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Mobility Lessons from Gautreaux and Moving to Opportunity

Greg J. Duncan & Anita Zuberi

Research on the impacts of the Gautreaux residential mobility program was first conducted nearly two decades ago.¹ The purpose of this article is to provide an update on Gautreaux lessons based on a new wave of Gautreaux research. The recent research provides a much longer-run picture of residential and personal outcomes, and draws its data from administrative records rather than surveys. We also provide some comparison between results from Gautreaux and those from its sister program, Moving to Opportunity (MTO). We conclude with some thoughts about policy implications based not only on residential mobility research but also from evaluations of more general work-support programs that have been conducted in the past decade.

Gautreaux One is the name we give to the original Gautreaux program that moved thousands of Chicago families who were in public housing or on waiting lists for public housing to other neighborhoods in and around Chicago. It began in 1976 and ended in the late 1990s, with the bulk of its moves occurring in the 1980s (Figure 1).

The Moving to Opportunity experiment followed on the heels of Gautreaux One and was inspired by it. It was run by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in five cities, including Chicago, from the mid- to late-1990's. Similar to Gautreaux One, it provided

¹ For a comprehensive review of the history of the *Gautreaux* lawsuit, the implementation of the program, and early research results, see generally LEONARD S. RUBINOWITZ & JAMES ROSENBAUM, *CROSSING THE CLASS AND COLOR LINES: FROM PUBLIC HOUSING TO WHITE SUBURBIA* (2000). See also James E. Rosenbaum & Julie E. Kaufman, *The Education and Employment of Low-Income African-American Youth in White Suburbs*, 14 *EDUC. EVALUATION & POL'Y ANALYSIS* 229 (1992) and Susan J. Popkin, James E. Rosenbaum & Pamela M. Meaden, *Labor Market Experiences of Low-Income Black Women in Middle-Class Suburbs: Evidence from a Survey of Gautreaux Program Participants*, 12 *J. OF POL'Y ANALYSIS & MGMT.* 556, 573 (1993) for specific details on early employment and educational outcomes, respectively.

thousands of families in these five metropolitan areas with an opportunity to move to more affluent neighborhoods; however, MTO operated over a much shorter period of time than Gautreaux One. Finally, a new round of the Gautreaux program began in 2002. Thus far, it has moved hundreds, rather than thousands, of families, but not enough time has elapsed for us to be able to assess long-term outcomes in the program we call Gautreaux Two.

One important way in which the Gautreaux program designs differ from MTO's is that the Gautreaux programs were part of a legal settlement involving racial discrimination and designed to provide families living in highly segregated neighborhoods of concentrated poverty in Chicago the opportunity to move to much better neighborhoods, where "much better" was defined as more *racially integrated*.² In contrast, Moving to Opportunity targeted only *class*.³ It provided families with opportunities to move to more affluent neighborhoods, defined as those with poverty rates under 10 percent, but attached no racial criteria whatsoever to the destination neighborhoods.⁴ In fact, most MTO families moved to highly segregated, if more affluent, neighborhoods.⁵

Program evaluation. In evaluating the three programs, it is crucial to understand the nature of the comparisons that are being made. The potential impact of a housing mobility program can be defined by the difference between how a family provided with the program's

² The Gautreaux One program was designed to place families in neighborhoods with less than 30% Black residents. See RUBINOWITZ & ROSENBAUM, *supra* note 1, at 25. In 1981, program rules changed so that families could move to neighborhoods with more than 30% Black residents if the neighborhoods were deemed to be revitalizing. *Id.* at 40. The Gautreaux Two program incorporated both racial and poverty criteria for its moves; participants were placed in neighborhoods with less than 23.49% of the residents living in poverty and less than 30 percent Black residents. See Jennifer Pashup et al, *Participation in a Residential Mobility Program from the Client's Perspective: Findings from Gautreaux Two*, 16 HOUSING POL'Y DEBATE 361, 366 (2006).

