
Housing Dispersal Programs

Edward G. Goetz

Current federal housing policy and the planning approaches of many local governments focus on the dispersal of subsidized families. There have been, in fact, two generations of dispersal policy. The first, occurring in the late 1960s through the mid-1970s, was part of the fair housing movement that was aimed at addressing issues of racial discrimination and suburban exclusionism in housing, and the second, dating from the early 1990s, is focused on deconcentrating poverty in American cities. Both generations of dispersal efforts, regardless of their differing justifications, use roughly the same policy strategies. This article reviews the policy history of housing dispersal and offers a schematic interpretation of different programmatic approaches.

Keywords: housing; dispersal; scattered site; mobility; subsidized

Current federal housing policy and the planning approaches of many local governments focus on the dispersal of subsidized families. Dispersal is seen as both an end in itself, helping to reform and improve the nation's stock of subsidized housing, and as a means of deconcentrating poverty in American urban areas. The current efforts constitute, in fact, a second generation of dispersal policy. The first, occurring in the late 1960s through the mid-1970s, was part of the fair housing movement that was aimed at addressing issues of racial discrimination and suburban exclusionism in housing. Both generations of dispersal efforts, regardless of their differing justifications, use roughly the same policy strategies. This article begins by offering a schematic interpretation of dispersal policy during the past thirty-five years. A typology of programs is used as the frame-

work for a discussion of the evolution of dispersal efforts in the United States. The bulk of the article presents the policy history of dispersal.¹

The first wave of dispersal efforts emerged at the end of the 1960s as a result of the "open housing" movement. Dispersal of subsidized housing was a way of reversing past discrimination and promoting integration. Thus, the first generation of dispersal marked a turnaround for the federal government and its housing policy. After decades of contributing to problems of residential segregation and discrimination, the federal government moved in the 1960s toward acknowledgment of the problems and some initial, hesitant steps to reverse direction. These steps included Executive Order 11063 signed by President Kennedy in 1962 ending discrimination in federally assisted housing programs, the *Fair Housing Act of 1968*, the creation of scattered-site public housing, the end of high-rise public housing developments, and the first steps toward support of regional housing initiatives to disperse subsidized units.

These first steps toward antidiscrimination and dispersal were halting and, for the most part, ineffective. The *Fair Housing Act of 1968* was limited in important ways and proved very cumbersome in the fight to end racial discrimination in housing (Massey and Denton 1993). Implementation of the act was undermined by

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TABLE 1. Housing Dispersal Programs

Target	Form of Housing Assistance	
	Tenant-Based Approaches	Unit-Based Approaches
Neighborhoods of concentrated poverty		HOPE VI Vacancy consolidation Vouchering out <i>The Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998</i> Mixed-income developments
Nontargeted	Section 8 Vacancy consolidation Vouchering out Regional opportunity counseling Portability	
Nonconcentrated neighborhoods	Mobility programs (Moving to Opportunity, Gautreaux, etc.)	Scattered site Fair share Other regional production programs

successive presidential administrations uninterested in pursuing enforcement and through cuts in enforcement staffing. Dispersal policy and scattered-site efforts have been similarly limited. Scattered-site public housing remained less than 10 percent of subsidized units in most cities (Hogan 1996). The Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) first regionalism initiatives of 1970-72, including support for regional councils of government and regional fair-share housing approaches, quickly evaporated in the face of suburban resistance. Dispersal, as a policy objective, was put on the back burner. HUD did not consciously return to the old practices of concentrating assisted housing, yet visible attempts to significantly disperse subsidized housing disappeared from the agency's agenda.

Ironically, efforts to disperse subsidized housing were waning at just the moment Congress created perhaps the most appropriate means of scattering subsidized households, the Section 8 housing allowance. This program was enacted in 1974 not as part of a larger desegregation and dispersal effort but more as a means of reducing costs in housing programs and distributing housing resources through the market.

When dispersal reemerged as a sustained and multi-dimensional approach, it was tied not to the issue of racial discrimination and segregation but to a "new" problem, the concentration of poverty in American cities. Henry Cisneros, onetime mayor of San Antonio, and President Clinton's first secretary of HUD, called "highly concentrated minority poverty urban America's toughest challenge" (HUD 1996, 1). In 1995, Cisneros toured the country and talked at each stop about the mistake in previous HUD policy of "warehousing poor people in high-rise buildings" (Hartung and Henig 1997, 404). The policy response to concen-

trated poverty has focused on scattering subsidized households across a greater geographic area within regions, providing families with a housing allowance (the Section 8 or Housing Choice Voucher) that allows them to choose their own units on the open market and does not constrain them to units financed by the public sector. Deconcentration has also meant, to a very significant extent, the demolition/conversion of existing units of subsidized housing and the forced relocation of assisted families to other neighborhoods, achieved through HUD's HOPE VI program and the "vouchering out" of project-based subsidies (the conversion of housing subsidies from project-based to tenant-based usually associated with the demolition or conversion of the housing to market rate).

Dispersal programs (of both generations) can be distinguished by their characteristics along two dimensions (see Table 1). The first is whether the subsidies are unit based or tenant based. This is important because unit-based subsidies have been highly concentrated in the nation's most distressed neighborhoods.² Tenant-based subsidies have been more widely distributed and are regarded by many as easier to use when introducing subsidized housing into communities that have previously had little (see Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2001).

The second dimension is how (or whether) the subsidies are targeted. Some dispersal programs work by deconcentrating families within neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. For example, HOPE VI takes previously high concentrations of poverty in older distressed public housing developments and transforms them into lower-density, mixed-income developments. Mobility programs, on the other hand, rely on tenant-based assistance and target their assistance in nonconcentrated neighborhoods by requiring families

to use them only in low-poverty areas. Some programs, such as the regular Section 8 program and mixed-income development, are untargeted in that they can be used in either high-poverty or low-poverty areas. "Vouchering out" works in both ways, breaking up concentrations of subsidized households by converting their subsidies to allowances that are then used in a nontargeted manner throughout the local housing market.

