborhood was safer, she prefers the amenities of her new place better—“Where I was at was kinda better because of the hanging out and shooting (referring to her current residence). They didn't have all of that on that block because it was majority houses and ... they probably had a lot of teenagers but not on that block.” However, she likes that her current apartment has “three bedrooms and two bathrooms, a washer and dryer, and that it had hardwood floors versus carpet.” Thus, for Janel, living in a higher crime neighborhood than her previous residence was justified by the amenities of her new residence.

Living Unstable in Public Housing

For some respondents, eligibility and access to public housing were not enough to stabilize their housing situation. Chronic substance abuse destabilizes the stability of public housing. Vivian, a 24-year old European-American mother of one son spent most of her childhood in San Antonio’s public housing developments with her mother. She describes her childhood as follows:

For me, it's real hard. Even though growing up I lived in the projects, growing up all my life with my mom, except when I was in junior high school and high school I went to live with my dad in South Texas. Beaumont. So I've had two different ways of growing up. I lived with my dad all over the country and stuff, and I'm an only child there. And I lived with my mom, where there was ten of us.

Vivian’s mother’s substance abuse was a major factor in her childhood housing instability. The family moved from public housing to shelters and back to public housing. She recalls, “My grandmother would always go get us out somehow. To the one [shelter] on the East Side, close to the Victoria Courts. It's the one that we would always go to.” Moving often affected Vivian’s education experiences—

Growing up here, I never stayed at one school for a certain amount of time. I only stayed there for like two years at the most. We moved around a lot here in the area, elementary and junior high. Because I remember I went to this school here, I went to Cooper, I went to [Bowlin], I went to Burnett, I went to a lot of middle schools and a lot of elementary schools, even one in Ft. Worth Texas. Over there in Ft. Worth, I learned to speak basic Cambodian. But that was years ago. There was a lot of Cambodian kids that were there in Ft. Worth. Of all the schools I went to, the one I got the most out of would be high school, because I stayed there for three years. It was a small town, everybody knew everybody. Some of the teachers, their own kids were working there in the school. I would say that everything I learned from school was probably from there.



Vivian describes how her mother's addictions affected her progress in school—

I used to be [a] honor roll student. In junior high school, my grades started dropping because my mom was an alcoholic. That's when she got into drugs. She was sniffing spray paint and all that crap. Growing up with my mom, when we were younger, it was us kids that we had to clean the house. We were the ones that had to do everything. We didn't have a washer, so we had to wash like four loads of clothes in the tub with the washing board. In junior high school, my train of thought was just like always screwed up. If it wasn't because my mom came home drunk, she was beating the crap out of everybody. The junior high school years, I remember all of them. But I didn't get anything good out of my junior high school years.

As a result, Vivian failed the 8th grade but instead of repeating the grade at the school, Vivian went to another school.

In trying to understand where Vivian's mother's addictions began, Vivian's memories are arranged by traumatic events over her lifetime. She explains—

My elementary was like that because my mom was an alcoholic at that time. She didn't do any drugs in elementary. There are a lot of things I remember from my elementary years, but then there are things I choose to not think about. I don't remember each year, I just remember certain times when I was younger. I can remember we would get up, whenever my mom would go drink, because my grandmother had a bar, and my grandmother would watch us while my mom was drinking and my mom would get fried. She would get drunk all the time. We used to hate it because whenever my grandmother was going to take us home, that the bar was closing, we always had to get out, because we would all sleep in one bed, in my grandmother's bed. We would have to get up in the middle of the night, everybody tired, we had to get the baby, and my mom was all drunk in the car, yelling at everybody, pissed off. Because growing up, since we were younger, like when my twin brother died when we were like two months old I think. When he died, my mother went nuts. They took her to the state hospital and she's been into the state hospital three times I think for suicide and stuff like that. On her arm she has like real big thick scars of where she would slash her arm. I don't think I even remember seeing that. I guess I was too small.

Another major traumatic event in Vivian's childhood was the death of her baby sister. She describes—

She drowned in the tub. It came out in the news. When there was Mayor Cisneros here, back in eighty-five, eighty-six. And they came out in the news where they were saying that this is what happens when you neglect your kids and stuff like that, because my mom wasn't there. She [baby sister] was like eight or nine months. My oldest sister was the one that was there, but everybody was asleep, except... I have a brother that's older than me and then another sister after him. She was the one that was awake. For years, she felt like she was the one to blame because of her death. She was the one that was watching her. But she had something on the stove that was burning, and she had her in the tub. That day, I remember that we took her out of the tub. My mom and my sisters were trying to resuscitate her. The cops came and the news got there, the mayor got there. My sister went hysterical, not right



then, but within that time. And within that time, my mom showed up with the baby's father. That's when we went to the shelter and my sisters, the older ones they took them to the juvenile, or to the police station. I remember being in the shelter when I was a baby, because I used to cry for my oldest sister. After that, they had her [baby sister] on a respirator for I think about a week, until finally they just said they were going to take her off. Because she wasn't breathing on her own. When we were younger, since I was an infant, they had me in the infant room and I would always cry for my sister. I was like about a year. I think we were in the shelter when I was small maybe two or three times. But I would always cry for my sister, so that's the only person that I would cry for. Even when I was in elementary school, I would cry for her in the middle of the night. I would make her wake up.