³ See LARRY ORR ET AL., DEPT. HOUS. AND URBAN DEV., *Executive Summary of MOVING TO OPPORTUNITY: INTERIM IMPACTS EVALUATION* v (2003), <http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/MTOFullReport.pdf>.

⁴ *Id.* at ii.

⁵ *Id.* at viii.

mobility opportunities fared *relative to what would have happened to that family had it not been given those opportunities*. Since MTO's evaluation design is based on random assignment, it is well-suited for estimating program impacts. When families living in public housing in MTO's five cities were recruited for the program, they were told that they would be in a lottery in which they had a one-in-three chance of not being able to move in conjunction with the program.⁶ Essentially, a coin was then flipped, determining which families became eligible for the program and which did not. As a result, the fortunes of MTO control group families can be tracked alongside those of families in the program group.

There is no control group in the Gautreaux One program; research studies have only been able to study subgroups of families, all of whom moved in conjunction with the program. While the Gautreaux Two study follows families who both did and did not take up the program's offer of mobility assistance, the two groups were formed by self-selection rather than random assignment. The study designs of Gautreaux One and Two thus limit their capacity to answer the important policy impact question, although both are useful in addressing questions regarding program design and the role of the characteristics of destination neighborhoods.

Although control-group comparisons are not possible with Gautreaux One, a great deal of research has come out of the program.⁷ The best-known research studies compare the roughly half of program families placed in neighborhoods in the city of Chicago with the rest of the

⁶ A random lottery assigned MTO participants into three groups: Experimental, Section 8, and Control. The experimental group received a housing voucher which could only be used to move into a low-poverty census tract (i.e., less than 10 percent poverty). Counseling services were also available to assist the experimental group in finding a unit. In contrast, the Section 8 group received a housing voucher which could be used in any census tract regardless of poverty level, but they did not receive any counseling to help them. The control group did not receive a housing voucher or counseling through MTO, however they could move using other resources available to them outside of the program. For more information see ORR ET AL, *supra* note 3, at ii-iv.

⁷ Much of this research is summarized in RUBINOWITZ & ROSENBAUM, *supra* note 1.

families, all of whom were placed in Chicago's suburbs.⁸ More recent research has expanded these comparisons by examining families according to the poverty rates, racial characteristics and other features of their placement neighborhoods.⁹ As noted above, although counselors in Gautreaux One strove to place families in low-poverty, racially-integrated neighborhoods, there were in fact periods during its operation when it was very difficult to find housing in neighborhoods that met these criteria. About one-fifth of the families in Gautreaux One were placed in high poverty, highly segregated neighborhoods.¹⁰ The research compares the fortunes of the one-fifth of families placed in these neighborhoods with the four-fifths placed in more affluent and less segregated neighborhoods, some but not all of which were in suburban communities.

Long-run Gautreaux results. What have we learned from the more recent look at Gautreaux One? Its most stunning success is revealed by tracking families' addresses in the late 1990s, up to 22 years after their original moves. With two-thirds of Gautreaux One families placed in the suburbs still residing in the suburbs, there is great persistence in the residential successes of the families that moved as part of the program.¹¹ Even more impressive is the program's *intergenerational* residential successes: the children placed in the suburbs with their mothers, but old enough to be living on their own by the late 1990s, continue to reside in

⁸ See James E. Rosenbaum & Susan J. Popkin, *Employment and Earnings of Low-Income Blacks Who Move to Middle-Class Suburbs*, in THE URBAN UNDERCLASS 342, 356 (Christopher Jencks & Paul E. Peterson eds., 1991); Rosenbaum & Kaufman, *supra* note 1; James E. Rosenbaum, *Black Pioneers—Do Their Moves to the Suburbs Increase Economic Opportunity for Mothers and Children?*, 2 HOUSING POL'Y DEBATE 1179 (1994); James E. Rosenbaum, *Changing the Geography of Opportunity by Expanding Residential Choice: Lessons from the Gautreaux Program*, 6 HOUSING POL'Y DEBATE 231 (1995).