By highlighting the method of housing assistance and the programmatic target (if any), the typology in Table 1 helps to identify the potential impacts of different dispersal approaches. A reliance on measures targeting concentrated neighborhoods, for example, would reflect a redevelopment approach to dispersal in which segregation (income or racial) is addressed by dismantling communities of the poor (or of color). On the other hand, greater relative reliance on programs that work in nonconcentrated areas indicates a greater willingness to open up previously restricted markets.

The typology also serves as a means of identifying the level and source of potential political opposition. Tenant-based forms of assistance are much less visible and thus generate less resistance than project-based programs that typically require a process of public approval. At the same time, the level of opposition to assisted housing in more affluent and whiter neighborhoods (the lower, right-hand cell) is a long-standing characteristic of the American political landscape (and, indeed, what has contributed to the concentration of subsidized units in the first place). The redevelopment approach to dispersal (represented by programs in the upper right cell), if it generates political opposition at all, typically stimulates resistance from lower-income communities with fewer political resources at their disposal. Thus, Table 1 also identifies a scale of increasing political vulnerability for dispersal programs that flows from the top left to the bottom right cells.

FIRST-GENERATION DISPERSAL PROGRAMS

Scattered-Site Programs

For three decades from 1937 to the middle of the 1960s, the dominant model of public housing was the high-density "project." Although efforts to disperse public housing began as early as the 1950s (Hogan and Lengyel 1985; Chandler 1990), the Section 23 program, enacted in 1965, was the first significant program to facilitate a more scattered approach. Section 23 allowed local public housing authorities (PHAs) to lease private homes on a scattered-site basis to public housing tenants.

The shift to a scattered-site approach was gradual, however. In the 1960s, many of the officials who were running local housing authorities were simply not prepared to use their programs to achieve desegregation. One survey in 1967 found that close to one-half of PHA officials did not think that public housing should promote integration (Hartman and Carr 1969). Fewer than one-fourth of the housing authorities in the survey had initiated scattered-site programs by the end of the 1960s (Hartman and Carr 1969). Because most public housing authorities began their scattered-site programs in the early 1970s, scattered-site units constituted only 9 percent of all assisted housing by the early 1980s (Hogan 1996). After another decade, scattered sites remained less than 10 percent of assisted units in urban areas despite the fact that local officials generally regarded the programs as successful (Hogan 1996).

HUD received further impetus to move toward scattered-site housing from the courts. In the case of *Gautreaux et al. v. Chicago Housing Authority et al.* (1967), the court ruled that the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) had to end its policy of concentrating public housing in minority and poor neighborhoods. The court mandated that the city disperse future public housing throughout the city and, specifically, build it in low-minority neighborhoods. The CHA responded by refusing to build anymore public housing units for most of the following two decades. In the end, the court appointed a receiver to implement the scattered-site program, and more than 1,800 units were built. Community opposition to the program was persistent, however (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2001).

The growth of the scattered-site program across the county was limited by high land and property costs outside of core neighborhoods, the opposition of residents in the receiving neighborhoods, and the lukewarm commitment of local housing officials to the goal of scattered-site assisted housing.

In addition to embarking on dispersal in a limited way through scattered-site development, HUD moved away from the practice of building public housing in high-rises. In *Shannon et al. v. United States Department of Housing and Urban Development* (1970), the court ruled that HUD and local PHAs could no longer locate subsidized housing only in nonwhite areas (Tein 1992). HUD responded with regulations adopted in 1972 that restricted new construction of subsidized housing in nonwhite areas, except in cases where there were comparable opportunities for nonwhite families in white neighborhoods.

Fair-Share Housing Programs

Concurrent with these efforts to redirect the federal public and assisted housing programs, HUD and Con-

gress began to feel their way into supporting regional initiatives in subsidized-housing dispersal. During this period, several special presidential commissions focused on the exclusionary practices of predominantly white suburban areas and the lack of subsidized, affordable housing outside of central cities. The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, created in 1967 after the Detroit and Newark riots; the National Commission on Urban Problems (the Douglas Commission); the President's Committee on Urban Housing (the Kaiser Committee); and the President's Task Force on Suburban Problems each called for a greater dispersion of federally subsidized housing and specifically for greater development of such housing in suburban areas (Danielson 1976). The Kaiser Committee went so far as to suggest that HUD be given the authority to override local zoning regulations that were exclusionary in intent and effect. Even the Task Force on Urban Renewal, reporting two years into the Nixon administration, recommended withholding federal aid from communities that did not make an effort to expand low-income housing (Danielson 1976).

In the years following the *Fair Housing Act of 1968*, the federal government provided support and funds for the development of area-wide councils of government (COGs) and provided a brief period of support for the metropolitan dispersal of assisted housing (Keating 1994). HUD's Open Communities Program, for example, provided water, sewer, and infrastructure funds based on local governments' compliance with fair-share housing concerns.

Congress authorized COGs to review local applications for federal aid to ensure that proposed projects were consistent with regional development plans. The number of COGs nationwide grew dramatically in response to this new procedural requirement. Some COGs used this authority to downgrade applications from communities that had not made progress in meeting affordable housing goals. This mechanism led to the creation of fair-share housing programs in several metropolitan areas.

Fair-share programs, according to Listokin (1976), are designed to "improve the status quo by allocating units in a rational and equitable fashion. . . . A primary impetus for and emphasis of fair share is expanding housing opportunity usually, but not exclusively, for low- and moderate-income families" (p. 1). Because they require the cooperation of municipalities throughout a metropolitan area, fair-share programs typically are operated by regional governments.