While Vivian's mother had romantic partners, Vivian states that "we never had like a man anywhere around the house." Vivian's mother did have one long-term relationship of eight years with one man who fathered five of Vivian's youngest siblings including the sister that died. Her oldest sister has a different father; the next three have one father, Vivian has her father, the next one after Vivian has her father, and then the youngest, a total of 12 living children. Before the younger children were born, Vivian's father's child support was the family's only source of income. Vivian remembers occasionally visiting her father on holidays and summer months, but explains that—

all those years that I was with my mom, my dad never knew that my mom was abusing drugs or that she would abuse us, that she would hit us, until one day I remember I wrote my dad a letter. And my mom found it. I was telling my dad I wanted to go live with him because my mom was using drugs. And my mom just got mad and said that I wasn't going to tell my dad anything, and blah blah blah. And then the case workers would come, because sometimes when my mom would hit us, she would leave us bruises and welts and stuff. And they would ask us that if my mom abused us. And we were so terrified of my mom, because we knew that if you said something that they weren't supposed to know, mom's going to kick your butt. We would lie for her.

Vivian did go live with her father for a couple of years when she went to high school. She describes her father's relationship with her mother—

He doesn't want to hear anything about her. I guess because he's mad, because all these years he thought that I was being taken care of by my mom, when really I wasn't. And I never saw any of my money all those years. For eighteen years he paid child support. He paid a lot of money. It wasn't through the court or anything. My mom almost killed him when I was a baby. There's a scar from here to here where she stabbed him. And he was almost dying I think. He was on his deathbed I think. But he ended up surviving.

Vivian still visits her father and has a positive relationship with him. Her housing experiences demonstrate the cumulative effects of substance abuse, childhood neglect, social interactions, and poverty on sustaining a stable housing environment.

Barriers to Social Capital



Another pattern emerging from the data is chronic housing instability where respondents cycle in and out various states of homelessness over their lifetime, disrupting or severing their network (family, social, and institutional) ties. Colleen is a 21-year old African American mother of two sons at the beginning of the study and was pregnant with her third by at the end of the study. All three pregnancies are fathered by different men. She grew up in Chicago’s Henry Horner public housing development with her mother until age 14 when she and her mother were evicted due to non-payment of rent. Since their eviction, Colleen and her mother have relied upon their family and social networks at Henry Horner for housing assistance, and in many instances, they lived apart. Colleen remained in a chronic state of homelessness where she has lived in homeless shelters, doubled up with family members and friends, as well as sleeping in the hallways of the Henry Horner homes.

Colleen had her first son at age 18 and since he was one-year old, they moved 17 times. Lacking a stable housing environment has made it difficult for Colleen to parent her children. Colleen is physically aggressive in her social interactions with others, including her children and their fathers. This aggression may be a coping mechanism she developed from living on the streets and needing to protect herself and later, her children. By the end of the study, Colleen’s youngest son, age three, was living with his paternal grandfather in Texas and her eldest son, age 6, was taken away from Colleen and put into a mental hospital for children. This resulted from a visit to the welfare office and Colleen’s case worker witnessing Colleen’s son throwing a tantrum and banging his head into the wall. The case worker suggested that the son be hospitalized but Colleen refused. After a follow-up visit to where they were staying, they case worker found out that Colleen was living in an abandoned building; therefore, mandated that her son be taken into custody.

Others in the study also experienced childhood housing instability resulting from childhood abuse and neglect which leads to adult domestic abuse and exacerbated housing instability. Children growing up with parents who grew up under these conditions have great barriers in their development. Natalia spent her first nine years growing up in one of San Antonio’s public housing developments. Natalia lived with her mother until she was nine years-old. Natalia’s mother then gave her to her aunt. Natalia’s other sisters got married and moved out of their mother’s home. When Natalia was 12 years-old she went to a shelter with two of her sisters. She explains the situation—“when parents can’t take care of themselves, and they can’t take care of their kids, so they sent us away.” She would see her mother every a month to six months at a time.

At 12 she lived in a girl’s home, where she stayed until she was 16. She explains: “I was too wild. I just didn’t want to live there anymore so I just left there on my own.” From there she went to live with her mom. Next, she moved with a man (not the father of her children) for four years in Houston. She came back to San Antonio when she was 18 because her mother got sick. At this time, Natalia began to live with her sister and was helping her take care of her 5 children. When Natalia got a job she moved out and went to live with some friends.

