RISK, RESILIENCE AND RELOCATION: A LIFE COURSE

EXPLORATION OF RESETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES

OF PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

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EXPLORATION OF RESETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES

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Spatial deconcentration of poverty has been the organizing framework of federally subsidized housing policy for well over a decade. During that time low-income families living in traditional public housing across the country have been involuntarily relocated. Household relocation into lower poverty middle class, while the underlying mobility goal, has proven difficult for many families. We continue to look for evidence for how and whether these families are able to adapt as they are scattered across urban settings.

The research focus was to operationalize the resident's adaptive behavior pertaining to deconcentration of poverty by trait difference, familial/cultural cues and perceived institutional opportunity/constraint. Mobility behavior was studied across three phases: coping reaction to *dispersal*; meeting familial/cultural needs in *relocation;* and perceived opportunity prospects of institutional alliance culminating as prospects of *resettlement.* Theorized as adaptive indicators of resilience, mother's coping style facilitated relocation decisions that met familial need/want using perceived opportunity set, thus improving the family's likelihood of reaching resettlement, preferably in lower poverty settings.

Using a life course perspective of risk and resilience, 12 mothers - categorized by lifestage as young, middle and older - were interviewed four years after household dispersal to examine prior adaptive behavior in order to explore current functioning and future prospects. Mechanisms used included a pre-move agency score of psychosocial wellbeing; assessed familial/cultural resources by age/lifestage of mother to gauge appropriate relocation needs; and poverty status of current neighborhood.

Analysis of qualitative data revealed while pre-move agency scores were indicative of effective coping with dispersal, these scores were largely unreliable across other phases of experience. Differences in mother's age/lifestage and family relocation needs were identified. Self-reported levels of maternal satisfaction influenced ability to successfully meet those needs. In turn, met familial need influenced prospects of resettlement. Perceived prospects of resettlement, indicative of agency, met familial need and poverty status of neighborhood were mixed across age groups. For families

living in lower poverty mixed-income public housing, only the older women termed themselves resettled. Families living in higher poverty households – all who had left housing assistance after relocation - were more likely to report resettlement.

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CHAPTER 1

DECONCENTRATION OF POVERTY: A PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

1.1 Introduction

For over 50 years the two-story red brick apartments, canopied near year round by spreading live oak trees, had sat on the sloping riverbanks running through the downtown of a mid-sized Southwestern city. Named for the "mother" of the state and the throw of the land, Jane Long Terrace had been home to countless low-income families over the years with tenures ranging from a few months to nearly 40 years. In late 2001 that all changed when a decision was made by the local housing authority to sell the sprawling acreage, in large part, to fund the scattered-site construction and purchase of mixed income developments in more affluent neighborhoods.

Following the growing trend of deconcentration of poverty, a buyer was found, a deal was struck and soon plans were drawn to demolish buildings and disperse households. Because these proposed mixed income developments had yet to be acquired, families would have to first make "temporary" moves while awaiting completion. In response to the potential fallout from involuntary displacement and the complications of transitional moves, the residents united and were recognized in the contractual negotiations with the City. It was in this climate that the deconcentration of

poverty - necessitating household dispersal and subsequent relocation - got underway in spring 2002 for the 268 families who lived there at the time the policy was initiated.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Individuals function as agents through the adaptive choices and actions made even as they confront temporal and contextual life course change across socio-historical circumstances (Elder & O'Rand, 1995). Conducted four years later, this study of 12 mothers from the original sample of 268 families is a life course exploration of adaptive choices, actions and changes experienced through deconcentration of poverty at the individual level. Here as Elder & O'Rand (ibid) identify human agency, the individual life course is constantly under construction. The evolving course of development is one of new challenges involving change, adaptation, risk, forged pathways and encountered barriers, all across time. How individuals construct their own life course is predicated on availed opportunities and constrained options that, in turn, determine the types of choices made. All of this is balanced by adaptive resilience used to negotiate the continuum of opportunities despite risk, yet always tempered by obstacles of varying degree. This is the bedrock of life course study.

Using a life course perspective of risk and resilience, one purpose of this study is to demonstrate that deconcentration of poverty is experienced as a series of adaptive phases that each family must go through. The evidence of such experience is studied through the outcomes of mobility behavior, also termed as adaptive behavior. Using the retrospective nature of life course review, we examine such adaptation as one's

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ability to meet present day residential needs, wants and hopes as converging pathways of family in childhood, school during adolescence, teenage motherhood and work-related tenure. We gain better understanding for the mobility behavior and social action of dispersed residents by understanding more about the adaptive individual across a variety of life course domains.

To operationalize the adaptive experience of deconcentration, we will explore the emotional reaction and behavioral response of residents in three phases: *dispersal*, *relocation*, and [prospects of] *resettlement.* The term *dispersal* refers to receiving the news of a pending involuntary move and preparing the household for relocation. The term *relocation* denotes the physical move that the household must make, including the follow-through necessary to locate appropriate housing for the family. The term *resettlement* in this study signifies a perceived state of spatial and social "rootedness" after dispersal and relocation.
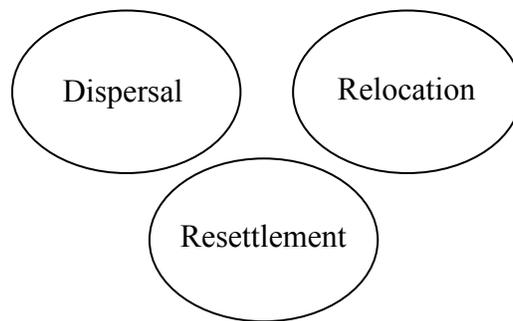
Figure 1.1 Phases of deconcentration.

Examining these phases, we conceptualize the experience from an internal to an external perspective. Figure 1.2 captures, in life course perspective, the psychosocial dimensions of agency, family/culture and structure that color the experience for each

individual. From this illustration, we begin to understand the phases of deconcentration as a set of nested influences that begin with the individual and move outward to take in the social perspective of linked lives. At the core we find *micro* characteristics of agency, moving across *meso* familial/cultural influences of linked lives and *macro* institutional impact on the prospects of opportunity for the household. In many ways, we will find that agency, in the constructionist metaphor, runs through all of these dimensions. This further illustrates agency-within-structure as the way people create their own lives within the limits of structure (Settersten, 1999). The theoretical concepts used to build this foundation are explained in Chapter 2.
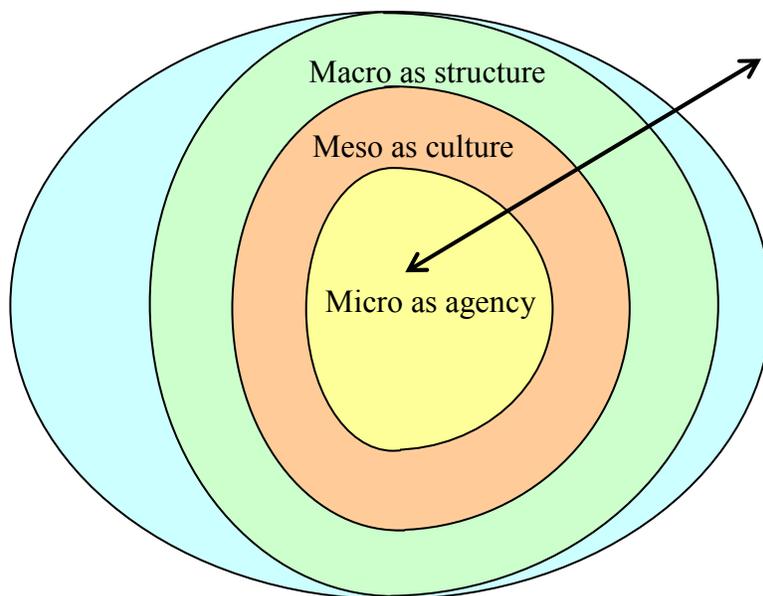
Figure 1.2 Nested model of mobility behavior & social action.

Figure 1.3 illustrates these micro psychosocial elements that define personal agency. Here we are interested in agency as individual traits and differences that give important information about capacity, adaptation, functioning and wellbeing. The

notion of agency asserts that individuals, through their choices and actions, actively construct their own life course within limitations and opportunities of their circumstances (Elder, 1995). Agency becomes a way to explore the nuance of adaptive behavior and social action, but remains an understudied mechanism of the urban poor (Gotham, 2003). While there are obviously several elements that comprise the psychological dimensions, we consider agency evidenced by coping style for this study.
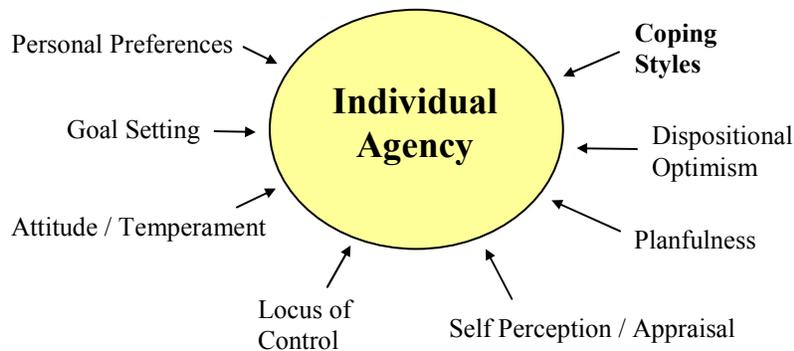
Figure 1.3 Micro influences.

Figure 1.4 illustrates the *meso* proximal influences that can impact personal experiences of deconcentration of poverty, particularly in response to recognizing and fulfilling migrating household needs, wants, and aspirations in the phase of relocation. Understanding familial/cultural influences of linked lives demonstrate that housing decisions affect the entire household. Further, getting such needs met in a new neighborhood is key to the process of relocation. Again we can see there are several aspects that can influence at proximal distance, but we consider age and lifestage of the mother through the needs of her family as the focus.
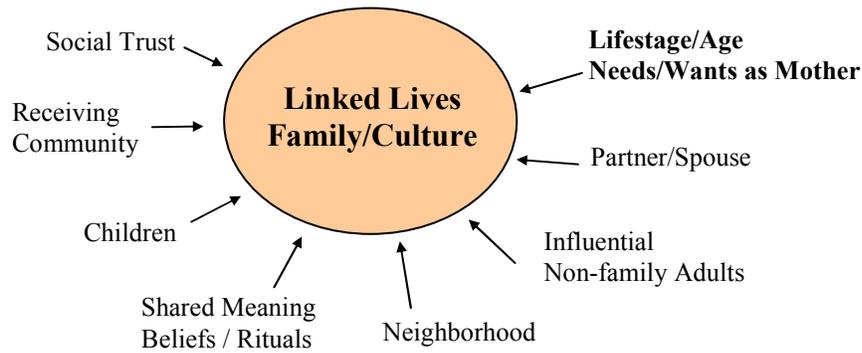
Figure 1.4 Meso influences.

Figure 1.5 illustrates the *macro* influences as the institutional impact on the individual. These are all the larger structural forces that can affect the continuum of opportunity and constraint for these residents. One of the most important institutions in the lives of public housing mothers is the institution of the local public housing authority. We focus on that institutional alliance to explore prospects of opportunity for the household.
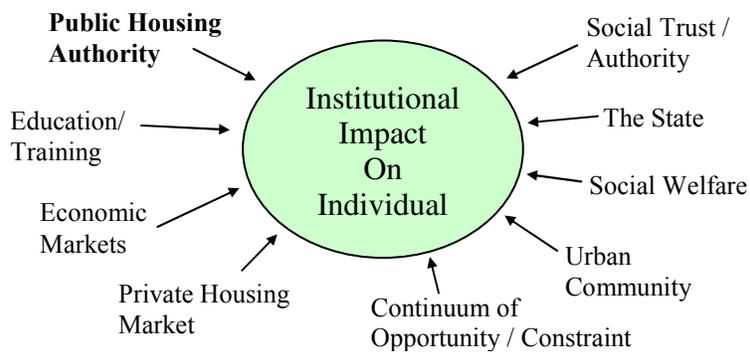
Figure 1.5 Macro influences.

1.2.1 Research Questions

At the center of this study are questions that seek to determine adaptive factors used and processes these women experienced during the imposed change of deconcentration. We are also interested in learning how the imprint of different life course experiences - indicative of personal capacity, familial/cultural resources and negotiating skill – helped to form attitudes, behaviors and thus outcomes in the experience of deconcentration. Understanding change as adaptation, we ask the larger questions:

- How might we explain mobility behavior and social action from the resident's perspective? What are the mechanisms of adaptive behavior?

- What can we learn from the pathways of childhood family, adolescent schooling and teen motherhood that inform present day mobility behavior and social action? How did they use personal and social skill and resources to decide?

- Does personal agency as coping style influence the process of dispersal and subsequent relocation?

- Does age and life stage of mother matter in family relocation decisions?

- Does poverty status of neighborhood influence the prospects of resettlement?

The more basic questions of interest become centered on specific events and moments of remembrance.   Inquiring about dispersal and relocation over four years ago I asked:

- What was it like to like to receive the news of displacement?

- What did it mean to have "choice" in deciding where to relocate one's family?

- What did the proffered opportunity talk mean to you?

- What would you have done differently through the phases?

- Where do you see you and your family five years from now?

As these questions are posed to discern the nested configuration of micro-level trait differences, meso-level familial/cultural cues along with macro-structural boundaries, we can begin to think of deconcentration of poverty, moving from the core outward, in a process-oriented rather than a strictly results-oriented fashion.

To aid the reader in the interchangeable nature of concepts introduced thus far, Table 1.1 gives a summary of terms to be used to further discuss categories of micro, meso and macro aspects of deconcentration of poverty.