The cities of Dayton, Chicago, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and others had brief experiments with fair-share housing programs (Keating 1994; Craig 1972; Listokin 1976). As the federal government withdrew

support, fair share became strictly a local initiative. It survived where there was sufficient local interest in assuring that subsidized-housing opportunities existed in an equitable fashion throughout the central city and the developing suburban areas. That is to say, it survived almost nowhere. Instead, and as with the dispersal of HUD-subsidized housing, fair share continued only where the courts demanded it.

The country's largest fair-share program in New Jersey is the result of a series of state Supreme Court rulings. The first Mt. Laurel case decided by the New Jersey Supreme Court in 1975 held that communities could not zone to exclude low-income housing. Two subsequent lawsuits were required to fully implement the court's mandate of regional fair-share strategies throughout the state. In 1985, the New Jersey legislature created the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) to oversee statewide implementation of fair-share requirements. Communities in New Jersey are assigned low-income housing obligations based on existing housing mix, present and projected employment, and amount of open land (Anglin 1994). The COAH was also responsible for setting time limits for compliance and was given the power to enforce its regulations. In the first six years of the program, the COAH had facilitated the development of fourteen thousand affordable housing units in New Jersey suburbs, or 9 percent of new housing construction in the state (Haar 1996).

The program allows communities to fulfill up to half of their low-cost housing obligation by paying other localities to build the housing. In practice, this has meant whiter and more affluent communities have paid poorer communities with greater percentages of people of color to take a portion of their obligation. Among the fifty-four such agreements reached in New Jersey between 1987 and 1996, all but one involved the transfer of affordable housing obligations from wealthier to poorer communities. The average sending community had a population that was 2 percent African American, whereas the average receiving community was 27 percent African American (Field et al. 1997). Suburban areas can fulfill the rest of their obligation by providing low-cost housing for the elderly and by imposing residency preferences that allow them to direct the units to families already residing in the community.

Among units that have been built in suburban areas, most are occupied by white families who had previously lived in the suburbs (Wish and Eisdorfer 1997). In fact, the amount of city-to-suburb dispersal of lower-income and minority households through the Mt. Laurel program has been minuscule. Wish and Eisdorfer (1997) traced the movement of more than 2,600 households and found that only 6.8 percent were families that

moved from the city to the suburbs. Less than 2 percent of the families were African Americans who moved from the city to the suburbs. When the movement of African Americans from the suburbs into the city is taken into account, there has been a net rate of African American dispersal of less than 1 percent.

Regional Housing Production Programs

Some local and state governments have instituted a variety of programs aimed at increasing the amount of low- and moderate-income housing in suburban areas of metropolitan regions. These include inclusionary zoning programs (e.g., Montgomery County, Maryland, and New Jersey) that require a percentage of units in new developments to be set aside for low- and moderate-income occupancy (Brown 2001; Mallach 1984; Boger 1996; Calavita et al. 1997), “builders’ remedies” (in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island) that provide opportunities for developers to appeal permit and zoning decisions of local governments (Morgan 1995), and state programs (such as those in California, New Hampshire, and Oregon) that require local communities to provide reasonable opportunities for the development of affordable housing (Morgan 1995; Cummins 1996). These objectives typically are achieved through incentives or through direct regulation of the development process. These programs shift the costs of supplying subsidized housing to developers and market-based home buyers and require a strong market to succeed (Polikoff 1997). If market conditions are met, the potential for significant production of affordable units in areas that traditionally, or otherwise, would not have them is considerable. In Montgomery County, Maryland, for example, one of the wealthiest suburban counties in the nation, more than twelve thousand units of low- and moderate-income housing have been built since 1974.

Gautreaux

The most notable lawsuit dealing with desegregation and deconcentration is the *Gautreaux* case. There were, in fact, two *Gautreaux* cases. In 1969, a U.S. district court found that the CHA discriminated in the placement and leasing of public housing and ordered it to provide additional units on a scattered-site basis in predominantly white areas. After an appellate court had ruled in a parallel case that HUD was also culpable, the Supreme Court ruled in 1976 that a metropolitan-wide remedy was possible (Rubinowitz 1992). As a result, the ultimate remedy that was adopted, or what came to be known as the *Gautreaux* program, encompassed the entire six-county Chicago metropolitan area in which HUD operated programs.

The metropolitan remedy allowed for the use of a then-new policy instrument, the tenant-based Section 8 certificate, by African American public housing residents in areas of the region that were less than 30 percent black. In the twenty years of the program, six thousand participants moved to mostly white areas.³ The majority moved into the city’s predominantly white suburbs (Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2001).

The program provided an orientation workshop, an initial credit check, and a home visit for interested families. A mobility counselor was assigned to each family to help locate potential apartments and to provide information the tenants would need after their move, such as referrals to local service agencies. Rubinowitz (1992) argues that many families would not have participated had it not been for the counseling element of the program. To get landlords to participate, the program screened applicants for them. In addition to the credit checks and home visits, the program also required letters of reference for each applicant. Participating landlords were assured of both confidentiality and the fact that the program would avoid reconcentrating participants (Rubinowitz 1992).

Program officials consciously attempted to keep the program low profile. Careful screening of families and limits to the number of families relocated in any given community were established to avoid political backlash in the receiving communities and to retain as much as possible the “invisible” nature of housing allowances.

Despite criticisms of the design of the research that showed positive outcomes for *Gautreaux* families, the experience of the program convinced many that mobility programs that integrate landlord recruitment, tenant counseling, and placement services could begin to overcome patterns of residential segregation and improve the lives of poor families (Goering et al. 1995).

Section 8 Program

In 1968, the President’s Commission on Housing, known as the Kaiser Commission, recommended a form of housing allowance for lower-income families. The argument in favor of tenant-based assistance focused on three matters, only one of which was related to its potential to reduce the levels of segregation by race and poverty that characterize unit-based housing assistance programs. The main argument in favor of Section 8 was the growing criticism that unit-based programs were too costly and not serving enough families. In addition, tenant-based assistance was favored because it allowed families a greater level of choice in units and neighborhoods and represented less interference in the private market (Friedman and Weinberg 1983).