⁹ See Micere Keels et al, *Fifteen Years Later: Can Residential Mobility Programs Provide a Long-Term Escape from Neighborhood Segregation, Crime, and Poverty?*, 42 DEMOGRAPHY 51 (2005); Ruby Mendenhall et al, *Neighborhood Resources, Racial Segregation, and Economic Mobility: Results from the Gautreaux Program*, SOC. SCI. RES. (forthcoming 2006).

¹⁰ Mendenhall et al, *supra* note 9 (manuscript at 6, on file with the Northwestern Journal of Law and Social Policy).

¹¹ Keels et al, *supra* note 9, at 60.

neighborhoods that have lower poverty rates, have higher rates of educational attainment and are more integrated than the ones they originally lived in.¹² Figures 2 and 3 provide a more detailed look at the residential fortunes of Gautreaux One mothers and children. On average, these families came from very poor neighborhoods, with census tract poverty rates averaging 40%, the lower boundary commonly used to define concentrated-poverty or “ghetto” neighborhoods.¹³

On average, Gautreaux One cut these neighborhood poverty rates by more than half – to 17%.¹⁴ As of the late 1990s, both the mothers and the children were living in communities with poverty rates that were similar to their placement addresses – 16% for mothers¹⁵ and 18% for their grown children.¹⁶ The persistence of the residential success of families moving in conjunction with the Gautreaux One program is indeed striking. Looking to the racial composition of the neighborhoods (Figure 3), Gautreaux One families began in highly segregated settings: on average 87% of their neighbors in their origin communities were African American. The program placed its families in communities that reduced this percentage by two-thirds, to 30% African American.¹⁷ In contrast to rates of neighborhood poverty, the subsequent moves of Gautreaux One families were to somewhat different neighborhoods – on average, they contained a fairly even balance of African Americans and individuals from other races.¹⁸ Almost

¹² MICERE KEELS, THE GAUTREAUX RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY PROGRAM: CHILDREN’S SECOND GENERATION RESIDENTIAL ATTAINMENT 24 (2005) (unpublished manuscript, on file with the Northwestern Journal of Law and Social Policy).

¹³ See Keels et al, *supra* note 9, at 58. Poverty rates in Chicago’s public housing neighborhoods averaged more than 40% but about one- half of Gautreaux One families were on the waiting list for public housing and lived in somewhat lower-poverty neighborhoods. See RUBINOWITZ & ROSENBAUM, *supra* note 1, at 55-56.

¹⁴ Keels et al, *supra* note 9, at 62.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 69.

¹⁶ KEELS, *supra* note 12, at 15.

¹⁷ Keels et al, *supra* note 9, at 54.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 61.

none of the Gautreaux One mothers and children moved anywhere close to their original neighborhoods.¹⁹

Gautreaux Two began in 2002, so it is much too early to tell what long-run residential successes and failures these families will experience. But the early returns are not as promising as the long-run results from Gautreaux One (Figure 4).²⁰ At 13%, the average poverty rates in Gautreaux Two families' placement neighborhoods were lower than those for families moving in conjunction with Gautreaux One, but roughly half of the Gautreaux Two families have already moved on, with the movers moving to neighborhoods with poverty rates that averaged 27%.

Thus, it appears that the subsequent moves are undoing some of the initial advantages of the original moves. This is true with respect to race as well (Figure 5).²¹ On average, Gautreaux Two families came from communities in which 80% of their neighbors were African American and were placed in neighborhoods in which 11% of their neighbors were African American. But those moving again have moved to neighborhoods averaging 61% African American. All in all, it appears that the persistence of the residential success enjoyed by Gautreaux One families may not hold for Gautreaux Two families.

MTO results. The MTO evaluation gathered far more extensive information about the personal characteristics of family members than Gautreaux One researchers have been able to measure about families participating in its program. MTO experimental and control-group families were tracked for five years and then questioned extensively about their personal, family and neighborhood situation. Although control families were not given assistance in moving to

¹⁹ *Id.* at 60; *see also* KEELS, *supra* note 12.