Table 1.1 The Interchangeable Terms of Micro, Meso and Macro

Micro	Meso	Macro	Aspects of Study
Reaction to Dispersal	Response to Relocation	Prospects of Resettlement	Phases of Deconcentration
Agency	Culture	Structure	Adaptive Behavior / Social Action
Coping & Wellbeing	Met family needs	Negotiating opportunity	Operationalizing Deconcentration
Agency	Age / Life stage	Poverty status of neighborhood	Sample Selection

The lived-through experience in each phase, influenced by past functioning, is further impacted by one's trajectories of resilience. The basic premise of the construct of resilience, most agree, is demonstrated by an ability to "bounce back" from earlier deprivation to "self-right" over time, demonstrating coping capacity in the face of changing life events and transitions (Vaillant, 2002; Werner & Smith, 2001). The need

to better understand how resilience arises from personal hardship has encouraged scholarly attention to study the more protective and adaptive factors among those whose lives have been marred by adversity. We also know that resilience is born out of instability, the kind evidenced by sudden or unprovoked change (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000).
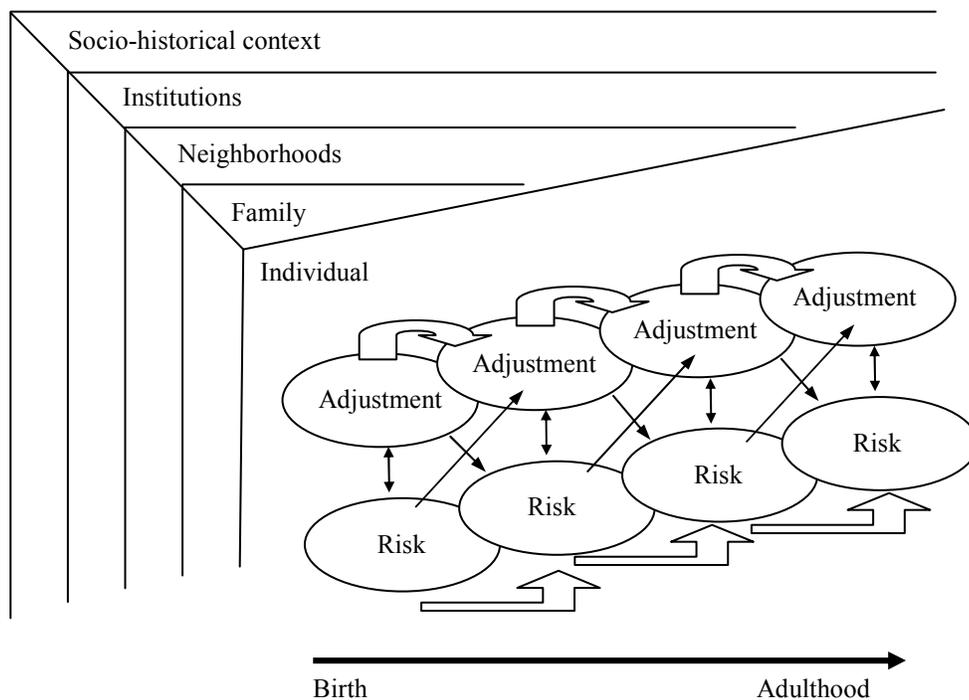
Figure 1.6 A developmental-contextual model of resilience.
Source: Ingrid Schoon, 2006, Risk and resilience: Adaptations in changing times
Cambridge University Press, New York, page 25.

Figure 1.6 illustrates how the individual, in a developmental context, is captured in life course progression demonstrating the interactional influences that shape the individual. Starting with personal agency of the individual, these spheres of influence

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are interrelated and mutually interdependent. Further, such influence can persist despite personal hardships of socio-economical adversity that many of the women studied here faced as children. We focus attention on the holistic nature of a continual and reciprocal adjustment to risk experiences, embedded in a socio-historical context (Garmezy, 1985; Rutter, 1990). This context gives indication of an age-graded framework that situates a life course in a particular period of time. It also gives indication of lived-through circumstances reflective of economics, gender, and race in which these experiences take place (Elder, 1974, 1999). In this developmentally contextual model we see that personal agency and the layers of influence upon the individual match the transitional pathways we will study. Here the family and the neighborhood are in more proximal settings to the individual, while school and the State as institutions convey a more distal affiliation. All are in multi-level personal context however.

This allows us to consider the individual, at any point in the life course, as a summation of past experiences and the launch of new ones. This usually will mean that the way we learn to adjust to risk encounters in earlier life we will use in subsequent adjustments. It also means earlier experiences with risk can be linked to later life risk. In this milieu, the spheres of influence become vital aspects of continual development of the individual across the life course. However, life-long developmental processes may not necessarily always been rooted in early life but come about in later periods (Schoon, 2006).

The ebb and flow of the life course tells that for every diminished quality there is also evidence that mitigating forces in the form of resources, support and services can

help to moderate life course trajectories and effects (Marks & Ashleman, 2001). This means that although the accumulation of high risk factors, including family poverty and early motherhood, can tilt a young woman in a disadvantaged direction, the flexibility of life course development allows for moderating factors of supportive encouragement and resources across the life-span (Marks & Ashleman, ibid). The influence of friends and networks can ameliorate potentially negative effects. The impact of such influence can also guide the formation of attitudes, the follow-through on behavior and the collectivity of social action. The source of resilience is said to be a set of protective factors that concretize strength in a biopsychosocial framework (Settersten & Mayer, 1997) including biological makeup, dispositions, social support, and access to opportunity life events (Hutchison, 2005). Here we get indication of how resilience builds from a centralized core of personal agency outward, taking in spheres of influence that will come to illustrate Elder's life course concept "linked lives" as shared networks in a developmental context (Elder, 1998).

Because the bulk of public housing mobility literature gives little attention to residential reactions to *dispersal*, we explore how these women prepared to leave Jane Long Terrace (JLT) by using one aspect of agency, coping style. We use Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) binary classification of problem-focused (action-oriented) versus emotion-focused (distress-elimination) coping to study the initial change of displacement. Because the bulk of public housing mobility literature also gives scant attention to the prospects of *resettlement*, we explore how residents perceived their negotiated opportunity accounts four years after dispersal. We recognize that

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resettlement, timed to and defined by each household, is a phase of the *perceived* possibilities of opportunity. This means, as head of household, the mother believes she has negotiated opportunities offered at dispersal to the best of her ability.

Because the bulk of public housing mobility literature is primarily concerned with the second phase, *relocation,* a key focus here is to add to that stream by exploring how residents go about making decisions of housing choice. We base such exploration on the efficacy of meeting familial and cultural needs/wants of "linked lives." Here we funnel such needs, wants and hopes through the age/life stage of the mother to pinpoint the effectiveness of relocation choices. In these ways, all phases of deconcentration give important information about mobility behavior and social action. Living through each phase means attitudes, behavior, and action of residents are influenced by skills of resilience. Referring back to Figure 1.5, we see that needed adjustments are based on personal capacity and spheres of influence. We come to see the looping effect that resilience brings to each phase of experience: through coping, lifestage choices and perceived negotiation of an individual's opportunity set.
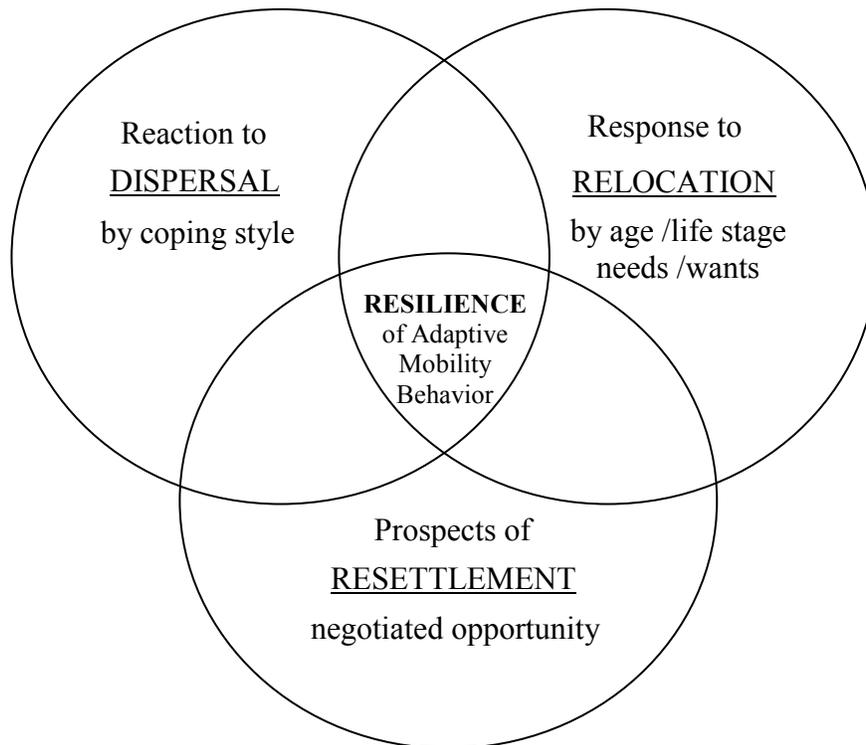
Figure 1.7 Phases of deconcentration of poverty.
Evidence of behavior: Using skills of resilience.

Figure 1.7 illustrates that to operationalize each phase of deconcentration means we also are operationalizing the paths of mobility behavior and social action through one's skill set of resilience. This means that phases of experience become evidence of mobility behavior using skills of resilience. For example, as we examine coping with dispersal we are attempting to understand how one's style of dealing with imposed change might influence relocation decisions. Such momentum is theorized to eventually impact the prospects of resettlement. The mechanism by which this can be studied is through a life course skill set of resilience. Remember, resilience is demonstrated by

abilities to "bounce back" from earlier deprivation to "self-right" over time, demonstrating coping capacity in the face of changing life events and transitions (Vaillant, 2002; Werner & Smith, 2001). The value of support strengthens resilience.

We come to know these mothers' skill set of resilience through a life course review of converging pathways of family, neighborhood, school and brushes with other institutions. In this study, skills of resilience become a proxy for processes of behavior, i.e. housing choice. This means as we explore each phase we are also exploring how each woman used aspects of her skill set to behave and move through.

1.3 Exploring Housing Choice: The Balance of Person and Place

In this discussion understanding deconcentration of poverty as a policy of change means exploring housing choice through converging pathways, live-through phases and evolving overlap of influence. This also means in order to consider such active participation first we must take what is largely an undifferentiated policy of mobility outcome and expand it into experiential terms. As it stands, when we talk of housing "choice", we lack clear understanding for how the resident makes such choice beyond the structural limits they confront. Widely regarded as a building block of mobility, choice is typically subtexted in an external capacity, driven by a market-based approach that attempts to incorporate the private sector, seeking to rework economic, social, political and racial disparity for low-income families (Briggs, 1997; Brophy & Smith, 1997). For others, the juxtaposition of choice and dispersal are considered at odds with each other, particularly when pointed out that "choice" is usually forced upon residents, essentially eliminating the basic meaning (Varady & Walker, 2003). .

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For urban subsidized households, mobility, as a focus, is regarded as positive change. It is said to broaden opportunity potential, bolster self-sufficiency, thus improve the life chances for families marred by low-levels of household income (Basolo, 2003; Ludwig, Duncan, & Pinkston, 2005). We gauge the evidence of mobility change largely through the mechanisms of improved access to schools, jobs and societal integration (Rosenbaum, 1995) thwarting institutionalized racial residential segregation (Denton, 1994) and creating racially and economically mixed neighborhoods (W. D. Keating, 1994).

While such improved mechanisms remain critical to linking residential access to opportunity structures and demonstrating how residents are impacted by the structure of relocation, it lacks sufficient attention to the psychosocial features of self that could shed more light on the steps toward such improvement. Some studies have examined the micro-experience of relocation, identifying person-specific demographics of family size, skill of negotiation, and health status into categories of the "hard to house", explaining low take-up rates into more advantaged neighborhoods (Pashup, Edin, Duncan, & Burke, 2005; Popkin & Cunningham, 1999; Turner, Ross, Galster, & Yinger, 2002). One study that examined residential participation in a household sufficiency assistance program explained low take-up by four groups of participants. These included those who lacked information; those with personal issues of instability; those who believed the costs of participation outweighed the gain; and those who felt involvement would not advance household goals (Gibson & Weisner, 2002).

Still other studies found that among both movers and nonmovers from a

refurbished public housing complex, problems with poor communication and inaccessibility to local housing staff were reported (Popkin, Buron, Levy, & Cunningham, 2000). Conversely, others found those residents who expressed confidence in a mobility program as well those with higher education and satisfactory search skills had more successful housing searches than others with diminished confidence and less skill (Clampet-Lundquist, 2004).

However, we continue to lack clear understanding of residential preference beyond the assessment of *post-move* satisfaction/dissatisfaction scores (Varady & Preiser, 1998; Varady & Walker, 2000). Offered here is a call to better understand residential preference and how households go about realizing opportunity potential. To do so will mean expanding the dimensions of how we tend to think of residents in general. Recalling Elder & O'Rand's (1995) discussion of agency, such expansion means identifying how these householders as agents confront change, marshal adaptive resources and navigate across three distinct phases of policy execution. These phases are theorized as the coping reaction to household *dispersal*; age/lifestage of motherhood response to the rigors of *relocation*; and perceived likelihood of *resettlement*.

1.4 Resident as Agent: The Balance of Risk and Resilience

Further enriching this scenario of resident as agent, we recognize the synergetic combination of risk and resilience as life course mechanisms that pinpoint personal, familial, cultural and structural characteristics. Such a perspective gives further explanation for what will enable some and constrain others in the change experience of dispersal and relocation and impact resettlement. The nuance of "risk" and "adaptive

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change" is important to this discussion. While residents may be in the throes of change in response to dispersal, *change*, underscored by factors of instability across a life course marred by risk*,* can point to evidence of dependency and further hardship for low-income householders who quality for public housing assistance. This means that in order to take part in mobility efforts, residents must undergo the inevitability of change, no matter the perceived risk to them. As the first step, such change dictates involuntary relocation. Helping residents to differentiate the positive effects of change from the more negative ones they may hold must be a goal of poverty deconcentration policy.