She got married in 1986 and moved to an apartment in San Antonio. When she found out she was pregnant they moved to a different apartment. Then they moved to a house, where they stayed for a year. She became pregnant again and they moved to another house. After Natalia had her second daughter, she broke up with her husband and moved to Alazan courts. She lived in her Courts apartment for ten years then she moved to another apartment within the courts. When



asked what made her house a home, Natalia responded: “Cause it was my own place and I didn’t have to worry about my husband telling me crap all over. I (could) come and go as I wanted. We just had fun living there.” Both of Natalia’s daughters have learning disabilities. It is unclear how Natalia’s housing instability relates to her children’s learning disabilities; nevertheless, frequent mobility creates barriers to needed services as well as social networks. Natalia’s barriers to housing stability began with her childhood housing instability characterized by her mother’s inability to care for Natalia and her siblings. Natalia describes, “My Mom didn't want us, so I put myself there [in a girls group home]. This living arrangement created a sense of isolation from family as a child that has continued into adulthood. Natalia explains,

That's how we were raised. [As to whether or not her children ever see their cousins]. They see them once in a while. My sister's son is in a shelter over in Beorne. He comes out here more often. His case workers come out here and drops him off. And he stays out here for the weekend or whatever. He is 16 years old...He's there because my sister couldn't take care of him, my mother couldn't take care of him, so. He was too wild.

The instability of family networks in Natalia’s childhood characterized by high rates of residential mobility continues in her adulthood relationships. When asked about her current relationships with family members, she responds,

They call once in a while, I call once in a while. See them once in a while, but most of the time I am working, so I don't have time. It's a lot calmer, it's more relaxed. My family calls me when they want something. If I have money, food to give them, a ride to take them here and there, mainly. My Mom does the same thing. She calls me when she wants money, or if she wants something, or if she wants me to take her somewhere.

When asked what family members she goes to for help, she responds, "I asked my brother to help to get me a place to stay, he told me no, he couldn't help me out, so we just kept it that way.” Thus, in her early thirties by the end of the study, Natalia had reached a point where she felt her housing had stabilized and her children’s needs could be met through the support of social services.

VI. Conclusions

The purpose of this report is to provide a better understanding of frequent residential mobility among low-income urban primary caregivers. The report describes the pushes and pulls of residential mobility among respondents in the sample. This understanding, in turn, offers a lens into how frequent mobility shapes the opportunities and barriers that parents pass on to their children. That is, residential mobility is determined, in part, by individuals’ access to social capital, a process outlined by Lin as—

human capital (education, experiences), initial positions (parental or prior job statuses), and ego’s social ties (e.g., extensity of ties) are hypothesized to determine the extent of resources ego can access through such connections (network resources). Further, network resources, education, and initial positions are expected to affect attained statuses such as occupational



status, authority positions, sectors, or earnings (1999: 470).

In examining one’s social capital, Briggs similarly argues that “having social capital is not simply about how many people you know, how close you feel to them, or what exchanges you enter into together, but about *where your contacts are in a social structure?*” (1998:186). Thus, in exploring housing instability among a group of low-income urban mothers, one is better able to locate the types of social support and leverage that mothers are able to garner in their search for stable housing.

First, the findings showed that the majority of residential moves across the sample were due to push mechanisms. These mechanisms, in order of prevalence in the data, included forced moves, union dissolution, household conflict, and overcrowding. Forced moves were driven by evictions, fires, foreclosures, and HOPE VI demolition. Evictions were mostly due to inability to pay rent. HOPE VI relocations were, to a lesser degree, resulted in forced moves for respondents. While many received relocation assistance, the moves were not devoid of stress and disruption of social ties for families. While affordability was a major push factor, the social relationship category including union dissolutions and household conflicts was another major push out of housing for respondents in the study. In her study of residential mobility among a sample of rural, upstate New York families, Fitchen found “65 percent of the total reasons given for the respondents’ most-recent move involve a combination of housing and social factors” (1994: 424). That Fitchen’s findings and the findings in this report are similar is further evidence of the role that poverty plays in residential mobility whether in urban settings or rural ones. Fitchen concludes, and I concur, that—

Poverty itself is at the root of the [residential] movement found in this study, both directly in terms of the inability to gain and keep adequate housing on inadequate income and indirectly in terms of the pressures and stresses that erode personal functioning and destabilize interpersonal relationships (1994:435).