Consideration of tenant-based forms of housing assistance dates to the formation of the public housing program in 1937 (Friedman and Weinberg 1983). Congress considered a program of tenant-based assistance when creating the *Housing Act of 1937* and again in 1944. In both cases, Congress decided that slum clearance and the construction of more and newer housing units to deal with a shortage that had emerged during the Great Depression and grown during the war were the national priority. Furthermore, housing allowances might merely subsidize profits in slum neighborhoods (Friedman and Weinberg 1983; Semer et al. 1976). The idea did not go away, however. Congress considered and rejected the idea again in 1949 and 1953. The riots of the 1960s highlighted the extent of residential segregation and substandard housing conditions for the poor in central cities and brought the dispersal potential of housing allowances to center stage (Hartung and Henig 1997).

Although no immediate action was taken on the Kaiser Commission's recommendation, Congress authorized a national experiment in the use of tenant-based assistance in 1971. Called the Experimental Housing Allowance Program (EHAP), the initiative was meant to run for the better part of a decade, and the results were to be used to determine if a national program would be created. However, Congress and the Nixon administration decided in 1974 to not wait for the results and created the Section 8 program. The program was expanded in the 1980s to include vouchers as well as certificates.

Section 8 of the *Housing and Community Development Act of 1974* consisted of three separate housing assistance programs. The Section 8 New Construction and Section 8 Substantial Rehabilitation programs worked very much like the old project-based programs in which the subsidy was tied to the units built (or rehabilitated). The Section 8 existing program was the truly tenant-based subsidy in which the household could use the certificate in the marketplace. The tenant-based Section 8 program caught on quickly and in just five years became the nation's second largest low-income housing program behind public housing (Rasmussen 1980).

The program worked by allowing certificate holders to rent any unit in the market that met quality standards and rented at or below a HUD-established fair market rent (FMR) for that region. The certificate paid for the difference between the market rent of the unit and 25 percent of the household's income. In 1982, the certificate formula was changed so that households were responsible for paying 30 percent of their incomes. FMRs are adjusted annually by HUD, and the legislation established that FMRs were to be set at the median rent for units of similar size in each regional market. In

1984, FMRs were reduced to the 45th percentile, and in 1995, they were reduced again to the 40th percentile (Turner 1998).

VOUCHERS

In 1983, Congress, at the urging of the Reagan administration, created a demonstration program of housing vouchers. Vouchers were similar to Section 8 certificates, except that they had fewer geographic restrictions (certificates were limited to the jurisdiction of the local agency that administered them, whereas vouchers were valid throughout the United States) and families could rent units above the FMR if they absorbed the extra cost (and thus paid more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing). In 1999, Congress merged the certificate and voucher programs retaining most of the features of the vouchers.

Over time, the emphasis and expenditures of federal housing policy have shifted from building units to providing housing allowances (Struyk 1991; McClure 1998; Hartung and Henig 1997). The ratio of vouchers and certificates compared to project-based assistance (including public housing) shifted from 0.6 in the 1970s to 4.75 by the 1990s (Hartung and Henig 1997). By 1997, 72 percent of new federal rental assistance funds went to tenant-based subsidies and only 28 percent to project-based programs (McClure 1998), and roughly one-third of all households assisted by the federal government received allowances (Newman and Schnare 1997; McClure 1998).

Section 8 vouchers form the basis of the mobility approach now favored at the federal level. The record of Section 8 shows a much greater dispersion of assisted households compared to project-based programs. This effect was accentuated with the introduction of vouchers, allowing families to venture into neighborhoods where prevailing rents were above FMR limits. Because households receiving tenant-based assistance are more evenly distributed across metropolitan regions than are residents of project-based subsidized housing, the overall geographic dispersion of HUD-assisted households has increased over time (Gray and Tursky 1986).

PORTABILITY

During the 1970s, HUD took some preliminary steps to encourage the use of Section 8 certificates across jurisdictional boundaries. HUD's voluntary Areawide Housing Opportunity Plan encouraged municipalities within metropolitan areas to collaborate in planning for low-income housing and to facilitate cross-jurisdictional mobility by certificate holders (Tegeler et al. 1995, 456). The Regional Housing Mobility Program, designed to assist area-wide planning organizations in facilitating the interjurisdictional mobility of low-income and

minority households, was abandoned by HUD at the beginning of the Reagan administration (HUD 1994).

In 1987, Congress amended Section 8 to allow certificate holders to use their subsidies throughout the metropolitan area in which the subsidy was issued or in a contiguous metropolitan area. In 1990, Congress expanded the so-called portability provision to allow statewide mobility by certificate holders. Despite these changes, most local housing authorities did not implement portability guidelines quickly (Donovan 1994). A national survey in 1991 found that only 3 percent of Section 8 certificates and vouchers had been ported across jurisdictional boundaries (Polikoff 1997).

Portability was not vigorously adopted by local housing authorities for several reasons (Turner 1998). The first is the policy followed by many local authorities of establishing residency preferences for admission to the Section 8 programs. An internal HUD survey of its fifty-one field offices found that 42 percent of 2,541 local public housing authorities had such residency preferences (Tegeler et al. 1995). Tegeler et al. (1995) argue that "the practice of ranking current local residents above out-of-town applicants may be the single most significant factor excluding eligible minority households from access to Section 8 subsidies once the certificates have been allocated to a region" (p. 21). In addition, the program often resulted in a loss of administrative revenues to local authorities each time a resident "ported out."

In 1992, Congress pulled back on portability, requiring recipients who did not already live in the jurisdiction of an issuing housing authority to remain within that jurisdiction for at least twelve months before moving with it (Schill and Wachter 1995; Tegeler et al. 1995). Portability is now a permanent feature of the new Housing Choice Voucher program (the new name for the Section 8 program since 1998).