In most ways, addressing the need to deconcentrate maladaptive living arrangements points to the stronghold of prolonged exposure to risk and daily stressors over the life course for these individuals. Addressing such risk is perhaps the most salient feature of deconcentration, considering the preventative and adaptive strategies that dispersal and relocation might bring. The policy initiative of deconcentration points to ameliorating the personal exposure to place-based risk. It also means recognizing personal strategies of resilience in order to help "bounce back" from the spatial elements of maladaptive living. Such consideration of resilience in matters of dispersal, relocation and resettlement is at the heart of this study.

Here we are interested in exploring the factors of risk and the protection of resilience that converge across life course pathways displaying disposition and degree of support. Table 1.2 delineates more common risk factors that can influence us all, but particularly children and adolescence.

Table 1.2 Factors of Risk

Individual	Interpersonal	Environmental
Family History of Illness, Alcoholism	Chronic Family Conflict	Poverty & Economic Deprivation
Risk taking Behavior / Sensation seeking	Family Alcohol / Drug Use	Neighborhood Disintegration
Poor Impulse Control	Poor Parent / Child Bonding	Poor Access to Opportunity
	School Failure / Alienation	

Source: Jenson, J. M., Fraser, M. W., 2006. Social Policy for Children & Families: A Risk of Resilience Perspective. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Table 1.3 is presented as a set of resilience factors by level of influence. These factors span personal, familial, cultural, neighborhood and institutional arenas that can impact behavior. They can also be considered mechanisms in mobility outcomes. The root causation of risk and maladjustment that pervades poor communities has been well documented (Anderson, 1991; Ellen & Turner, 1997; Jencks & Mayer, 1990; Wilson, 1987). However, we know less about the impact of these factors on mobility behavior at the individual family level. While understanding such social pathology is vital, some social science researchers have suggested that the field of study should focus on how individuals have learned to cope, protect, and be optimistic in the face of chronic and episodic stress (Luthar et al., 2000; Sethi & Seligman, 1993). Understanding the continuum of risk and resilience serves here to dimensionally expand how we view the resident as agent.

Table 1.3 Factors of Resilience

Individual	Interpersonal	Environmental
Social & Problem Solving Skills	Attachment	Community / Social Support
Temperament	Caring Relationship with Family	Caring Relationship with Adults / Teachers / Extended Family
Low Level of Economic Stress	Low Household Conflict	Opportunity: Education / Employment / Pro-social Activities
Positive attitude	School Involvement / Commitment	

Source: Jenson, J. M., Fraser, M. W., 2006. Social Policy for Children &
Families: A Risk of Resilience Perspective. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

As in many life course stories marred by early exposure to risk, knowing the paths that an individual takes can lend a deeper understanding to subsequent choices. Here we are interested in early experiences and choices made in childhood, adolescence and young motherhood that may shed light on present day mobility behavior and social action. Chronic exposure to early family instability interspersed by decisive events such as dropping out of school, entering into teen motherhood and, for many, single parenting tells much about growing up in households, neighborhoods and communities of questionable support.

Pathways are carved in social environments that highlight the critical nature of interpersonal protective factors of resilience. Across the life course, relational attachment meets environmental opportunity in order to forge such protection (Jenson & Fraser, 2006). Yet "environmental opportunity" is a rather large concept that not

only defines one's world in immediate context but also the societal structures that govern from afar. Many of these women studied have endured the effects of racial and ethnic stigma, thus further complicating pathways taken. As Stier and Tienda (2001) argued, the cumulative effect of pathways offered and taken in terms of later social opportunities and life outcomes also point to important racial and ethnic differences unexplainable by only observable individual differences across experiences. In this way, we are exploring the consequences of these mothers growing up as girls in racial and ethnic context, attempting to further understand skill building of resilience across the socio-historical context of the time.

While it is beyond the scope of this study to "un-bundle" the complexity that early exposure to risk assigns to subsequent pathways of poverty for any one individual over another, in a general sense we intuit roadblocks and detours over the life course. This means that as teen motherhood often thwarts one's attempt to complete education, such lack will most likely mean employment instability. Resulting circuitous and disjointed pathways become evident of a life course of uneven means. Yet all is not lost. The rise and fall of overcoming, or at least tempering, the persistence of risk through the resilience of personal and cultural resources ad another dimension to our understanding of behavioral outcomes in matters of mobility.

This means that the toolbox of resilience, added to over a lifetime, contains more adaptive ways of dealing with personal costs and potential loss of deconcentration: the ability to "bounce back." Stated differently, the exposure to factors of life course risk as well as the capacity to recover and persevere can impact the

practical experience of deconcentration of poverty. Such impact becomes evident in ways that highlight, by degree, a resident's capacity for coping with dispersal and making family-appropriate relocation decisions. We can also see how resilience can lead a householder to bargaining - to personal satisfaction - the opportunity prospects of institutional assistance. Essentially it means that a resident approaches resettlement using trait abilities, recognizing personal preferences in meeting lifestage needs, wants while holding aspirations for the future.

Acknowledging the socio-economic risks of poverty along with the adaptation of resilience in the face of such adversity, we begin to recast the resident from the more traditionally passive moniker of "recipient" and "relocatee." In this way we expand the language to convey the experiential process of deconcentration. Through measures of coping effectively, discerning familial/cultural markers that influence decisions as well as bargaining to realize perceived institutional opportunity, we "flesh out" the processes of deconcentration from a residential perspective.   In effect, we recognize a more balanced effort to make decisions in the aftermath of household dispersal that take into account personal characteristics and preferences.

1.5 Exploring Mobility Behavior: The Balance of Agency, Culture, and Structure

This study, using a life course perspective, seeks to offer an exploratory model of mobility behavior and social action by operationalizing the capacity of personal agency, the influence of family/culture and the parameters of institutional structure. In turn, these become the integrated determinants of coping reaction to dispersal, behavioral response to relocation needs of the family, and subsequent negotiation of

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opportunity prospects toward resettlement. Figure 1.8 summarizes these explanatory elements of mobility behavior and social action.

MICRO INFLUENCES

Coping Capacity

Optimism

Planfulness

Individual Agency

Locus of Control

MESO INFLUENCES

Age/ Life stage

Linked Lives Family/Culture

Children

Social Trust

Neighborhood/ Receiving Community

MACRO INFLUENCES

Public Housing Authority

Economic Markets

Institutional Impact On Individual

The State

Education/ Training

Private Housing Market
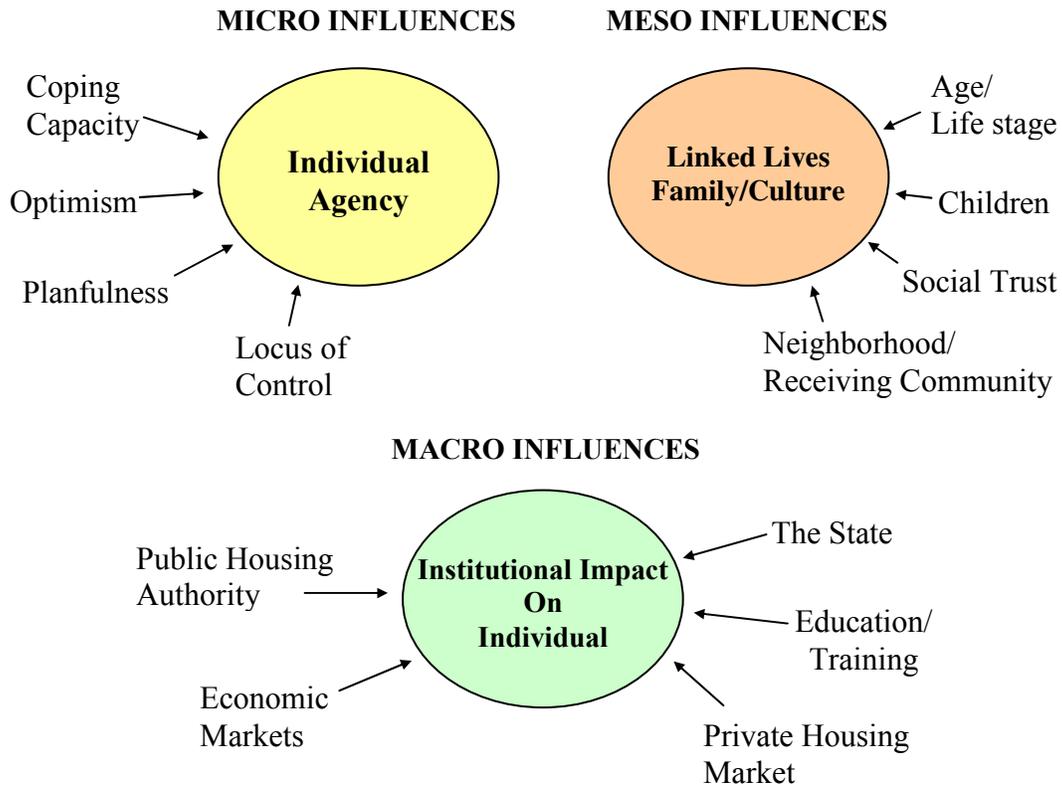
Figure 1.8 Explanatory elements of mobility behavior.

In this study, the terms "culture" and "family" are used interchangeably. This underscores the argument that families adapt across a developing set of needs and wants, largely due to external changes and most often confined by cultural limitations (Hareven, 2000). Perhaps the most important link between micro-elements of functioning and macro-imposed changes is in the cultural context of family (Hareven, ibid). The parameters of social structure used here are indicated by a set of formal rules

that organize and govern an individual's social pathways across the life course (Buchmann, 1989). Drawing these psychosocial elements into an explanatory model means focusing on the relationships running throughout. If we are to understand how individuals, groups and social systems interact we must recognize the relational identity that each represent in the larger scheme (Ritzer & Gindoff, 1992).

While phase two, relocation, has long been considered the marker by which to measure outcome of mobility policy effectiveness, here we recognize the prerequisite of preparation in phase one, along with the post-scripted prospects of resettlement of phase three in order to broaden understanding of such outcome. Much like a rolling tumbleweed that gathers momentum beginning with dispersal moving toward resettlement, the experience at each phase is significant in reaching such a state of spatial and social rootedness. This means that the quality of resettlement can be affected not only by effective coping style, satisfying age/lifestage needs and wants of the family but also through forging an institutional alliance to realize prospects of opportunity. As one woman put it, *if I can't do better than JLT, then what was the point in all this mess?*

Here characterizing the subtlety of Briggs' (1997) "getting by" versus "getting ahead", we consider prospects of opportunity in a geographic context. In that way we incorporate an experiential approach with the more familiar focus of mobility studies: that is, evaluative *process* by destination. While the notion of "getting by" as tweaking social support within community remains a valuable resource to the day-to-day functioning of these women, we understand less about "getting ahead." Using "getting

ahead" as a concept involving leveraged social, economic and educational improvement notably outside the immediate community, we explore the householder's ability to realize the promise of opportunity. In this way we are able to get a sense of the spatial and social rootedness necessary for resettlement. Further, we build an important distinction in understanding how low-income families fare in their neighborhoods (Briggs, ibid).

Deconcentration of poverty, in most ways concerned with (only) relocation into preferred neighborhoods, remains a somewhat undifferentiated debate that starts (and ends) with the premise of improving place thus improving person. In surveying the place effects literature over the last decade or so, Briggs (2005) reiterated scholarly interest through a typology of mobility studies showing efforts to "deconcentrate" poor neighborhoods, thus disperse households into alternate socioeconomic arrangements. Such studies have typically examined the unidirectional effects of place *upon* person. The categories identified included: neighborhood effects on human behavior and attitudes; social and residential mobility and opportunity structures associated; neighborhoods and mediating contextual effects of networks and families; and studies of place and economic location within the marketplace (Briggs, ibid).

From the outside looking in, the execution of policy begins when residents are moved from one place to another and the efficacy of the policy is gauged by the neighborhood to which they relocate. That is, much of how we frame mobility for public housing residents is driven by how policy motivates residential behavior. In other words, we remain interested in how policy aids or hampers place-based selection.

This is apparent given the intention of mobility policies that include Housing Choice Vouchers into private settings and mixed income living through improved public settings. Through these and other mechanisms of portability and opportunity, the aim is reduce spatially associated economic and social deprivation, altering and improving the life course direction of each family member in the process (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Maritato, 1997; Ellen & Turner, 1997). In Figure 1.9 we see the implications for remaining in poorly organized neighborhoods of concentration that can have deleterious effects on the household. Alternately, improving one's physical environment can change/improve the individual life course primarily on the basis of renewed place-effects. Yet some have argued this takes the form of environmental determinism that minimizes the importance of the individual to the overstatement of place-effects (Jennings & Quercia, 2001; von Hoffman, 1996).

| Housing Choice Vouchers – Private Housing Market |
| Scattered-Site/Mixed Income Developments- PHA owned/private mgmt |
| Mobility Assistance – Housing Searches/Counseling; PHA implemented |

Place Based Barriers   Place Based Facilitation

Urban Renewal Redux (Vale, 2000)	Incentives & Outreach (Goering et al., 1995)
Tight Housing Markets (Lenz & Coles, 1999)	"Choice" With Vouchers (Turner, 2003)
NIMBY; Discrimination (Hogan, 1996)	Mobility/Mismatch Strategies (Downs, 1995)

Impact on Person   Impact on Person

Uprooted Affiliations (Katz, 1989)
Competition / Negative Comparison
(Jenkins & Mayer, 1990)

Safety, Improved Access
(Varady, 1998)
Resilience of Children / Improved
Parenting (Coulton, 1996)

Figure 1.9 Dispersal & relocation of low-income families:
Mechanisms of portability & accessibility.