²⁰ All of the data on Gautreaux Two mobility rates and neighborhood characteristics presented here were calculated by Micere Keels using program records and census tract information.

²¹ *See supra* note 20.

low-poverty neighborhoods, many of them did move. Given their interest in this program, it is hardly surprising that most control families moved to somewhat better neighborhoods, but their new neighborhoods had far higher poverty rates than the placement neighborhoods of the MTO families that moved in conjunction with the program. Neighborhood safety improved as well for the experimental group.²²

The most striking successes for MTO were in its inventory of mental health measures.²³ Considerably fewer MTO mothers were depressed than control mothers.²⁴ The reduction in depression was similar in magnitude to what has been observed in clinical studies testing best-practice depression treatment regimens.²⁵ This substantial improvement in mental health is not so surprising given what these families sought with the MTO program in the first place. Almost all families enrolling in MTO reported that their primary motivation in signing up for the program was moving away from violent, gang-ridden neighborhoods to safer ones.²⁶ Moving to neighborhoods with less crime and violence, which satisfies families' major program desires, is likely linked to the striking improvements in mental health.²⁷ Thus, by the criteria of what mattered most to the participants themselves, MTO was very successful.

MTO was much less successful in promoting self-sufficiency. Program designers hoped that MTO moves would improve mothers' employment prospects, reduce their welfare

²² ORR ET AL, *supra* note 3, at ix.

²³ ORR ET AL, *supra* note 3, at x; *see also* Jeffrey R. Kling et al, *Moving To Opportunity and Tranquility: Neighborhood Effects on Adult Economic Self-Sufficiency and Health from a Randomized Housing Voucher Experiment* (Nat'l Bureau of Econ. Research, Working Paper No. RWP04-035, 2004).

²⁴ Kling et al, *supra* note 23, at 20.

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ ORR ET AL, *supra* note 3, at ix.; *see also* Jeffrey R. Kling et al, *Bullets Don't Got No Name: Consequences of Fear in the Ghetto*, in *DISCOVERING SUCCESSFUL PATHWAYS IN CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT: MIXED METHODS IN THE STUDY OF CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY LIFE* (Thomas S. Weisner ed., 2005).

²⁷ *See* Kling et al, *supra* note 26, at 15.

dependence, and boost the school achievement of children.²⁸ On these counts, the results have been disappointing.²⁹ MTO families were no more likely to be employed, earned no more and received welfare no less often than families assigned to the control group.³⁰ Here it is important to remember that MTO's evaluation took place in the late 1990s, in the midst of welfare reform and a booming economy.³¹ MTO families did indeed boost their employment and reduced their reliance on welfare,³² but these changes were no different, on average, from those experienced by the comparison group.

Early evidence from Gautreaux One conducted by James Rosenbaum and his colleagues compared maternal employment rates for city and suburban movers and found substantial differences.³³ But our longer run look at employment and welfare receipt, drawing on data from the late 1990s, showed no employment advantages to being offered housing in a suburban as opposed to a city neighborhood.³⁴ Mendenhall et al. (forthcoming) demonstrate the importance of a finer-grain distinction among types of placement neighborhoods, with the lowest maternal earnings associated with placement neighborhoods with fewer whites and less favorable employment and welfare outcomes for the one-fifth of families placed in high poverty, largely African American neighborhoods.³⁵ Overall, the most recent evidence from MTO and

²⁸ ORR ET AL, *supra* note 3, at xi.

²⁹ *Id.* at xii-xiii; Kling et al, *supra* note 23, at 27-28; *see also* Jeffrey R. Kling & Jeffrey B. Liebman, *Experimental Analysis of Neighborhood Effects on Youth* (Nat'l Bureau of Econ. Res., Working Paper No. 483, 2004).