SECOND-GENERATION DISPERSAL

In the early 1990s, as the concentration-of-poverty argument was reaching ascendancy, the framework for federal housing policy shifted. Congress began not only to recognize the "failures" of public housing but began to associate those failures with an emerging understanding of concentrated poverty as the driving problem in American urban areas. In 1988, along with encouraging portability in Section 8, Congress created the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing. Legislators were looking for a way to change the face of existing public housing by looking at options for the worst such housing in the stock and by increasing the income diversity of public housing residents. The new Clinton appointees brought this same

framework with them in 1993, and throughout most of the 1990s, HUD policy moved toward a paradigm that emphasized dispersion. The work demonstrating the connection between federal housing policy and concentrated poverty (see Massey and Kanaiaupuni 1993; Holloway et al. 1998; Carter et al. 1998) provided the larger rationale for dispersion. HUD was not simply correcting old mistakes; it was addressing what it regarded as the most significant problem facing American cities at the end of the century.

The second generation of dispersal has been a two-pronged approach. On one hand, there is a strong reliance on "mobility programs" that use tenant-based Section 8 subsidies to move families out of neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. These programs are part of a larger shift in federal housing subsidies from project-based to tenant-based assistance that has been taking place for more than twenty years (Nenno 1998). On the other hand, there has been a concerted effort to redefine and redevelop existing public and assisted housing projects by introducing a greater mix of incomes and uses at the project sites and by improving site design to encourage community building within the projects (Popkin, Buron, et al. 2000; Epp 1996).

Mobility Programs

Programs that combine Section 8 tenant-based assistance with mobility counseling and other special efforts (or special program requirements) to deconcentrate subsidized households are referred to as "mobility programs." Mobility programs go beyond the regular Section 8 program in any of three different ways: (1) participants who volunteer for the programs are *required* to move to nonconcentrated neighborhoods, (2) they incorporate forms of mobility counseling in order to assist households in choosing neighborhoods they would not necessarily have chosen without greater information, and (3) the programs include an active recruitment of landlords in neighborhoods not traditionally receptive to Section 8 families.

As described earlier, the barriers to interjurisdictional mobility using Section 8 are significant. Suburban communities often establish residency preferences for Section 8 and other assisted housing programs that work to reduce opportunities for central city residents to take advantage of subsidized housing in the suburbs. PHAs cannot own or operate facilities outside of their jurisdiction unless they enter into agreements with housing authorities in those areas, which have been rare (Polikoff 1997). Mobility programs are attempts to overcome the limited amount of dispersal typical of the regular Section 8 and public housing programs.

There are five major categories of mobility programs currently in operation in the United States (Turner 1998). The first is the result of recent efforts on the part of the federal government to shift project-based subsidies to tenant-based assistance. In HUD-subsidized buildings that are no longer financially viable, or that have high vacancy rates, or in which the project-based subsidies have expired or are prepaid, families are given Section 8 vouchers in a process called "vouchering out." These families are then assisted in using these vouchers on the open market, relocating to a neighborhood and housing unit of their choice. I include this in the category of a mobility program because of the counseling provided to households and because one of the major policy objectives in vouchering out is to disperse subsidized households.

The second category of mobility program stems from a set of litigation settlements across the country. These lawsuits were typically filed as housing discrimination cases in which it was alleged that the local housing authority and HUD willfully and negligently segregated subsidized housing projects in predominantly minority neighborhoods (Popkin, Galster, et al. 2000). The most famous of these suits is the *Gautreaux* case resulting in a mobility program that became a national model for other efforts. More recently, HUD has taken to settling these cases out of court where possible (Hartman 1995). Many of the resulting consent decrees incorporate *Gautreaux*-like mobility efforts.

The third category of mobility program is the federal government's Moving to Opportunity (MTO) program. This demonstration program, enacted by Congress in 1992, was influenced by the documented outcomes of the *Gautreaux* program and incorporated many of the features of the *Gautreaux* effort (Briggs 1997; Stoll 1999). Fourth, HUD has created several Regional Opportunity Counseling programs around the country to promote collaboration in Section 8. These programs combine landlord recruitment and mobility counseling to enhance dispersal (Williams 1998). Finally, there are a variety of local programs around the country, such as the Hartford voluntary program (Donovan 1994), that combine elements of counseling and placement to facilitate the mobility of low-income households. In all, there are more than fifty of all types of programs operating in more than thirty-five metropolitan areas across the country (Briggs 1997; Williams 1998).

Moving to Opportunity

The MTO program was authorized by Section 152 of the *Housing and Community Development Act of 1992*. Congress appropriated \$20 million in 1992 and another \$50 million in 1993 for the program. Authorized as a demonstration program, MTO operates in five cities:

New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, and Baltimore. The program is designed to provide Section 8 tenant-based assistance to families living in public housing or project-based Section 8 in areas with high poverty concentrations (greater than 40 percent of residents below the poverty level) (HUD 1999, 1996). Although modeled after *Gautreaux*, MTO differs from that litigation-based program in one important way: the receiving neighborhoods are defined by their degree of poverty, not by their degree of racial concentration. Similar to *Gautreaux*, however, MTO uses nonprofit agencies to recruit landlords to participate and to provide screening of program participants, mobility counseling, and support in the search and resettlement process (HUD 1999, 1996). The program was operational in all five cities by February 1995. Each of the five local housing authorities established a waiting list of those eligible for MTO and then proceeded with recruitment and the random assignment of volunteers to one of three groups—the MTO experimental group, the Section 8 comparison group, and the stay-in-place control group. The experimental group members were referred to the nonprofit counseling agency to begin their counseling and search for housing. They were given Section 8 tenant-based subsidies and were required to relocate into census tracts where less than 10 percent of the population was below the poverty level. The Section 8 comparison group was also given a Section 8 certificate but thereafter treated no differently than any other regular program participant. Thus, their housing search was not restricted to low-poverty areas, and they received no special mobility counseling. Finally, the in-place control group members remained in their public housing or project-based Section 8 units (HUD 1999, 1996). Program participants were randomly assigned to one of the three experimental groups to determine more precisely whether differences in outcome that occur across the groups are attributable to the counseling and assistance received by the treatment. HUD (1999, 1996) plans to monitor the families during a ten-year period to document their educational, employment, and social experiences.