We rarely balance that fulcrum to explore how people, through a broader study of mobility behavior and social action, form relocation decisions based on factors other than the effects of place. It is an important reminder that there is a delicate balance between place-effects and personal action, particularly a tendency to overstate advantages and disadvantages of the former over the latter. The literature often stresses

how neighborhood conditions shape the lives of inhabitants (Ellen & Turner, 1997; Jencks & Mayer, 1990). The notion that neighborhood characteristics of concentrated poverty severely reduce the social and economic chances of individuals drives the federal push to demolish and disperse the nation's worst public housing, thus [re]directing the overall sufficiency of relocated residents (Clampet-Lundquist, 2004; Epp, 1998). Yet, some argue that scholarly attention has overlooked the challenges presented by low-income mobility. Specifically not enough attention is paid to the transformation of the individual, noting that the more fragile householders may end up worse off than before dispersal. Of these residents, many will face homelessness and other such uncertainty (Popkin & Cunningham, 2005).

The place-effects of poverty can also lead some to naturally assume that living in a substandard neighborhood will always compliment the behaviors of its inhabitants. That is, where one lives can explicably dictate individual behavior, charting personal and familial functioning. Rather, individual and family characteristics already in place generally dictate the ability to withstand, rise above or sink under the effects of a disadvantaged neighborhood (Turner & Acevedo-Garcia, 2005). This, in effect, substantiates the impact of attributes of personal agency used to shape individual choice within structural constraints (Gecas, 2003) such as those evidenced in mobility. Further, the formation and maintenance of resiliency shape abilities to adjust and adapt the person-environment fit, particularly in inner city communities (Luthar, 1991). The capacity of agency and resilience merge and come into focus when we study the

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psychosocial factors of motivation, perception and preference that influence decision-making as a result of a forced relocation.

This study explores the depths of behavior and social action in ways that spotlight the impact of change on the day-to-day life of the individual. Further, we recognize change in personal relationships in familial and cultural proximity that underscore the spatial and social milieu of the neighborhood. We are also interested in institutional alliances, associations and influences that are more structurally distal to the resident but no less important. While social change as the core assertion of deconcentration is evident, this study argues for a closer inspection of change at the individual family level. Here we can see that the execution of deconcentration policy requires the evidence of social change in a variety of contexts, all directly influencing the affected resident and her household.

In the many ways we define change - life before, during and after - as a series of processes of deconcentration, we capture the experience by the life course term, *turning point.* Referring to deconcentration of poverty as a turning point for the individual spans a scholarly description of change. The concept of change has been theorized whether perceived or actual (Clausen, 1993); chosen or assigned (Clausen, 1995) or else by chance or planned (Caspi, 1998). Notably, change as "perceived or actual" as well as "chosen or assigned" comes to describe a subjective perspective of deconcentration not readily considered.

Sampson and Laub's (1993) conceptualization of turning point stipulated a set of events that led to an individual's turning toward or away from normative behavior,

carrying repercussions. Salient examples of their study of crime and youth included the failure to complete high school as well as the experience of motherhood before the age of twenty. In the aftermath, these researchers found resulting limitations on employment and income opportunities that demonstrated how turning points, as social connections to crime, are linked. It is important however not to polarize turning point as all or nothing, any more than it is wise to polarize stability versus change or continuity versus discontinuity into an either /or situation. That is, the inevitability of human development must allow for both malleability as well as consistency across the individual life course (Caspi, 1998; Hinde, 1988; Settersten, 1999).

Demonstrating an interest in the resident as an individual, we understand behavior as representative of the basic drives and motives that propel, repel and compel us as humans. In turn, we can get important clues to a physiological as well as psychological explanation of human performance. By gaining an understanding of the theoretical evolution of the construct of behavior, we span deterministic to more contextual explanations. From the earliest inquiry into human behavior the concept *instinct* as an innate biological force was conceived, most notably so by Sigmund Freud. Freud explained behavior in a binary mode of either survival or avoidance, but many perceived the explanation as too simplistic (B. M. Allen, 1997). Other early theorists, such as Alfred Adler, a neo-Freudian, instead identified behavior as motivation by not only internal differences and traits but also by the social context in which people lived (Dinkmeyer & Sherman, 1989). In this study, we adopt an Adlerian perspective that recognizes a social psychological framing in the discussion of behavior. In

understanding the role of social action in this mobility study, we follow the Weberian tenet that all human action is subjective and is therefore influenced by the behavior of others (Weber, 1947).

Central to the notion that mobility behavior is relational behavior, the social psychological foundation of this study seeks to understand, describe and thus explain how behavior is "influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of others" (Allport, 1968, p. 3). Personal behavior and social action are gauged by particular types of relationships (e.g. mother, worker, neighbor) and as such can depend upon relational identity, commitment and strength of ties (Felmlee & Sprecher, 2000). Therefore to gauge personal behavior and social action in this study, one must understand not only what individuals "bring to" their behavior and actions by acknowledging personality trait differences; we must also recognize such behavior in interactional context at proximal and distal ranges.

In all of these ways, we broaden the spectrum of mobility "outcome" by incorporating processes of change, adaptive behavior and social action in life course analysis. In turn, such expansion supports the notion that deconcentration is a multi-phasic experience that gives "life" to the lived through dimensions of dispersal, relocation and resettlement. Taking a life course approach highlights this study's thematic aspects of interdependent "linked lives" (Elder, 1994), aligning the individual, her familial/cultural kinship and transactional attempts to negotiate structural boundaries in order to get ahead. In the way that lives are interconnected among individuals, families, neighborhood and institutions demonstrates the embedded nature

of human development. Further, such interactive convergence within an extended variety of environments demonstrates how both proximal as well as distal transitions shape individual behavior (Schoon, 2006), here activated on behalf of the family.

Such interdependency is necessary in understanding present day mobility behavior and social action as it conveys attachment, connection, social exchange and relatedness over the life course (Pruchno, Blow, & Smyer, 1984). A rich thematic cache of shared real world circumstances in deconcentration of poverty awaits scrutiny, including how individuals marshal elements of self at every level of experience. This gives the researcher a canvas on which to explore the dynamics between individual and contextual spheres, including how one develops patterns of adjustment to hardship on subsequent life chances (B. Carter & McGoldrick, 1999; O'Rand, 1996; Shanahan, 2000) exposing diverse trajectories by age, culture, race and social class (Elder, 1998; Shanahan, 2000).

Perhaps most importantly, this study is built on the premise that we all approach the need to adapt with a skill set, by degree, for dealing with the implied change. Therefore, much of the adopted language that identifies mobility behavior and social action as a result of significant household change and the call for adaptation pivots on one's constructed "toolbox" of resiliency. This learned set of skills that confirms the capacity to "bounce back" in reply to the potential adversity of a chronic situation is of particular interest among the study of disadvantaged populations (Jessor, 1993; McLoyd, 1990). Here, resilience, in protective response to risk, becomes an intersecting factor that explains variance among an individual's emotional, behavioral

and social response to policy execution. Resilience also becomes the intersecting factor to demonstrate the degree to which individuals use agency, culture and structure as determinants of [mobility] behavior and social action.

The pathway model of mobility behavior and social action that guides this study is found in Figure 1.10. The elements of design build on an aggregation of life pathways of earlier influential family and school experiences in childhood and adolescence, merging with later pathways of teen motherhood and work tenures. Of particular interest is how these converging pathways matter to present day mobility experiences. It is through patterning of the life course that we come to understand how earlier life events can alter and shape pathways into later life. Whether by parental status, the neighborhood in which we grow up, opportunities available, opportunities seized, or the stability and security of home life, traveled pathways become the foundation for understanding the future prospects as we grow and develop (Case & Katz, 1991; Haan, Kaplan, & Camacho, 1987). Pathways also give important information about how individuals negotiate developmental risk factors, yet form and maintain protective measures of resilience. That is, as actors we understand pathways as blueprints for potential outcomes.

PATHWAYS OF:
Family
School
Work
Teen Motherhood

Reaction to Dispersal
Individual Agency:
Coping Style

Response to Relocation
Linked Lives
Family/Culture
Age/Life Stage
Needs/Wants met

RESILIENCE

Prospects of Resettlement

Institutional Impact
Alliance for Negotiation

Intersecting Adaptive Factor

Synergy to cope; get lifestage
needs/wants met;
Transactionally negotiated
in the face of adaptive change

Figure 1.10 Pathway model of mobility behavior & social action:
Explanatory attributes & determinants.

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There are no hard and fast rules about prediction here. That is, this study makes no attempt to "fit" a typical profile of pathways with an inevitable outcome. Rather, in this case exploring early pathways of family, school, work and motherhood opening into later pathways can give important feedback about the prospects of adapting to middle class expectations in current relocation. Such exploration allows us to examine a woman's path into public housing as well as give present-day insight into where she might relocate and her prospects of resettlement. Such insight reaches beyond a more typical survey of housing and neighborhood satisfaction that focuses on environmental improvements or structural hurdles as determinants for why people come, stay or leave a particular neighborhood. Such insight also takes the view of the resident as the one who knows her needs and those of her family best, resisting the need to assign a value when decisions are made to move into not necessarily lower poverty neighborhoods.

In subsequent chapters we discuss theoretical aspects of how a public housing resident is recast as a cultural agent, replete with traits, familial tasks, age/lifestage specific needs and wants. By degree, we explore her blueprint of rules, norms and tools used to navigate change and adaptive expectation with a skill set of resilience. We reiterate the point "by degree" recognizing a variation across capacity, ability and motivation. Underscoring this notion of variance, we recognize that most women studied here have been exposed to developmental risk and social adversity. Yet we also know that such adversity does not preclude ways to positively adapt despite such at-risk exposure (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Rutter, 1990; Werner & Smith, 1992).

The literature pertaining to risk and resilience continues to grow. Table 1.4 summarizes consistent findings across a variety of sources, many of interest to this study of public housing mothers. Exploring the continuum of risk and resilience in various environments, here we examine how risk factors of self, family and external circumstances are buffered by protective mechanisms.

Table 1.4 Factors of Risk and Resilience

Risk Mechanism:	Buffering/Protective Factor:	Source:
A. Dispositional Factors		
Females are more likely than males to report stress.	Females are more likely than males to seek social supports from peers.	Block, 1993
While caring is buffering, females consistently experience more stress given a negative life event than males.	Females are more oriented to caring and connectedness than males.	Gilligan, 1982
For those with external locus of control, as stress increases, functioning decreases	• Internal locus of control associated with maternal and/or family expectations. • For those with internal locus of control as stress increases, functioning stays the same.	Blum, et al., 1991. Luthar 1991.
Psychological problems, family stress, and negative maternal attitudes.	More predictive of positive outcome than socioeconomic status.	O'Grady & Metz, 1987
Predictors of serious coping problems: Maternal and family problems, poverty, low maternal education and low family stability.	Temperament as a protective factor may be less a characteristic than a "goodness of fit" between individual and his or her environment.	Werner & Smith, 1982
B. Family Factors		
Divorce/Single mothers	• "Connectedness" is protective; it can be with parent, others, self or larger purpose. Belonging is a more critical variable in individualistic societies. • Moral energy: Connectedness to a higher purpose.	Dugan & Coles, 1989
• Poverty • Poverty effects are cumulative.	• Informal social supports are protective for young children but not for adolescents. • There are few buffering factors to the effect of poverty and the effects were cumulative.	Cause, et al., 1982
Divorce, parental psychopathology, institutionalization.	Child competence is more influenced by interaction with parents than by parent socioeconomic status.	Luthar & Ziegler, 1991

Table 1.4 – continued

C. External Factors		
Loss events are associated with depression while non-loss events are associated with anxiety.	• Demographic factors: age, sex, socioeconomic status. • Personality style: coping style, locus of control, personality characteristics. • Environmental factors.	Cowen & Work, 1988
The number of stressful life events may be more predictive of negative outcomes than the nature of the specific event.	The meaning ascribed to an event will significantly influence the extent to which it is a stressor (Bandura, 1977).	Sameroff, et al., 1987

Adapted from R.W. Blum, Risk and Resilience: A Model for Public Health Interactions for Adolescents.

Exploring resilience throughout the processes of dispersal and relocation means examining how psychosocial factors including coping mechanisms and resiliency along with familial/cultural relationships foster skill and abilities to deal with life events. These life events are ones of both great stress and ones that might describe everyday types of problems. Therefore it is important to weave them into the psychosocial elements of agency, age, family, culture and structure to fully extend understanding of the processes of deconcentration of poverty.

Before introducing the theoretical and empirical background to the study, it is important to summarize the scope of this study thus far. At the foundation is an effort to develop and expand what is, at first glance, a rather global if not somewhat undifferentiated policy. In most ways, it is involved (or interested) in relocation outcomes of public housing households out of clustered concentration into scattered settings. Therefore a primary contribution is to add to the residential mobility literature for public housing residents in the following ways. First, break down the processes of

poverty deconcentration in three discrete phases in order to study residential behavior and social action, thus expand what we know about the affected resident from dispersal to eventual resettlement. Next, add psychosocial detail to the dispersed individual in order to examine housing choice as a process as well as outcome. Too often mobility outcome, in a strict structural sense, serves as proxy for what we know about residential behavior. Such singular focus commonly means we continue to search for ways to improve structures, as if that will alter behavior accordingly. We know that it does not.

This study also maintains there is more to deconcentration than relocation as a point-in-time destination. Such limited consideration neglects the critical reactions to dispersal and reduces the speculation of resettlement, albeit sandwiched by the more familiar responses to relocation. As such, we miss much of what we could glean from an extended view of mobility behavior and social action of those affected. Further, this study explains residential behavior and action by a set of nested attributes, skills and resources that incorporate, in Venn fashion, formed (unique) psychosocial combinations of who they are, with whom they belong and by what means they bargain the prospects of opportunity. Referring to the micro-meso-macro dimensions of the model, we find variant components of agency (coping styles), age/lifestage needs (familial/cultural) and bargained structural opportunity that all come together to influence housing choice. As residents face pending household dispersal they begin the process that carries them through to [multiple] decisions of relocation, all affecting the prospects of resettlement.