³⁰ ORR ET AL, *supra* note 3, at xii-xiii; Kling et al, *supra* note 23, at 27-28; *see also* Kling & Liebman, *supra* note 29.

³¹ ORR ET AL, *supra* note 3, at xi.

³² *Id.* at xiii; *see also* Kling et al, *supra* note 23, at 15-19.

³³ Rosenbaum & Popkin, *supra* note 8, at 356; Susan J. Popkin, James E. Rosenbaum & Pamela M. Meaden, *Labor Market Experiences of Low-Income Black Women in Middle-Class Suburbs: Evidence from a Survey of Gautreaux Program Participants*, 12(3) J. OF POL'Y ANALYSIS & MGMT. 556 (1993).

³⁴ Mendenhall et al, *supra* note 9.

³⁵ *Id.*

Gautreaux One does not replicate the dramatic employment differences observed in the original Gautreaux research.

Also disappointing, and this is also better established in MTO than Gautreaux, is that moves to better neighborhoods did not boost children's school achievement.³⁶ Part of the reason is that MTO-related moves improved neighborhood quality much more than school quality. Families that moved in conjunction with the program did not always attend a local school; all five MTO cities had citywide school districts with school choice programs. Despite the greater distance, some MTO families stuck with their familiar original schools.³⁷ Others appeared to pick schools that were close to relatives who might provide after-school care.³⁸ Whatever the reason, it is clear from the experiment that there was essentially no impact of MTO moves on school achievement. Even younger children, who were preschoolers when they moved in conjunction with the program, did not improve their school achievement relative to their control-group counterparts.³⁹ In the case of delinquent behavior, MTO appeared to benefit girls modestly.⁴⁰ In contrast, it increased delinquent behavior on the part of boys in families that moved as part of MTO compared with boys in the control group.⁴¹

Summary and conclusion. Drawing policy implications from Gautreaux One and MTO requires us to weigh the considerable successes with the disappointments. In terms of why

³⁶ Lisa Sanbonmatsu et al, *Neighborhoods and Academic Achievement: Results from the Moving to Opportunity Program* i (Nat'l Bureau of Econ. Research, Working Paper No. 11909, 2006).

³⁷ SUSAN J. POPKIN ET AL, U.S. DEP'T OF HOUSING & URB. DEV., *FAMILIES IN TRANSITION: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MTO EXPERIENCE* 92 (2002).

³⁸ *Id.* at 80.

³⁹ Sanbonmatsu et al, *supra* note 36, at 27.

⁴⁰ See Jeffrey R. Kling et al, *Neighborhood Effects on Crime for Female and Male Youth: Evidence from a Randomized Housing Voucher Experiment*, 120 THE Q. J. OF ECON. 87, 105-127 (Feb. 2004).

⁴¹ *Id.*; Kling & Liebman, *supra* note 29, at i; Susan Clampet-Lundquist et al, *Moving At-Risk Kids to Better Neighborhoods: Why Girls Fare Better Than Boys* (Princeton Indus. Relation Section, Working Paper No. 509, 2006).

participants were interested in the program, both programs succeeded admirably. Families successfully fled their violent, gang-ridden neighborhoods, and their mental health improved. But in terms of what many policy makers were hoping for – more work and earnings, greater independence from welfare, second-generation successes – the programs were not as successful. Merely changing neighborhoods, even changing to much better neighborhoods, does not produce the kind of achievement-oriented successes in either generation that many had hoped for, although Gautreaux One children were able to sustain the residential successes of their mothers.

Perhaps mobility programs need to go beyond merely placing families in better neighborhoods and provide them with needed family and personal services and supports. But here it makes sense to think more broadly, since low-income families involved in mobility programs are not the only ones in need of these kinds of family-based supports.

An example of such a broader program is a Milwaukee-based work support program called New Hope, which helps families making the transition from welfare to work.⁴² Workers who documented thirty or more hours of work were provided with a package of benefits that included an income supplement that brought family income above the poverty line, a childcare subsidy, health insurance, and a temporary community service job if people needed it to make their thirty hours.⁴³ New Hope provided a package of supports that made it possible for families, through full time work, to balance the kind of work and family demands that all families face. The New Hope package of supports would undoubtedly have helped many Gautreaux and MTO families, as well as many other low-income families.