Second, the most common pull into housing was family ties where respondents were able to learn about housing vacancies; acquire housing with financial assistance from family members; move closer to family members who could provide other non-monetary assistance such as childcare and sustenance; and temporarily move in with family members. A smaller proportion of pulls included opportunities for work and education; convenience to services and institutions; familiarity and stability of the neighborhood. Another pull was the military, especially for respondents living in San Antonio, who were able to secure housing with a family member who was in the military, and, in many cases, relocated with the service-member when he/she was re-stationed. In the majority of cases, family ties acted as social support, allowing respondents to cope with housing instability, but did not create long-term housing stability for families and children.

Finally, children faced several challenges and barriers, directly or indirectly, as a result of frequent residential mobility. Children who experienced pushes out of housing were more likely to have behavioral problems and educational delays, consistent with findings in the literature. However, children who experienced multiple stressors including frequent residential mobility, parental domestic abuse, parental substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, and physical and mental health recorded more behavioral problems. Due to these multiple stressors, it is difficult to point at direct causality. For instance, the data showed respondents living with abusive partners before choosing to relocate without the partner. While directionality cannot be proven, these respondents



reported depression, decreased parental involvement with children, and children acting out in school.

Children gained some benefits from mobility. Respondents spoke, at length, about their hopes for the future in finding housing where their children could grow up in neighborhoods where they could play freely, have access to good schools, and create strong networks. In many cases, as described by respondents, moving gave children a new, fresh start. Having to move under harsh conditions also helped teach children how to deal with adversity. One can argue that children, potentially, accrue more social capital via 1) the social leverage gained in neighborhoods where place attachment was salient; and 2) the social support gained by residing near other family members.

Housing instability does not occur in a vacuum and, rarely, is housing insecurity the only challenge that individuals and families have at any one time. Housing instability is as multi-faceted as the choices and behaviors of individuals who experience it. The report demonstrates the heterogeneity found among those precariously housed, the role of housing policies that create both barriers and opportunities for stable housing, and the extent to which a focus on building social capital via leverage and support may provide one solution toward housing instability. Ultimately, a call for a dynamic approach to successfully addressing housing insecurity among low-income urban families is needed.



APPENDICES

Table 1: Sample Characteristics, Ethnography (N = 256 Families) and Survey (N = 2402)

Characteristic	Ethnography		Survey~	
	N	%	N	%
City				
Boston	71	28%	926	39%
Chicago	95	37%	762	32%
San Antonio	90	35%	714	30%
Ethnicity / Race				
African American	98	38%	1009	43%
Latino/Hispanic	108	42%	1137	48%
Non-Hispanic White	50	20%	209	9%
Ages of Primary Caregivers				
15-19	21	8%	122	5%
20-24	67	26%	412	17%
25-29	62	24%	464	19%
30-34	36	14%	466	19%
35-39	35	14%	419	17%
40+	35	14%	517	22%
Education				
Less than high school	110	43%	843	35%
Completed high school or GED	67	26%	567	24%
College or trade school	79	31%	986	41%
TANF Status				
TANF	125	49%	894	37%
Non-TANF	131	51%	1499	63%

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TANF / Work Status					
TANF / Working	40	16%	170	7%	
TANF / Not Working	85	33%	688	30%	
Non-TANF / Working	64	25%	658	28%	
Non-TANF / Not Working	67	26%	814	35%	
Number of Children Primary Caregiver					
Is Responsible For					
1 Child	64	25%	530	22%	
2 Children	70	27%	775	32%	
3 Children	63	25%	570	24%	
>4 Children	59	23%	526	22%	
Children's Ages					
< 2	190	28%	769	12%	
2-4	174	25%	1214	19%	
5-9	205	30%	1712	27%	
10-14	88	13%	1931	31%	
15-18	28	4%	609	10%	
Total	685		6235		
Marital Status / Living Arrangements*					
Not married, not cohabiting	142	56%	1642	69%	
Married, spouse in home	42	17%	324	14%	
Married, spouse not in home/separated	24	10%	276	12%	
Cohabiting (any marital status)	43	17%	151	6%	



Table 2: Reasons for Residential Mobility

Reasons for Residential Mobility	
Categories	Subcategories
Social Relationships	
union formation/dissolution	new union Marriage separation/divorce Reconciliation Reunion
pregnancy	
family ties/support	
parent absent	
network ties	
domestic abuse	
household conflict	Arguments
Housing and Neighborhood Quality	
neighborhood	Drugs Crime bad neighbors Prostitution (specify which)
rodents/bugs	Maintenance
apt issues	construction quality
	Security
Space	Crowding Independence too much space
Affordability	
welfare reform	
job/wage changes	
rent/utilities too expensive	
forced move	Eviction Fire Foreclosure Hope VI DSS/CPS/DCFS
	intervention
discrimination	Redlining
purchased home	
Access to Resources	

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housing assistance	Approval public housing availability Transfer
housing availability convenience/proximity	Medical Childcare Transportation School
Opportunity	Job Job
familiarity/stability	Education School
temporary housing	Neighborhood

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