To adequately evaluate these ideas and thus the effectiveness of studying deconcentration as process, we must first understand the basis of the fundamental shift

in the philosophy, proviso and delivery of subsidized housing assistance for low-income families. In doing so, we recognize the historical prelude to the concentration of poverty. Reviewing a voluminous body of literature that details the maladaptive forces and origins of spatially situated poverty, the aim of the next section is to summarize anticipated outcomes of deconcentration into lower poverty locales. That such a body of work remains highly debatable among scholars and the public citizenry alike underscores the importance of further inquiry.

<u>1.6 Background to the Study: Concentration of Poverty</u>

The spatial concentration of low-income urban living has garnered the attention of a variety of stakeholders, prompting an explosion of urban poverty scholarship identifying cause, scope and consequence. The focus of this section is to briefly review what has become a voluminous body of literature of each aspect of study. From policymakers, interest groups and general citizenry, the reasons that the poor have congregated in tight inner city locales have been widely theorized by social science researchers. We turn to a review of those reasons.

1.6.1 The Back Story of Poverty Concentration: Causation

One of the most identifiable hypothesis of poverty concentration is that of Wilson (1987) who reasoned a self-reinforcing cycle of social and economic isolation and impoverished conditions. He portrayed the "underclass" of residents who lived in such isolation as a product of severely restricted economic opportunity and out-migration of middle class minority models. This resulted in a set-up of deviant norms and behaviors for those who remained, further reinforcing the perpetuation of isolation.

In these ways, high concentrations of urban poverty were propagated by the systematic disenfranchisement from mainstream economic, political and social opportunities that, in turn, set up a maladaptive set of behavioral norms. His arguments considered the fall-out from macro-economic changes in U.S. economy that have restructured local economies, rendering many low to moderate-income citizens unemployed (Wilson, 1996). Meanwhile, those residents with economic means fled the urban center for the suburban fringe where jobs had also relocated, leaving behind crumbling neighborhoods bereft of employment and opportunity (Wilson, ibid).

In line with notions of economic isolation, the spatial mismatch hypothesis portrayed the lower class as trapped in the inner city because of the inability to travel to the more dynamic economic growth suburban centers. This created the suburbanization of employment in locales inaccessible to segregated urban city dwellers (Ihlandfeldt & Sjoquist, 1998; Kasarda, 1989, 1990). Further, fragmentation and segregation by income and race, as evidenced by Rusk's (1999) hypothesis, meant that a central city's ability to annex and thus reap the benefit of regional growth could predict the degree of poverty concentration in any given metropolitan locale. In this way, sprawl reinforced economic segregation and kept poverty in central cities (Rusk, ibid).

Yet Downs (1999) argued that it was the underlying nature of U.S. development processes - not sprawl per se - that had undermined the fiscal muscle of large central cities. He maintained such had been accomplished largely in a socially unjust and adverse manner. While attacking sprawl with more federally purchased open spaces of land will not impact inner-core poverty issues per se, the potential for setting aside more

open land near urban centers might spark development. In this way, prospects of gentrification and mixed-income development could attack more directly the problems of segregated concentration (Downs, ibid).

In line with causal segregation, Massey and Denton (1993) argued that the "underclass" of poverty had burgeoned as a result of the racial and prejudicial discrimination toward poor blacks, continuing to push them into high concentration, denying them the means to escape inner city ghettos. Thus, discrimination of housing became the legacy of force that pushed people of color into urban ghettos (Bullard & Lee, 1994; Massey, 1990; Massey & Denton, 1993; Massey & Eggers, 1990). Of particular interest to this study, such intentional segregation and discrimination was evident when surveying where public housing complexes were originally built (W. H. Carter, Schill, & Wachter, 1998; Holloway, Bryan, Chabot, Robers, & Rulli, 1998; Massey & Kanaiaupuni, 1993).

Minority neighborhoods were portrayed as isolated places of troubled networks that no longer could or would function according to conventional academic, economic or social goals (Jencks & Petersen, 1991; Wilson, 1987). These spatially configured patterns served to reinforce the stratification of society by class and race as well as encourage a "ghetto culture" of social pathology (Anderson, 1991) through the tight clustering of the urban poor. This is substantiated by studies that show that concentrated poverty is found almost exclusively among people of color (Jargowsky, 1997).

1.6.2 The Scope of Poverty Concentration

The regarded quantifiable markers of poverty concentration are where 40% of non-elderly residents' incomes are operationalized (Danziger & Gottschalk, 1987) and validated (Jargowsky & Bane, 1991) below the official poverty level. Jargowsky (2003a) and Kingsley and Pettit (2003) found that this concentration over the 1970s and 1980s slowed and in most cases reversed. Minority neighborhoods experienced the exodus of higher income households leaving a higher proportion of poor residents (Massey & Kanaiaupuni, 1993). Attributed to a robust economy, there was a significant drop in concentrated poverty among blacks between 1990 and 2000; 4.9 million lived in high-poverty settings in 1990 with a drop to 3.1 million by 2000. Poverty status by black household income alone dropped some, but not nearly so dramatically. During this time period the probability of being black and living in a high-poverty tract dropped from 30.4% to 18.6% (Jargowsky, 2003b).

Yet Galster (2003) cautioned that mere reduction in overall percentage does not necessarily translate to improved wellbeing. This author noted that moderate-poverty neighborhoods have increased, thus redistribution could foreshadow continued problems for inhabitants. Furthermore, official poverty measures have been criticized for not keeping up with basic needs reflective of the changing times we live in (Glasmeier, 2005). Yet there are those who point out that most poor people do not live in the standards that classify a neighborhood of concentrated poverty (Ellwood, 1988), thus underestimating the economic and social diversity found within these areas (Jargowsky, 1997).

1.6.3 The Consequences of Poverty Concentration

The empirical investigations into the extent and consequences of concentrated poverty have become important public policy inquiries. Controlling individual characteristics as much as possible, most studies concur that life in concentration affords fewer and less positive outcomes because of the lack of social cohesion and efficacy for families involved (Galster, 2003). As these numbers grow, there is a theoretical tipping point where individuals will engage in socially unacceptable behaviors (Quercia & Galster, 1997b). Of particular interest have been the personal and social implications of public housing. Governmental subsidized housing has become a magnet for large concentrated pockets of impoverished people. Public housing patterns have served to reinforce the stratification of class and race within society by clustering poor minorities into concentrated areas (Holloway et al., 1998; Kirp, Dwyer, & Rosenthal, 1995).

However, the objectives necessary to remedy such concentrations are often met with resistance, particularly at the local and regional levels. There is a range of arguments at the center of the not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) debate currently waged among policymakers, local authorities and the public at large. Such geopolitical controversy, according to a host of scholars, should be pitched in ways that can more objectively evaluate proposed remedies that bring low-income households into middle class settings. At the same time, these evaluations must also consider any necessary modification to minimize harmful effects to receiving communities (Galster, Tatian, Santiago, Pettit, & Smith, 2003).

To be sure, the concentration of low-income households living in tighter and tighter urban areas has resulted in a myriad of social concerns, specifically aimed at the potential outcomes for individuals living there. The social ills associated include: education drop out, increased teenage pregnancy, lack of jobs and rising criminal activity (Ellen & Turner, 1997; Jencks & Mayer, 1990; Wilson, 1987). The creation of these maladaptive neighborhood effects Wilson (ibid) theorized was the lack of positive role models and stabilized institutions that encourage a "ghetto culture" characterized by short-term goal life planning (Anderson, 1991). Research also tells us that such conditions can and do have adverse effect on a myriad of life time experiences and subsequent life decisions, most notable those that contribute to further inferior life course opportunities (Massey, Gross, & Eggers, 1991).

However, the interwoven elements of neighborhood effects and the mediating factors of individual, family and social relationships have been somewhat difficult to disentangle (Brooks-Gunn, Klebanov, & Sealand, 1993). Further, the mechanisms through which macro forces affect micro level behaviors tend to be overlooked, making the issue of self-selection into different neighborhoods undetermined (Tienda, 1991). That is, what we really know about the impact of living in certain neighborhoods may be clouded by individual and social characteristics of those who live there.

As we call attention to in this study of public housing mobility efforts, there are research assumptions made about neighborhood effects and individual characteristics that may miss the mark. For example, Briggs (1997) pointed out suppositions about the benefit of poorer neighbors living close to more affluent neighbors may or may not

adequately capture the spatial dimension of opportunity for low-income residents. Echoing another of Briggs' points, dispersed public housing residents carry their own definition of neighborhood that may be misaligned with those of researchers or policymakers.

1.6.4 The Role of Public Housing in Concentrated Poverty

Public housing, as viewed in community context, has long been a magnet for dense concentrated pockets of poor minority people. Recognizing the current state of subsidized housing also means tracing the stigma associated with "living in the projects" that has evolved over the years. For example, many of the public housing complexes that survive today in varying states of deterioration were originally sited in the poorest neighborhoods to begin with (Bratt, 1986; Kirp et al., 1995). In present day, the housing stock of neighborhoods surrounding public housing is generally of poor quality as well **(**Bratt, ibid).

Since the 1970s, federal housing policy overseeing low-income subsidy has largely been characterized by cutbacks resulting in de-funding, devolution and decline in housing stock as well as increasing reliance on market-centered strategies such as tax subsidies and privatization (Rubin, Wright, & Devine, 1992). Since the 1980s, there have been operationalized plans to radically change existing public housing stock through demolition, conversion and privatization (Hartman, 1986; Koebel, 1997). In more recent times, Congress has determined the need to end all public housing construction and restructure local authority subsidies, essentially eliminating the public

housing system that has sustained countless low-income families over the years (Quercia & Galster, 1997a).

In large part the reasoning behind these policy revisions reflect the fact that many public developments have come to be characterized by high welfare dependency, low educational attainment and very low incomes (S. J. Newman & Schnare, 1993). This has made the macro-environment of subsidized housing, including surrounding neighborhoods, areas of neglect and vulnerability. Further, reasons given to shift policy show that these spatially configured patterns have served to reinforce the stratification of class and race within society by clustering poor minorities into concentrated areas (Massey & Denton, 1993; Wilson, 1987).

1.6.5 The History of Public Housing

To understand how such concentration came about, we first have to look back to both the efforts and failures of governmental housing aid for low-income households. Throughout the last century, cycles of stagnation and revitalization have characterized remedies for America's central cities. During the era of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, public housing programs were conceived as means to temporarily help out the unemployed nuclear family facing economic hardship during The Great Depression. During this time, there was also an initial attempt to re-settle those living in inner city slums to the suburbs (Teaford, 1993). The Resettlement Administration, as it came to be known, developed three working class 'towns' in Maryland, Ohio and Wisconsin, surrounding them with greenbelts of parkland and farms to escape the encroachment of urban sprawl. However, the unexpectedly high development costs, the resulting higher

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rents plus the smaller number of units built proved to be roadblocks for the urban poor's escape from inner city slums (Teaford, ibid).

The years after World War II began the era of the suburbia boom. War veterans returning home settled into marriage and parenthood at rates faster than ever before. The explosion of new homes in larger and less congested outlying locales was also a tremendous draw to these new families. Such distribution outside of central cities required better and more efficient modes of transportation. Thus, the evolution of the automobile and the network of freeways and highways necessary to accommodate was born. The symbiotic relationship between the transportation changes and the housing boom both encouraged and transformed suburbanization. Here suburbia's gain proved to be inner city's loss. Whites were out-migrating and black newcomers were arriving from their migratory journeys into the Northeast and Midwest. This caused great change in the overall composition of central city population (Teaford, 1993) and led to what we now know as the decentralization of U.S. cities (Hughes, 1993).

Before long, neighborhoods and communities were transformed, characterized by social, economic and racial segregation, resulting in net poverty hanging over American central cities (Gotham, 2001). The progression of such transformation has been charted by the introduction and proliferation of the automobile that called for major changes in transportation and posed challenges to inner city infrastructure. With new means to travel beyond the central hub, the middle class required new and upgraded access to area roads and highways. This meant that people could now live, play and work beyond the central business district (Gotham, ibid).

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Armed with the ways and means of out-migration, qualifying families took out governmental subsidized home mortgages that further encouraged changing population patterns. In essence, while shifting the middle class to the fringes, central cities were now left with increasing concentrations of poor people and resulting problems. What Massey and Denton (1993) termed as racially residential segregation underscored the effects of discrimination on housing markets. Moreover, market relations and structuring in terms of capital investment and disinvestment were directly affected by this racial segregation in housing, resulting not only in racial isolation in public housing but declining disadvantage in adjacent neighborhoods (Wright, Rubin, & Devine, 1998).

To follow, older central cities became synonymous with crime, decay and poverty. In these ways the social disintegration of inner city life undercut its competitive position and set up inflexible governmental structures that further handicapped its vibrancy (Downs, 1999; Rusk, 1999). The urban housing stock continued to age and dwindle, now sheltering impoverished and fragile households, standing as visual testaments of obsolescence and neglect (J. A. Devine & Wright, 1993; L. Keating, 2000; Wright & Rubin, 1991).

The perception of subsidized housing for low-income households by the ending years of the 20th century was markedly different from the mid 20th century policy initiatives that ostensibly had set about to provide the most basic of needs: shelter. The Housing Act of 1949 had set the stage for U.S. urban redevelopment efforts and dramatically affected the future of public housing. One measure was wide-scale removal of targeted blight and widespread decay in the buildings that housed the urban

poor. Many pointed to such conditions as a major contributor to the overall decline of American cities. Then as now, many saw the wholesale relocation of subsidized households directed at low-income blacks (McAllister, Kaiser, & Butler, 1971).