⁴² Johannes Bos et al, *New Hope for People with Low Incomes Two-Year Results of a Program to Reduce Poverty and Reform Welfare* (1999), <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/60/execsum.html>; Aletha C. Huston et al, *New Hope for Families and Children Five-Year Results of a Program to Reduce Poverty and Reform Welfare* (2003), <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/345/overview.html>.

⁴³ Bos et al, *supra* note 42.

An important policy issue addressed in neither Gautreaux nor MTO research is their impact on receiving neighborhoods. Designers of both programs worried that individuals living in the receiving neighborhoods might be subjected to higher crime rates and/or lower property values. On the other hand, there might be potential spillover benefits to these moves if, for example, moving minority families into white neighborhoods helps promotes racial tolerance and understanding.

As we think about these three different programs – Gautreaux One, MTO and Gautreaux Two – we need to be mindful of cohort and housing market differences. Can the residential successes of Gautreaux One be realized today? Families moving in conjunction with Gautreaux One faced very different circumstances than families moving in conjunction with MTO and Gautreaux Two. Most Gautreaux One families were first or second generation residents of Chicago public housing; qualitative interviews document that most of them came from two-parent families. These backgrounds are considerably more favorable than those of families participating MTO and Gautreaux Two. Moreover, housing markets were different for the three groups, with many more apartments rented to Section 8 tenants during the eras of MTO and Gautreaux Two moves than when most Gautreaux One moves took place. Indeed, there is evidence that some apartment buildings in otherwise middle-class neighborhoods filled almost completely with Section 8 tenants.⁴⁴ It would be a hollow victory if the demolition of Chicago’s public housing led to its re-creation in the private housing market.

At the same time, it is crucial to realize the formidable opportunities provided by the residential mobility that follows on the heels of neighborhood revitalization efforts. Gautreaux

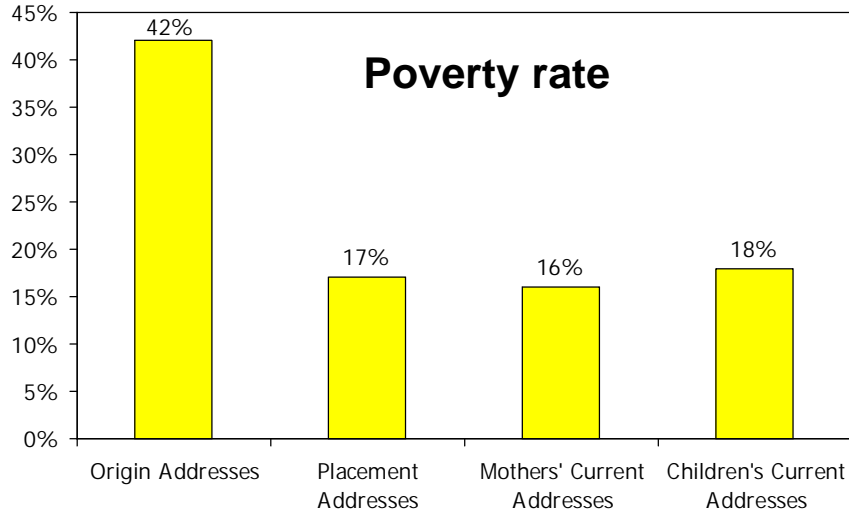
⁴⁴ David P. Varady & Carole C. Walker, *Vouchering Out Distressed Subsidized Developments: Does Moving Lead to Improvements in Housing and Neighborhood Conditions?*, 11 HOUSING POL’Y DEBATE 115, 138 n.30 (2000).