The program implementation was delayed in Baltimore when local political candidates publicized the program and generated strong opposition in some inner suburbs (Moberg 1995). Ironically, these suburbs were not eligible to actually receive MTO families because their poverty rates exceeded 10 percent. The trouble was such that Maryland's two senators succeeded in cutting future funding for the program.

The initial studies of MTO participants indicate significant benefits to families who move to nonconcentrated neighborhoods in terms of greater neighborhood satisfaction and reduced fear of crime (HUD 1999; John-

son et al. 2002). Other studies show gains in employment and earnings in some cities but not in others (Hanratty et al. 1997; Rosenbaum et al. 1998). Similarly, the experience of children in their new schools is mixed, with improvements in some areas and not others (Norris and Bembry 1998; Ludwig et al. 2001).

Vouchering Out

Vouchering out occurs when HUD project-based assistance is terminated either through a building conversion to market rate rents or through a demolition of an older project, and the displaced households are provided with tenant-based subsidies to use when finding a new apartment. Typically, families that are vouchered out are given some form of mobility or relocation counseling and assistance. As Polikoff (1997) argues, programs that demolish housing units and replace them with Section 8 certificates have the largest impact on “eliminating localized poverty clusters” (p. 20). Vouchering out is significantly different from other mobility programs in that the families are involuntarily displaced from their homes. This can have important implications for the experiences of the families who move.

Varady and Walker (2000) report that long-term residents and older residents were the least happy to move from four sites studied by HUD. Vouchered-out residents also tended to move into nearby neighborhoods rather than disperse widely. This same study reports enhanced satisfaction among residents who were vouchered out, less fear of crime, but no employment impacts (Varady and Walker 2000).

Redefining Public and Assisted Housing

HOPE VI

The National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing reported in 1992 that approximately 86,000 units, or 6 percent of public housing, could be considered severely distressed. Congress reacted to the commission’s report by authorizing HOPE VI in the same year. The program was aimed at eliminating the worst public housing developments in cities across the country. In order for this to occur, HUD and Congress revised several important policies related to public housing. The first was the one-for-one replacement law, originally a part of the *Housing and Community Development Act of 1987*, requiring housing authorities to produce a new unit of affordable housing for every one they demolished. In addition, HUD eliminated the set of federal preferences that reserved public housing for the lowest-income households (Salama 1999).

The program works primarily to demolish or rehabilitate large and troubled public housing projects,

redeveloping the sites into lower-density, mixed-use, mixed-income developments. The redevelopment usually includes some units of public housing on-site but also results in the conversion of many public housing families into Section 8 voucher holders. Thus, the program results in a net loss of public housing units, reduces concentrations of subsidized families, and contributes to the general federal conversion to household-based forms of housing assistance. HOPE VI projects typically result in triple deconcentration: there are fewer public housing units on-site, they are mixed with more nonpublic housing units, and the income mix within public housing is greater than before.

The one-for-one replacement law was the largest obstacle to the implementation of HOPE VI. This rule, combined with the lack of federal funding for the development of new units, made the demolition of dysfunctional public housing developments virtually impossible (Williams-Bridgers 1994). The program could not result in any large-scale activity until the replacement requirement was repealed. HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros was instrumental during the first two years of his administration in trying to convince fellow Democrats to waive the rule for public housing. One Senate Republican aide said the secretary was “doing what no Republican Housing Secretary could have gotten away with” (Weisman 1996, 2517). Cisneros advocated the repeal of the rule even before the 1994 election gave Republicans the majority and threatened the very future of HUD. After the election, however, “every word out of Cisneros’ mouth . . . is about the need for demolition” (Weisman 1996, 2517). One-for-one replacement was eliminated in 1995 and permanently repealed in the 1998 public housing bill.

In the first three years of the program, only PHAs from the forty largest cities or PHAs on HUD’s list of troubled housing authorities were eligible for HOPE VI funds (General Accounting Office [GAO] 1997). There was little doubt from the beginning that the biggest impact of HOPE VI would be in the demolition of thousands of units of public housing. Initial HUD targets were to demolish 100,000 units of public housing by the end of the century. Almost 25,000 were demolished by the end of 1996 (Weisman 1996). The first five years of HOPE VI projects were designed to demolish 37,449 units of public housing and replace 27,526 (GAO 1997). The difference was to be made up in vouchers for families who had previously inhabited public housing (GAO 1997). By the end of the 1990s, HUD had planned to replace roughly 60,000 of the 100,000 they wished to demolish. Although replacement housing is a goal of the program, HOPE VI does not provide funding for it. PHAs are required to channel other sources of public housing funds into the replacement housing. In

Atlanta, for example, there were plans to build replacement housing off-site using the cash flow from the profitable on-site HOPE VI housing (Salama 1999).

In practice, the scope of HOPE VI has extended beyond the most "severely distressed" projects to include any public housing development in which demolition and replacement costs are similar to rehabilitation costs. In some cities, these guidelines would have virtually remade the face of public housing. In Chicago, which had a high percentage of distressed public housing projects, HUD guidelines called for demolition of 18,000 of the city's 41,000 public housing units (Wright 1998). Many of the city's most notorious public housing projects are to be demolished under HUD plans. The Robert Taylor Homes are to see the demolition of more than 4,000 units with only 1,276 rebuilt (Rogal 1999). On the city's north side, Cabrini-Green is slated to lose 1,200 units with less than 600 being rebuilt (Bennett and Reed 1999). There is some evidence that HOPE VI is failing to deconcentrate significantly because (1) it is being applied to less-distressed public housing projects, (2) the most common destination for displaced families is other public housing, and (3) those who are given vouchers are simply moving to other neighborhoods of high-minority and poverty status (National Housing Law Project 2002; Rumbler 1998).