Later, the Housing Act of 1954 redirected the efforts from "urban redevelopment" to "urban renewal" paving the way for an emphasis on revitalizing blighted areas and de-emphasizing public housing construction (Gotham, 2001; L. J. Vale, 2000). To revitalize meant that residents, particularly poor minorities, were pushed into tighter and tighter clusters as a result of "slum clearance" and other urban renewal schemes. These strategies essentially reclaimed neighborhoods and forced the displaced into further isolated concentrations, thus allowing the reclaiming of desirable land from the poor for economic development. One of the most vocal opponents was Jane Jacobs (1961) who early on recognized the neighborhood as the building block of urban life. Witnessing first hand the devastating effects of reclamation of land in New York City, she railed against what she saw as the struggle between death and life of all great U.S. cities. As she recalled walking among carved-up neighborhoods, it seemed uncivil that economic decisions of the elite destroyed so many small, accessible and diverse urban venues in the path of "renewal."

The evolution of public housing, while initially based on temporary benevolence has, over the years, slipped into preferential practices that leave only the "poorest of the poor" as recipients (Bell & Gleason, 1999; Grogan & Proscio, 2000). By continuing to lower the income ceiling for admission and maintaining residence, many residents who were making a living wage were forced out. The two-parent family

requirement was relaxed to give subsidized housing to widowed, divorced and never married women with dependent children. Later Congress broadened categories of householders to include seniors older than 62 years old and those with certified disabilities. In the wake of the devolution of public housing only those with the lowest income status qualified and soon not surprisingly poor women, most as single heads of household, became the primary inhabitants of these complexes.

Hence, the poor have generally found themselves concentrated into downtown American cities largely due to the out-migration of middle class life and commerce. Specifically, systematic public and private disinvestment away from central cities have underscored the more recent NIMBY (not-in-my-back-yard) scenarios. Instead, favor has been thrown to suburban and smaller metropolitan enclaves that enforce strict exclusionary housing and zoning policies. Notable are Federal Housing Administration (FHA) practices and IRS capital gains tax incentives that have consistently benefited the middle class (Utt, 2002). Here we see the evolution of low-income segregation into tighter and tighter inner city clusters and the conflicted actions of government that, while ostensibly the voice for all, has historically benefited those with the most political and economic clout. Those who remain on the fringe have traditionally been confined to increasingly concentrated poverty living arrangements.

1.6.6 The Face of Concentration

Today the urban population who qualifies for housing assistance is primarily one that is female. Single heads of household with dependent children comprise the majority of these households. These single parents who may be unemployed or often

working in dead-end jobs are left paying the costs of raising their children. This increases the household financial burden to escape poverty (England & Folbre, 1999). Single women generally have lower earnings and because there are usually no other adults contributing income to the household, most have to rely on governmental transfers (Christopher, England, McLanahan, Ross, & Smeeding, 2001).

In the ways of linking poor educational outcomes and early motherhood, the increasing incidence of being a single mother often means facing relatively poor economic prospects (Ellwood & Jencks, 2001). Yet, Musick and Mare (2003) reportedly found no such increase in incidence, citing modest contribution of intergenerational inheritance of single parenthood and poverty with little effect on the economic status of single and two-parent families. However, for unmarried women who have children, educational prospects have declined (K.A. Musick, 2000), as have female heads of household leaving poverty (Stevens, 1994).

According to HUD, in 2000 there were approximately 1.3 million households living in public housing units managed by approximately 3,300 local public housing authorities; the racial composition was largely minority (69%) with nearly half African American. Families with children comprised half of these households and one-third were elderly residents (Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2004). To be eligible to head a household a woman must be at least 18 years of age. Women 18 years of age or older who live alone could also be considered a female head of household. Most often these women are mothers with dependent children living with them or are women living with

certified disabilities. The requirement for senior women to live in public housing is based on age; she must be at least 62 years old.

As indicated by U.S. Census statistics, we examine other associated factors related to women and poverty. It is the female single householder with no male present who represented 26.4 % of families with children under the age of 18 in the home living in poverty in 2002. This represents an increase up from 12% in 1970 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003a). In 2002, single parent women headed 54% of African American households with children under the age of 18; 31% of these children were living with mothers who had never married (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003b). The percentage of nonmarital births to African American women was 69% in 2000, compared with 43% of such births for Hispanic women (Martin, Hamilton, Ventura, Menacker, & Park, 2002).

The older woman in public housing reflects the face in the overall aging of America; the growing trend is increasingly female as women out-live men (Gelfand, 1999). Even though overall poverty rates among elders have dropped over the last 30 years, the rate of women who live in poverty conditions is almost twice that of men. This trend is linked to less economic lifetime earnings, longer life expectancy and lower financial net worth (Rainwater, 1999; Rupp, Strand, & Davies, 2003). The growing incidence of aging ethnic minority group members living in urban centers is expected to continue through the first half of the 21st century, with a projected growth from one in ten of all ethnic minority Americans to one in five by 2050 (Armstrong, 2001). In this way, *multiple hierarchy stratification* will come to characterize these inner city

residents according to incidence of being female, a member of an ethnic minority as well as being an elder (Markides, Liang, & Jackson, 1990).

As we consider aging in poverty, there is growing interest in how, across the life course, exposure to such poor conditions in earlier life will impact the abilities to access social and economic resource and opportunity in later life. This is an important focus of this study as we explore prospects of resettlement across age groups. We come to see that there are life-long implications for how such exposure can impact a number of quality of life issues (Phelan & Link, 2005). Such is the way O'Rand (1996) described stratification of resources *over* the life course, demonstrating hardship as the cumulative advantage and disadvantage over time. The political economy of aging - less a theory than framework - examines inequality among seniors, pointing out policy initiatives needed to improve elder access and distribution of societal goods (Estes, Linkins, & Binney, 1996). The potential implications of these initiatives in the 21st century must address the burgeoning boomer population who will need subsidized housing assistance.

<u>1.7 Background to the Study: Deconcentration of Poverty</u>

While the underlying ideological thrust to deconcentration many would agree is, on balance, an attempt to equalize "decent and safe housing for all", there is ongoing scholarly debate when we consider that the underlying theoretical foundations of deconcentration ultimately rests on the discussion of poverty in general. That is, how one approaches the topic of deconcentrated mobility of the very low-income is rooted in

a general perception of poverty. We turn to a review of the momentum behind the push to deconcentrate the living arrangements of large numbers of low-income households.

1.7.1 Impetus to Deconcentrate: Theoretical Perceptions for Poverty

To understand the processes (procedures), prospects (policy prediction) and perception (experiential perspective) of dispersal, relocation and resettlement as culminating outcomes of poverty deconcentration we must understand poverty. Here we look at poverty in specific ways to grasp the theoretical dialogue. In a subsequent section we turn to a discussion of poverty as public discourse and public opinion. This is necessary because understanding how the public at large considers the expansive issues of poverty carries implications for how the mobility efforts for low-income families are realized.

Around the 1960's, the discussion of poverty – and particularly the individuals who lived in such economically and socially compromised conditions – heated up to a vigorous debate. This deliberation essentially pitted the individual against the "system" in ways that brought up issues of culture related to poverty that continue to this day. The more controversially interrelated theory of poverty and culture was that of Lewis (1966; 1969), who proposed that isolated individuals, mired by social restrictions, propagated a set of self-perpetuating skills and behaviors to deal with such marginalized living. In these ways, the poor were theorized to remain in such a condition based upon a concretized set of cultural values and norms, no matter the nature of proposed structural change (Lewis, 1966). This set up a conduit by which the cultural conditions

found in the intergenerational transfer of deviant norms and behaviors became explanations of poverty (Murray, 1984).

Pitted against such explanatory arguments was Harrington's (1962) seminal work at the time that pointed to the problems of poverty as simply economic constraints of material resource that affected the behavior of the individual. This caused many to speculate about the structural implications of society and the economy as the causation of poverty. In these early theoretical agendas, the "blame" for the existence and perpetuation of poverty was either assigned to the individual or to "the system", demonstrating an explanatory clash between agency and structure.

The momentum for the economically structured poverty argument exploded with Wilson's (1987) thesis that the black middle/working class exodus from central city minority neighborhoods had set the stage for the proliferation of what he termed "the underclass." Brought on by the 1970's economic shift from manufacturing to service oriented businesses, the underclass, now socially concentrated in deteriorating urban centers, faced certain isolation from any educational or work opportunities to improve their positions (Wilson, 1991, 1996). In this way, Wilson concluded that the economic differential – and not race – was the primary reason for maladaptive behaviors associated with a life in concentrated poverty. Likewise, the situational response to constraints and incentives described through cultural meaning (Gans, 1962) and the adaptation to political and informational exclusion (Ogbu, 1985) emphasized outcomes of living in poverty.

Building on the importance of social networks for community integration and cohesion (Anderson, 1990; Rainwater, 1970), many have argued that persistent poverty is structured and sustained by a fusion of social, economic and cultural factors. In turn, these elements have interacted to form impoverished environments that foster adaptive strategies that are often at odds with conventional norms and behaviors (Rainwater, ibid). Recalling social disorganization theory originating with the social ecology of neighborhoods (Shaw & McKay, 1942), we find that urban poor may be doubly disadvantaged: by the individual life experience of being poor and by the concentrated confines of impoverished neighborhoods. Yet the link between neighborhood poverty and social isolation has been criticized, largely because of the practice of census measures of class rather than actual social networks and activities of inner city poor (K. S. Newman, 1992).

There have been other scholarly streams of research attempting to understand and thus explain poverty, with most measured in agreement/disagreement with Wilson's early underclass theory. Recognizing the link between the changing U.S. family structure and the impact of income inequality, Ellwood and Jencks (2001) studied how single motherhood and attained levels of education contributed to this growing trend. They echoed Wilson's call for more research to determine how single mothering differed across race and education. Alternately, Newman (1999) criticized Wilson's rather bleak blueprint of inner city life, and instead pointed out that her research had found that many ghetto dwellers were indeed doing paid work, leading principled lives. For all of the scholarly debate and popular opinion, whether in favor or opposed to

deconcentration policy, we cannot begin to understand relocation outcome - let alone involved processes - if we fail to consider how poverty and the individuals affected are perceived.

1.7.2 Attitudes toward Deconcentration: The Public Perception of Poverty

To expand on the theoretical poverty causation debate, we look more closely at the societal attitudes of poverty that perpetuate public perception of poverty. How the general population, including the middle class, perceives poverty is reflective of many factors. Important to this discussion is the association of poverty and the ongoing structural barriers to mobility, including racism and classism, that low-income families face as they attempt to relocate into lower poverty. This discussion also acknowledges issues that limit society's social discourse on the subject.

When we talk about poverty in this country we usually couch what we know in terms of distribution, usually tallied where the collective poor come up short on society's balance sheet of credit and debit (Katz, 1989). To a much less degree, even in bipartisan circles, do we ever consider the political power and equality differentials of those who live in poverty. When instead the demographics, individual behavior and social actions of this subpopulation are emphasized it means we have failed to fully address the underlying inequality patterned in styles of dominance, power and politics of distribution (Katz, ibid). Here conventional attitudes and stereotypes of poverty reflect personal failing rather than the breakdown of socioeconomic structures (Quadagno, 1994) perpetuating the continuance of policy and programs that ignore such macro-breakdown (Bullock, 1995; Furnham, 1993).

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Poverty is a product of political economy. Rather than seeing poverty as a product of scarcity, society has fashioned a system of control over the production of wealth and generation of surplus, thus making poverty a social product and unnatural (Katz, 1989). Yet this is generally not the way American discourse has chosen to broach the subject of poverty. The reasons for such dissonance are rooted in our capitalist measurement that tend to penalize those who fail to earn and prosper by cloaking such persons in somewhat moralistic condemnation, setting up differentials of power and status. It does not help when we adopt "underclass" terminology that, for many, sets up the tropes of have and have-nots, thus further widening the chasm between "us and them" (Gans, 1991, 1995; Hochschild, 1991).

Additionally, U.S. American language lacks concise and explanative political terminology for discussions of economics and community. As a result, considerations of poverty, which are really about power and distribution, have dissolved into personalized discourse centered on identity, morality and support. The language of family, race and culture has become our foundation of understanding poverty, rather than the more appropriate framework of disparity, authority and exploitation (Katz, ibid). As Herbert Gans wrote, "everyday life is, among other things, a never-ending flow of moral surveillance" (1995, 11). Such surveillance is often trained on where and in what condition people live, reflective of human tendencies. In these ways, we make judgments about home and neighborhood that tell a lot about self and others.

While we generally assess the actions of those familiar to us such as our family, friends and communal network, we tend to judge the character of those we do not know.

We will see that the danger of compartmentalizing "those not like us" in matters of housing is that we come to discount the resident as an individual capable of making decisions, having preferences, lifestage needs, innate abilities and aspirations for the future even as they find themselves living in public housing. In ways that highlight the outcome of concentrated poverty, the literature has documented a number of ways it has theorized the social, economic and political reasons to deconcentrate such living arrangements.

1.7.3 The Ideology of De-Concentration

Spatial deconcentration of poverty has been the organizing framework of federally subsidized housing policy and community economic development for well over a decade now (Goetz, 2000, 2002). Arguably, a historical approach to dealing with subsidized housing has been one largely of neglect. However, in more recent times policymakers from both sides of the aisle - albeit with partisan emphasis - have called for a fundamental shift in the underlying philosophy of assistance for low-income households. When then Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Henry Cisneros identified the proliferation of "highly concentrated minority poverty… as urban America's toughest challenge", he echoed what much of the country already knew (Cisneros, 1995).

This shift in policy philosophy and direction has added a new chapter in the evolution of public housing assistance, which began, in temporary form, to provide "decent housing for all" at its inception in the 1930s. During the latter decades of 20th century - now no longer considered temporary - public housing had come to be known

as "housing of last resort" (Cunningham, Popkin, & Burt, 2005). In a previous section, we reviewed the reasons for this downward trend by examining the voluminous body of literature devoted to the causes, scope and ill consequences of living in poverty. Here, we survey the extent to which devolution and dwindling federal appropriations to subsidized housing for low-income households has contributed as policymakers have attempted to curb housing costs and re-think policy.