One proves that families – both adults and their children – placed in affluent, integrated and much safer neighborhoods are able to build new lives for themselves and maintain these residential successes. MTO and early results from Gaureaux Two suggest that neighborhood changes may be necessary but not sufficient conditions for improvement; many families in these more recent programs appear to need other supports in order to be truly successful.

Figure 1: Mobility programs

	<i>Gautreaux I</i>	<i>Moving to Opportunity</i>	<i>Gautreaux II</i>
Timing of moves	Most moves in 1980s	Mid- to late-1990s	Begun in 2002
Placement neighborhood criteria	Race only	Poverty only	Poverty AND race criteria
Randomly assigned control group?	No	Yes	No
Research comparisons	(i) City vs. suburban movers (ii) 20% moved to poor and black neighborhoods vs. others	MTO program group vs. control group	

Figure 2: Gautreaux I Census Tract Poverty Rate



**Figure 3: Gautreaux I Census Tract
Percent African-American**

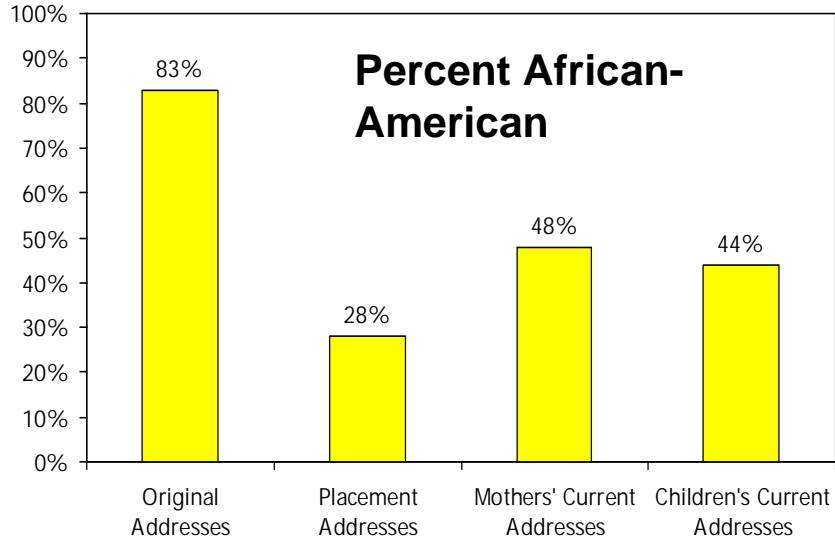
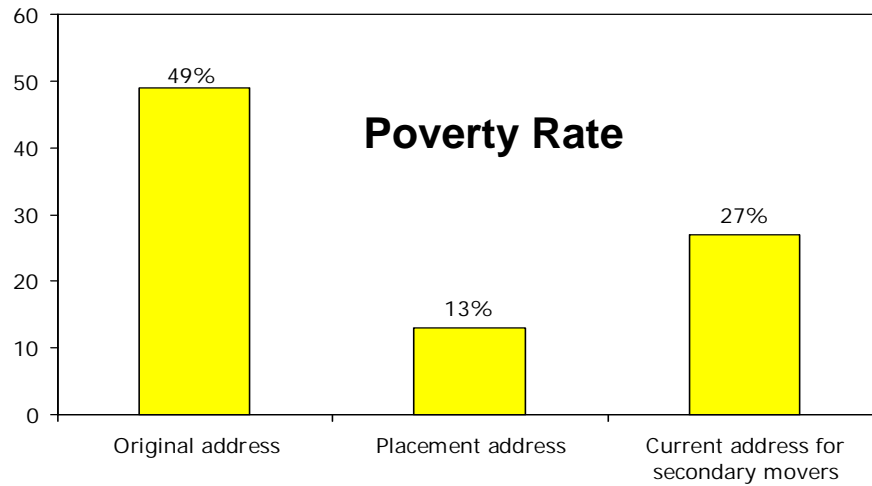


Figure 4: Gautreaux II Census Tract Poverty Rate



**Figure 5: Gautreaux II: Census Tract
Percent African American**