Residents who are displaced by the HOPE VI program are, like voucher-out households, involuntarily dispersed. There are two important implications of this. First, it reduces the enthusiasm that program participants may have for the program. Second, because involuntarily displaced households are not forced to relocate to nonconcentrated neighborhoods, the degree to which families are dispersed is limited, and the experiences that they report in their new communities are less positive compared to participants in voluntary programs (Goetz 2002b). Another group of HOPE VI participants stay in whatever public housing units are rehabilitated and maintained on-site, and so they experience deconcentration in place similar to those in mixed-income developments.

The program's heavy reliance on demolition and forced dispersal have produced significant opposition in some cities, and as some observers have noted, an unsettling resemblance to the old urban renewal program (Keating 2000; National Housing Law Project 2002).

Mixed-Income Developments

Mixed-income developments (referred to as mixed-income new communities, or MINCS; see Schill 1997) are attempts to create and maintain a greater range of incomes within a single subsidized project. The

Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act of 1990 authorized four public housing authorities to lease up to half of the units in selected developments to families with low, but not very low, incomes (Schill 1997). The public housing reform bill of 1998 (the *Quality Housing and Work Reform Act*) institutionalizes the mixed-income approach. The act directs PHAs to reserve as little as 40 percent of public housing units for the very poor, opening up the rest for families with higher incomes (up to the public housing income ceiling, of course). At the same time, the act tries to facilitate the deconcentration of the poor by setting aside 75 percent of all new Section 8 subsidies for very low-income households (Popkin, Buron, et al. 2000).

What separates the mixed-income model from scattered-site housing is that it reverses the dispersal model. Instead of mixing low-income people into wealthier neighborhoods, it attempts to attract higher-income groups into more disadvantaged communities by offering attractive housing options in previously concentrated project areas. This formula requires several elements to be successful. The developments must offer amenities attractive to market-rate residents, and the projects must be considered safe, thus necessitating strict enforcement of management rules and tenant screening (Schill 1997).

Mixed-income developments and recent reforms in the resident preferences for public housing signal a return to the original premise of public housing (Nyden 1998). Public housing was originally meant as a way station for the working poor. Over time, resident preference policies ensured that the program was targeted to the neediest families, whereas changes in the fiscal structure of the program and in the larger urban political economy ensured that the experience was long term and even multigenerational for some families (Spence 1993).

The rationales for a mixed-income approach to subsidized housing are similar to those for dispersal programs; communities are simply not viable without a cadre of employed residents to sustain businesses, provide role models, and increase social capital. A greater mix of incomes allows the public housing to fit more completely into the surrounding community; that is, it reduces the chances that the public housing will be seen as a pocket of disadvantage within the larger community. Finally, according to the neighborhood effects argument, there is the expectation that very low-income households will benefit from the inclusion of higher-income families in the projects they inhabit (Nyden 1998).

On the other hand, there is reason to expect little integration of groups in mixed-income developments. Studies of mixed-income projects have found that in

many cases, mixed income means simply “having two populations living side-by-side with little interaction” (Rosenbaum et al. 1998, 71; see also Brophy and Smith 1997). The literature on mixed-income housing does not provide guidance on the conditions under which middle-income households will reside in mixed-income developments, the specific income mixes that work best, or (and most fundamentally) what the impacts are on poor households (Schwartz and Tajbakhsh 1997).

Desegregation Lawsuits

Although the Gautreaux cases are the oldest and perhaps best-known court cases alleging discrimination and segregation in public housing, a number of other lawsuits have been filed in cities across the country. During the Clinton administration, HUD decided to settle with plaintiffs whenever possible. HUD has entered into consent decrees in more than twelve of these cases nationwide. Although the settlements differ in detail, there are several common themes that run through them all. Typically, the settlements call for the demolition of some public housing, construction of scattered-site replacement housing, and the development of mobility programs (with counseling) in which those in the plaintiff class are provided with tenant-based assistance to make desegregative moves (Popkin, Galster, et al. 2000). In addition, several of the settlements call for the merging of Section 8 and public housing waiting lists, and community development in areas surrounding the public housing stock.

The combination of public housing demolition, redevelopment, and mobility programs makes these legal settlements hybrids of the HOPE VI and MTO programs. The settlements deal with older public housing much as the HOPE VI program does—by emphasizing demolition and redevelopment of the sites into lower-density, mixed-use developments. Many of the consent decree sites have, in fact, made use of HOPE VI program funds to accomplish just those objectives. In addition, however, the lawsuits incorporate the MTO model of geographically restricted Section 8 vouchers and mobility counseling to facilitate deconcentration of households.

Typically, the demolition of public housing has proceeded without much delay. Dallas has demolished more than 2,500 units, and in Omaha, more than 700 units were taken down in a two-year period. “In Omaha, tenants were relocated so quickly that some ended up in substandard housing and have to be relocated a second time” (Popkin, Galster, et al. 2000, 42). In Minneapolis, more than 350 units went down in less than two years and another 350 after a protracted political struggle (Goetz 2002a).

The development of scattered-site housing, the creation of interjurisdictional mobility programs, and the provision of tenant-based subsidies are typically the most difficult to implement. For example, the development of replacement housing has not occurred on a large scale at any of the sites studied (Popkin, Galster, et al. 2000) with the exception of Minneapolis (Goetz 2002a). In some cases, the delays have been due to community resistance to the development of scattered-site housing, in other cases because of a lack of interest from private developers. In Dallas, two lawsuits by homeowners associations have been filed to stop the development of scattered-site units in suburban areas. In one case,⁴ the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals for Texas ruled that the scattered-site development of new public housing in predominantly white areas violated the equal-protection rights of homeowners in those neighborhoods (Popkin, Galster, et al. 2000), in effect ending the scattered-site program in Dallas.