The policy progression from place-based subsidy to mobility-based voucher has followed a shift in sociopolitical thinking and social science scholarship over the years. Examining how this country has couched its social responsibilities in assisting those in need of housing demonstrates the wide spectrum of public discourse and scholarly interest on the subject today. Policymakers who once declared "a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family" (Housing Act of 1949) have in more recent times translated the need to decrease concentration of poverty in public housing as housing goals. To accomplish has meant the creation of residential incentives to find work and thus become self-sufficient as written in the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (Hunt, Schulhof, & Holmquist, 1998).

This political momentum has converged to recognize a series of precipitating factors that sustained such maladaptive place-effects including lack of positive role models and destabilized institutions found in inner cities (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993; Crane, 1991). Other contributory factors have included racial segregation (Massey & Denton, 1993) as well as the resultant economic deprivation of rampant unemployment and social disorganization that pervades poor urban centers (Wilson, 1987, 1996). To

turn such adverse living arrangements around has meant that these households have had to be dispersed, involuntarily in most cases, to insure that families would leave.

Therefore policy solutions to these living arrangements have been wrapped in three streams of improvement: disperse the concentration of poor households, reduce the social problems associated with such living arrangements, thus improve the living environments for families (Goetz, 2003). Such solutions represent a fundamental shift in the philosophy for how housing assistance to low-income householders will be delivered: shifting from fixed place-based subsidy to variable person-based mobility.

The rationale for such fundamental shift is that the concentrated configuration of clustered poverty weakens the political and social fabric of urban centers, influences income distribution and - perhaps most importantly - cuts off large groups of low-income households from economic and social opportunity (Jargowsky, 1997, 2003a; Wilson, 1987). Not only does housing quality improve but also proximal association with middle-income living is theorized to replace maladaptive social behaviors with affirmative neighborhood affiliation (Brophy & Smith, 1997; Ellen & Turner, 1997; Galster & Zobel, 1998; Jencks & Mayer, 1990).

In specific ways that accent the life course, anticipated benefits include middle class role modeling with stabilizing effects (Briggs, 1997; Wilson, 1987); resiliency of young children through improved parenting support (Coulton, 1996; Furstenberg, 1993); improved employment opportunities for adults (Ihlandfeldt & Sjoquist, 1998) in response to spatial mismatch (Schill, 1991); better schools, more responsive agencies

and cohesive civility (Granovetter, 1995); as well as greater housing satisfaction and reduced fear of crime (Rosenbaum, 1991, 1995).

Yet this fundamental shift in subsidized housing policy to improve residential sufficiency and viability has been introduced in a fiscal climate of economy and cutbacks. The evidence of dwindling federal appropriations to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as the financial overseer of subsidized housing along with an aging and obsolescent housing stock have culminated in multiple effects of concentrated poverty (L. Keating, 2000). However, all is not lost. Now in the early 21st century, the delivery of housing assistance for families like those who lived in Jane Long Terrace Housing is experiencing a fundamental shift calling for widespread deconcentration in such living arrangements. What used to be managed as place-based assistance that tethered the urban poor to spatially stigmatized locales has evolved into more flexible terms of mobility, now couched in terms of diversified choice (Basolo, 2003; Turner, 2003); programmatic assistance (Cunningham & Sawyer, 2005; Goering, Stebbins, & Siewert, 1995; Goetz, 2002; Polikoff, 1997) and improved opportunity structures (Brophy & Smith, 1997; Galster & Killen, 1995).

1.7.4 The Choices of Deconcentration

The choice alternative to spatial concentration has included mixed income integration as well as market-based subsidy and housing construction (Goetz, 2003), ostensibly offering residential mobility to an overwhelmingly impoverished concentration of minority, female heads of household (J. Hogan & Lengyel, 1985). By such measures, the ideology of deconcentration is rooted in choice and mobility,

thereby discouraging a "ghetto culture" characterized by short-term goal life course planning (Anderson, 1991). Alternate housing has largely been aimed at repopulating these and other identified sites with a socioeconomic milieu that discourage reconcentration of poverty, constructing new housing to draw a mixture of people with varying economic and social status.

For example, the re-development of existing depressed sites in order to draw a lower-poverty residential base back into the central city is the goal of HOPE VI. Created by U.S. Congress in 1992, this federally funded housing program has been charged with economically and socially revitalizing entire communities. Around the country, the largest distressed complexes are being demolished, physically rebuilt thus socially reshaping these sites as well as surrounding neighborhoods (Clampet-Lundquist, 2004; Smith, 2002). In the case of the dispersal and relocation efforts that serve as the basis of this study there was no HOPE VI funding involved. Rather, an existing downtown public housing site was sold and the local housing authority used partial proceeds of the sale to fund the purchase of an existing middle-class complex as well as construct mixed income apartments in lower poverty neighborhoods.

While most agree that the physical and social conditions that had degenerated in our nation's subsidized housing stock was in dire need of repair, there has been a number of debates waged over how deconcentration of poverty might affect low income households. One such conflicting viewpoint has centered on the prominence of the person-place milieu in deconcentration endeavors. That is, as policy dictates household dispersal from a particular environment, ostensibly much rides on the ability of place-

effects to improve the life chances of each family member. The literature has devoted much energy to empirically testing such notion. Interest in the relationship between environment and behavior has flourished among various disciplines, including psychology (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993); sociology (Gans, 1962; Sampson & Laub, 1993); economics (Case & Katz, 1991) and anthropology (Sullivan, 1989).

For example, attempts to empirically determine middle class neighborhood place-effects with the notion of proximal modeling have highlighted the efficacy of the social influence model (Jencks & Mayer, 1990). Some scholars have postulated that when it comes to matters related to values, norms and behaviors, adult modeling can have both positive and negative effects (Crane, 1991; Wilson, 1987) on low-income residents. To support the more negative potentiality, some have also offered that the comparison of self and competition with more affluent peers can exacerbate low self-esteem (Ellen & Turner, 1997, Jencks & Mayer, ibid).

Such issues raised indicate that how we go about empirically determining place-effects *on* the individual is mixed at best. For example, some have questioned Wilson's (1987) initial "underclass" thesis, raising concern about how and why neighborhoods factor into individual decisions (Briggs, 1997; Gans, 1990; Jencks, 1992; S. J. Newman & Schnare, 1994b). Others have pointed to varying cause and effect patterns of concentrated living arrangements (economic isolation, Wilson, 1996; racial segregation, Massey & Denton, 1993; masked modeling effects of place, (Tienda, 1991). Some scholars have identified methodological inadequacies in how the construct of "neighborhood" has been initially conceptualized, neglecting contextual linkages

between place and the individual, further muddling any meaningful results (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1997; Jencks & Mayer, 1990; Sampson, 1991). Still others maintain that mobility means more than "moving out." Rather, studying migratory patterns *between* neighborhoods would better illuminate residential segregation and integration (Massey, Gross, & Shibuya, 1994; South & Crowder, 1997a, 1997b).

When searching for answers when householders do not make moves into lower poverty, there is a tendency to focus on discriminatory and constraining elements of external structures as the primary hindrance. As these barriers have been identified, policies of dispersal and relocation have, at least in theory, considered remedy by seeking to address structural and procedural impediments that thwarted lower-poverty mobility. Yet issues raised indicate that how we go about empirically determining place-effects on the individual is mixed at best. That there may be more at play in mobility outcomes - especially when household destinations remain problematic to moves into opportunity neighborhoods - remains a concern.

When examining destinations we find that residents make relocation decisions based upon a number of factors that may or may not include the allure of improved place-effects, becoming clearer when we review relocation studies. Such findings show that many low-income families do not make their way nor remain in lower-poverty neighborhoods as expected but instead often reconcentrate back into proximal and similar high poverty neighborhoods (D. J. Devine, Gray, Rubin, & Taghavi, 2003; Goering et al., 1995; Goetz, 2003; Varady & Preiser, 1998; Varady & Walker, 2000; Varady & Walker, 2003). For some householders who do relocate into lower poverty

mixed settings, overall personal and housing satisfaction have not always improved over previously concentrated living arrangements (Barrett, Geisel, & Johnston, 2004a).

So the problem emerges; we lack clear sufficient explanation for the relocation decisions after dispersal of these households who remain on the rolls beyond a measured snapshot of post move satisfaction/dissatisfaction. For those who leave assistance, we cannot adequately chart whether such action is a direct effect of dispersal and subsequent issues of relocation. For families who remain, those who move (back) into similarly high poverty neighborhoods can appear, on surface, to be a policy failure of deconcentration. Yet if we do not understand motives for such moves, such destinations will routinely be tallied as "unsuccessful."

Further, when householders do make their way into lower poverty settings – yet become lost to the system, especially when they leave under unfavorable circumstances - we also lose the ability to know the degree to which the execution of policy played in these outcomes because we know little about the resident as decision-maker. In simple terms, we lack concise explanation for mobility behavior and social action of displaced public housing householders largely because we lack understanding of deconcentration of poverty as multi-phasic social change *from the resident's perspective*.

From a policy perspective, we have narrowed our grasp by holding to the notion that improving place translates to improving person. In an earlier section we discussed how deconcentration and the structural implications of mobility are theorized to alter, thus redirect the life course direction of each family member in the process (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997; Ellen & Turner, 1997). Implied here, improving one's physical

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environment changes/improves the individual life course primarily on the basis of renewed place-effects. Yet some have argued this takes the form of environmental determinism that minimizes the importance of the individual to the overstatement of place-effects (Jennings & Quercia, 2001; von Hoffman, 1996).

The place-effects of poverty can also lead some to naturally assume that living in a substandard neighborhood will always compliment the behaviors of its inhabitants. That is, where one lives can explicably dictate individual behavior, charting personal and familial functioning. Rather, individual and family characteristics already in place will dictate the ability to withstand, rise above or sink under the effects of a disadvantaged neighborhood (Turner & Acevedo-Garcia, 2005; Turner & Ross, 2005). Further, the formation and maintenance of resiliency shapes abilities to adjust and adapt the person-environment fit particularly in inner city communities (Luthar, 1991). As recently pointed out, "there is essentially no convincing evidence on the functional form of the relationship between neighborhood characteristics and individual outcomes" (Liebman, Katz, & Kling, 2004, p. 4).

While relocation studies continue to near exclusively search for and theorize remedy of structural barriers to mobility, critical attention is rarely paid to the experiential processes of the residents. Clearly, the on-going threat of racial discrimination, such as reluctant landlords and unyielding receiving communities (Cunningham et al., 2005; Lenz & Coles, 1999) as well as discriminatory practices of realtors and financing institutions (Galster, Freiberg, & Houk, 1987; Yinger, 1995) remain real threats to residents' ability to realize true "choice." Yet, from a residential

perspective of study, research could also examine the real-life implications of "living through" the processes of reconciling dispersal, maneuvering relocation and perhaps most importantly, moving toward resettlement in a new home and neighborhood.

Policymakers, housing administrators and scholars are now in the process of querying the take-up rate of dispersed households' into lower poverty. When surveying the results of such inquiry, we have found there are householders who decide to reconcentrate back in higher poverty conditions. Considering these outcomes, we must look for ways that offer a more in-depth explanation. This study recommends rectifying the shortsighted way we have considered the experience of deconcentration and thus give consideration to those who make such decisions, playing particular attention to the attitudes, behaviors and social action of residents. Continuing to point the finger at structural barriers as indicators of behavior, albeit a real threat to mobility efforts, narrows what we can learn about outcomes of deconcentration.

1.7.5 The Outcomes of Deconcentration

Turning to a discussion of outcomes for relocating families, we find there has been little systematic research done that can adequately explain specific criteria or constraints that guide new housing decisions (Zaterman, Gross, & Kalenak, 2001). Moreover, studies conducted at varying sites confirm a wide variation in familial need and preference for mobility programs that offer relocation assistance (Peterson & Williams, 1995). For example, with those households who received mobility counseling, it was found that a family's demographics and socioeconomic status influenced the ability to move into a lower-poverty neighborhood (Goering et al., 1999).

The overarching drive to mobilize low-income families continues despite findings that many of these households do not make their way into lower-poverty neighborhoods. Research supporting such claims has found that relocating public housing families often moved back into proximal and similar high-poverty neighborhoods (Goering et al., 1995; Goetz, 2003; Varady & Preiser, 1998; Varady & Walker, 2000; Varady & Walker, 2003). The prevailing notion is that, through the destination decisions of these households, the outcomes of deconcentration are balanced between perceived opportunity and contextual constraints that residents face. That is, whether families make it to advantaged locales depends heavily upon the structural characteristics that propel or repel the decision-maker. Much of the relevant literature, quantifiably supported, indicates decisions largely through these macro-mechanisms.

Examples of this extensive body of work have demonstrated that more than one-third voucher holders now live in high-poverty locales with associative problems and barriers (Cunningham et al., 2005). This means of those who chose Housing Choice Vouchers in response to dispersal, a significant number of them have relocated into similar poverty environs to the ones from which they were originally displaced (Turner & Wilson, 1998). Turner and Wilson (1998) found that, compared with white counterparts, black and Hispanic displaced families were more like to settle back into high poverty. Newman and Schnare (1997) found that neighborhood conditions of voucher holders were generally worse than unsubsidized renter households.

A mobility study conducted in Washington, DC, found evidence that although low-income families were moving away from the worst neighborhoods they were, in

fact, reconcentrating into high-poverty tracts (Liebman et al., 2004, pg. 4). Varady and Walker's (2000) study conducted in Alameda, California, showed that the success of relocation for low-income families reflected the area's acceptance of racial and economic diversity. When families in Chicago had the choice to move, many families reported they were not willing to relocate because of the perception of discrimination (Popkin et al., 2000). In these and other studies, the empirical models generally delineated specific demographics including age, gender and race along with housing and neighborhood conditions as ways to better understand decisions to move among the general public (S. J. Newman & Duncan, 1979; Varady, 1986); public housing residents (L. Freeman, 1998; L.J. Vale, 1997; Varady, Walker, & Wang, 2001); and elders as a population subgroup (Varady, 1980).