The mobility programs launched as part of the decrees have also proven difficult to implement. In some cities, there was reluctance on the part of many people to make desegregative moves. Many participants feared discrimination in the housing search and harassment in the new communities. Others shied away from the mobility programs because of perceived financial barriers to the relocation process, whereas still others were reluctant to move away from areas with which they were familiar and away from support networks on which they relied. In Omaha, for example, where families could use their Section 8 subsidies in any area if after four months they were unable to locate a suitable unit in a nonconcentrated neighborhood, many simply waited and then moved into an impacted neighborhood. In New Haven, members of the plaintiff class did not want to move to the suburbs, away from friends and support networks (Popkin, Galster, et al. 2000). These patterns suggest that long-term support might be necessary to keep families from moving back into impacted areas.

Mobility programs were also hindered by a lack of units at or below the FMRs. Very tight rental housing markets in New York City, Minneapolis, Dallas, and Omaha made the competition for units very intense and made it difficult for the housing authorities to recruit landlords to participate in their programs. Finally, many mobility participants suggested that the lack of transportation in nonimpacted communities was a barrier to mobility. Even where bus routes existed, the distances are so great that getting to and from work and stores was very difficult. Families that did move, however, reported greater (although not uniformly so) satisfaction with their neighborhoods and their children’s schools.

AMBIGUOUS OBJECTIVES, EQUIVOCAL POLICY

The typology presented in Table 1 provides a framework for understanding dispersal policy and organizing expectations about program outcomes. The lack of tenant-based programs targeted to concentrated neighborhoods, for example, underscores the fact that mobility programs have had little to do with conditions of segregated neighborhoods. Their impact is tied to the outcomes of poor/minority families in receiving neighborhoods. Their limitations are similarly tied to the politics of receiving communities. Project-based dispersal efforts produce a different set of planning dynamics. Those that operate in receiving communities (scattered-site and fair-share programs) have always faced extreme opposition and for that reason have never achieved a significant scale of operation. The redevelopment approach to dispersal (project-based programs in concentrated neighborhoods) either tends toward demolition and displacement (HOPE VI) or the mixed-income approach. The benefits of either of these to low-income households remain unproven.

Dispersal policy is an arena in which the objectives have not always been clear. Emerging first in the late 1960s, after decades of explicitly discriminatory and segregationist practices siting subsidized housing, dispersal policy marked a significant redirection for federal housing policy. Housing officials, long accustomed to the old ways, were sometimes reluctant to embrace dispersal or integration. Even after the federal policy shift, there remained differences on occasion between official Washington policy and the practices undertaken by local housing authorities (see Goering 1986).

The most prevalent confusion in dispersal efforts is whether they are aimed at eliminating discriminatory barriers or whether they go further to attempt to achieve actual integrative outcomes (see Galster 1990). During the first generation of dispersal efforts, there was a clear merging of antidiscrimination efforts on one hand and integrationist objectives on the other. When this became politically insupportable, the Nixon administration separated the two. Stripped of the legitimacy provided by an antidiscrimination justification, dispersal quickly died as political support for integration was insufficient. In an echo of the first wave of dispersal, many of the lawsuits that serve as the foundation for current dispersal programs in cities across the county originated as antidiscrimination suits. The remedies, however, focus on dispersal or integration of low-income families into more affluent neighborhoods. This time there is an uneasy combination of antidiscrimination impulses with the desire to deconcentrate poverty. The elimination of discriminatory subsidized housing siting practices, for which there is significant

political consensus, will not, by itself, lead to a significant deconcentration of poverty. More direct steps to facilitate deconcentration through integrating the poor into more affluent communities simply do not enjoy the same level of consensus.

Congressional support for deconcentration and dispersal has been uneven and inconsistent. Congress in the early 1970s would not support a direct effort to integrate suburban areas but in 1974 supported creation of the Section 8 program in an effort to introduce greater choice for subsidized households. Congress approved the MTO program in the 1990s but immediately pulled the plug on its expansion at the first sign of suburban resistance. This has left the courts, in both the first and second generation of dispersal, as the most important initiator of dispersal and integration efforts. Massive and consistent suburban opposition to deconcentration, backed in Congress and in state houses by the growing political clout of America's suburbs, leaves dispersal in a precarious place. What can be agreed upon without much political contention, and therefore what has occurred in greatest quantity, is the demolition of "dysfunctional" or "pathological" central neighborhoods dominated by the poor and by people of color. The path of least resistance seems to be, as it has in the past, the demolition of communities of poverty and the dispersal of the poor and people of color. In practice, this leaves us perilously close to repeating the worst aspects of the Urban Renewal program.

NOTES

1. The literature on the outcomes of dispersal efforts is too large to be reviewed here. This article contains only brief summaries of the findings related to dispersal programs. For a more thorough consideration of this literature, see Goetz (forthcoming).

2. To be categorized "dispersal," a unit-based program must have as one of its primary objectives the geographic scattering of subsidized units. This is the case with scattered-site public housing and fair-share approaches. Other unit-based programs such as Section 235, 236, and 221(d)(3), for example, are not considered dispersal programs.

3. Although the consent decree stipulated that 7,100 families be assisted in moving out of segregated public housing, 1,100 of the families were assisted through other programs. See Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum (2001, 67-68).

4. *Highlands of McKamy IV and V Community Improvement Association; Ginger Lee; Preston Highlands Homeowners' Association, Incorporated; David Beer vs. the Dallas Housing Authority*, United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, no. 97-11083, March 16, 1999.

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