Here we find relocation studies commonly focused on broad demographics, including race and ethnicity, to demonstrate efficacy of the move, residential satisfaction and neighborhood effects. In many public housing studies, descriptive findings assigned to gender are generally deduced because, after all, the majority of residents heading subsidized households are female. Description assigned to age is perhaps even more limited in what we know of public housing deconcentration of poverty, with minimal attention given to the nuances of how age-related differences might reveal how residents deal with dispersal that could impact the relocation effort. This is to say, further the distillation of gender and age may provide further critical evaluation to current relocation practices in the de-concentration of public housing households.

Recent qualitative inquiry has centralized on determinants of mobility obstacles, largely using focus groups and brief biography to discern possible reasons and remedy. These findings have discovered that the number of dependent children represents a demographic marker of difficulty: the larger the family the more difficulty in finding housing in the private market (Popkin & Cunningham, 1999; Turner et al., 2002)**.** Lacking the skill to negotiate the private housing market as well as having significant health problems have also been identified as personal obstacles to mobility (Pashup et al., 2005). Surveying post-move satisfaction is yet another way to gauge outcomes of relocation by disentangling place-effects of environment, safety and access measures (Varady & Preiser, 1998; Varady & Walker, 2000).

There is also a sizeable amount of inquiry into poverty dispersal effects of scatter-site housing, which is comprised of small clustering of publicly owned housing units as opposed to a wider broadcasted dispersal from traditional complexes. The studies done with a comparison group show scattered-site residents reported less fear of crime (Burby & Rohe, 1989); higher levels of housing satisfaction (J. Hogan & Lengyel, 1985); continued employment isolation, yet higher levels of neighborhood satisfaction when compared with traditional public housing residents (Varady & Preiser, 1998). Clustered female residents in scatter-sites were more likely to find jobs through informal search methods as opposed to the more diverse job search networks of widely dispersed residents (Kleit, 2002).

What a review of these studies doesn't readily reveal are the processes that indicate how families weighed opportunity and constraint, how they imprinted

themselves onto decisions and how likely, within the degree of perceived obstacle, they would be to live in more affluent neighborhoods of influence. In these ways we fail to scrutinize the same set of "push" and "pull" factors that drives the common demands of general mobility (Rossi, 1955). By and large, these factors signify not only household necessity and desire to change residences, but also how they go about confronting constraints and choices, exclusion and accessibility in the process (Clark & Onaka, 1983).

Disentangling the "place matters" hypothesis focuses major emphasis on the degree to which structure of place impacts the individual.   If we are to understand process we must first look to the individual. In doing so, we recognize capacity and resource along with the inevitability of constraint for these householders. We also recognize that the degree of overcoming is tied to the ability of individuals to muster these capacities and resources available to the households. Van Kempen and Ozuekren (1998) identified four types of individual resources that are appropriate for study with this population: material, cognitive, political and social.

Briggs (1998) identified the overestimation of "community affects" in relocation strategies pointing out that personal relationships can outweigh the impact of the neighborhood. This study attempts to balance that scale by exploring in depth not only how personal relationships impact neighborhood but how such interpersonal aspects will reveal prospects of resettlement. In Chapter 6, we use Briggs' converging aspects of "getting by" (tweaking social support within community) versus "getting ahead" (leveraged social, economic and educational opportunity, notably outside

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community) to get a sense of spatial and social rootedness. In these ways we build an important distinction in understanding how low-income families fare in their neighborhoods (Briggs, ibid).

It would appear that the underlying ideological thrust to deconcentration is an attempt to equalize "decent and safe housing for all." Yet there is scholarly criticism based on theoretical suppositions on how to achieve such balance. There also remains a citizenry wary of what such enacted policy will mean for them in their own neighborhoods and communities.

1.7.6 The Criticism of Deconcentration Policy

The ideological momentum that drives household dispersal and relocation is not without critics that point to the "realities" that confront those who are displaced. As Greenbaum (2002) maintained, the rally to disperse is nothing more than a euphemism for forced relocation sated with passive characterization of affected residents. Wilson's widely used hypothetical "underclass" - largely considered the "face" of deconcentration - has also drawn criticism. Scholars such as Newman (1999) have further challenged his hypothesis by pointing out the strict use of census data misses the potential for enriched ethnographical studies. Overlooking such elements means we, as scholars, also lose the ability to study mechanisms of coping and support that give valuable information about how family and culture operate in old and new neighborhoods (Newman, ibid).

For some, the fact that people are moved involuntarily implies that if dispersal disturbs the delicate balance of a household's social support then social capital is

diminished or, at the very least, not increased for these families (Briggs, 1997; Popkin et al., 2000). This calls into question the balance of change versus stability. For urban subsidized households, mobility change is touted as a positive gain for the household; it is theorized to improve life chances and broaden opportunity potential. For seemingly all others, excluding these urban dwellers, change is considered disruptive implying stability is the desire outcome of civic life in the neighborhood and community. Coleman (1988) stressed the importance of stability in his social capital perspective insisting that instability can lead to diminished trust and other life problems including school failures. Or as Putnam (2000) put it, just as frequent repotting disrupts root systems of plants, so can frequent moves disrupt the sense of community in [all] people.

The practicality of encouraged moves into neighborhoods of low minority concentration has been a source of criticism for some, citing a host of problems associated with such moves. Lack of adequate transportation, affordable childcare and threats of racial harassment have proven to be problems associated with mobility programs into the suburbs (Rubinowitz & Rosenbaum, 2000). Other critics have pointed out that dispersal and integration of African American families into mixed settings undermine and weaken strong black neighborhoods. When minority residents are forced from their communities in which they are a majority they lose, in the process, important established social and family ties (Calmore, 1993; Tein, 1992). There have been those who decry the systematic dispersal of seemingly strongly connected families and instead call for those who reside in such neighborhoods to be empowered to improve and revitalize their own communities (Calmore, 1999; Wilkinson, 2000).

What's more, the censure of social engineering strikes at what some have labeled 'environmental determinism" that minimizes the importance of the individual to the overstatement of place-effects, coalesced now into something closer to American moral environmentalism (von Hoffman, 1998). Some critics decry any attempt of deconcentration as nothing more than a repackaging of the forgotten lessons from failures of mass relocation during the era of urban renewal that dismantled minority political and social synergy (Harrison, 1974). Further, in the ways that places have been described as "distressed" or "blighted" have misrepresented what actually were problems associated with measures of neighborhood service quality. Yet such labeling, now a part of our lexicon, has come to characterize an entire community of residents, further stigmatizing often-fragile self-assessment (Fullilove, 2004).

Still others who criticize deconcentration have pointed to the discriminatory prejudices that residents continue to face in their forays into middle class neighborhoods. While receiving communities have received ample attention for their embattled fear of invasion, there are also problems with often-hostile private housing landlords. Further, private developers often produce inferior quality housing at higher costs for these in-migrating low-income households (Greenbaum, 2002). As these and other conflictual ideas about dispersal and relocation persist, for many there is concern that in tight and expensive housing markets, vouchers will not be able to accomplish residential mobility (Cunningham & Sawyer, 2005; Katz, 2001; Turner & Wilson, 1998).

As we see, housing policies designed to deconcentrate poverty are not without scholarly critics. Hughes (1997) questioned whether these dispersal efforts beyond the inner city confines really could improve the economic independence of these households. Rather, for some, the dearth of job qualifications represents the core deficit of those living in poverty, not housing, per se (Case & Katz, 1991). These authors found that maladaptive neighborhood effects, endemic in many housing developments that included peer criminal activity and substance abuse, did not disappear even in a tight labor market.   However, Newman (1999) pointed out that none of these counter arguments looked at the relative advantages and disadvantages of expanding job qualifications in relation to various neighborhood constraints.

1.8 Framing the Study

This study of the experiential processes of mobility behavior and social action among a sampling of dispersed and relocated public housing mothers is framed from two theoretical social psychological approaches: life course perspective and symbolic interactionism.   Understanding that such processes are tempered by a life course exposure to risk factors balanced by the extent to which they have developed resilience brings the experience to the individual level.

In Chapter 2 an explanation is offered for how these theoretical approaches support exploring what we can learn *from* (rather than merely *about)* the adaptive behavior of public housing residents. The emphasis is subtle yet important. Learning from the actions of residents' means we observe, listen and synthesize information to offer explanation. Learning about such actions more notably means surveying and

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pinpointing at a distance aggregated trends for outcomes of behavior. It is also important to note that characterizing mobility behavior begins from the inside outward. That is, first we examine individual capacity, taking in familial/cultural influence operating in tandem with structural pathways of institutional opportunity and restraint. This lays the foundation of the life course perspective. It also lays the foundation of this study.

Symbolic interactionism, as a microsociological theory of social interaction, gives a framework of further understanding to the *meso* implications of familial/cultural influences that nurture and impact human behavior. It also gives added meaning to how these women, in particular, have used such resource to form, by degree, skills of resilience, even in the face of chronic hardship. The conceptualization of this theory outlines the cultural and historical contexts in which social interaction is grounded in the commonality of customs and norms. Such interaction illustrates how people find their place in a world consisting of social *processe*s not social *structures* (Stryker, 1980). In these ways, how individuals behave is taken from the experiences, the stories and the situations of how people live a day-to-day life (Ashley & Orenstein, 1990).

1.9 The Layout of the Dissertation

Here in Chapter 1 a research agenda has been identified through a detailed literature review devoted to the myriad of issues related to the effects of poverty concentration and the goals of deconcentration. In between, we assessed policy understanding, theory and execution, particularly identifying gaps, pointing out several that this study addresses. Notably, policy overestimation of mobility outcomes

indicative of the effects of place to the oversight of the individual drives this inquiry. Failing to recognize the experience of deconcentration from the residential perspective means we ignore important information for future housing policy.   Used to frame this life course study of public housing mothers, we examine their lives in ways that reveal how they came to live in concentrated situations. We listen to how they now confront the steps needed to reach deconcentrated ones. We are especially interested in how the impact that such sweeping change, from place-based subsidy to person-based mobility, is distilled to an emotional, cognitive and behavioral experience in life course context.

Using the literature as a guide to study the individual has meant the need to examine many issues. Some are related to internal processes of change, while others are related to external perceptions, conditions, and constraints that surface as residents undergo the rigors of deconcentration. We understand how concentrated poverty proliferated and the variant debate for spatial deconcentration. We have recounted how public perception of poverty matters, even as some residents venture into mixed income settings while others do not. In many ways, using the literature to identify policy gaps, we see the failure to regard the public housing resident as a decision maker. As in general mobility discussions, here these mothers had to make a move, all the while juggling needs, preferences and hopes that we all do under such circumstances. Attempts to grasp the relationship of agency, culture and structure as the basis for residential behavior force us to consider factors beyond the rather unilateral intentions of improved place. When we expand such thinking we begin to consider the

psychosocial dimensions of capacity, motivation and negotiation of the affected residents on behalf of their families.

Understanding the far-reaching consequences of deconcentration - thus maximizing the potential for mobility efforts - requires a distillation of each phase from initial preparation for *dispersal* to follow-through of the associated rigors of *relocation* to moving toward a sense of *resettlement*, exposing a series of necessary decisions that will impact the head of household and her family for some time to come. As a policy, deconcentration does not begin and end with relocation but instead has farther-reaching implications. It is theorized here that it is our understanding of *how* residents reconcile an involuntary dispersal coupled with the ways they equip themselves for relocation that can offer glimpses into the likelihood of eventual resettlement in new homes and neighborhoods, regardless of whether they are able to make and maintain the lower-poverty leap.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the dissertation's theoretical framework. Chapter 3 explains quantitative sampling and qualitative collection and analysis methodology, site descriptions of the study, as well as identified limitations of this study. In Chapter 4, we look at life *before* deconcentration from Jane Long Terrace by exploring reactions to dispersal in a life course context. Framed by the variant coping styles – problem versus emotion focused - of two women in particular, their stories, spanning childhood to current day, are used to explain their mobility decisions. Operationalizing the mobility behavior model offered, we will see, relies upon the distillation of deconcentration into three phases. Through this experience, we recognize life course pathways of ongoing

development, relatedness, education, work and motherhood as influencing present day mobility behavior.

Chapter 5 covers life *during* deconcentration, explored as residential response to the rigorous steps of relocation through the stories of the three women, categorized according to age/lifestage of the mother. In ways that identify the age-based needs of the mother and her family in cultural context, we examine the draw of place, the quality and appropriateness of accessed services and other factors that mothers use to make decisions for their families often overlooked in most mobility studies. Of interest here is how these individualized pathways, primarily based on demands as a mother, cut across age, lifestage needs, wants and aspirations to reveal personal action along with familial/cultural interaction to make choices pertaining to relocation.

In Chapter 6 we are interested in the assessment of life *after* relocation now four years after dispersal: the prospects of resettlement phase. If we are to follow at least the theoretical implications of deconcentration, the quality of housing and neighborhood as well as an overall sense of self should be improved or at least in the state of improving. Narrated through the life course accounts of three women, we listen for self-appraised established roots, noting the wins and losses to get there. The phase of resettlement is theorized as an interwoven network of culminating factors, including those used to deal with the reactions before and responses during processes of deconcentration. In this way, the likelihood of resettlement will depend upon a number of factors including personal disposition, met familial/cultural needs as well as perceived abilities to negotiate household opportunities to the satisfaction of the mother. In this way, the

perceived institutional alliance with the local housing authority is central to this discussion.

Here we are interested in not only understanding the impact of personal coping, familial/cultural needs in age/life stage terms, we are also interested in how these women used the structural supports touted in the policy of deconcentration to ameliorate family risk. This study, taking the view of the resident, is framed by the *perception* of improved life chances and the benefits from access previously denied. Leveraging and bargaining the structural/institutional advantages of mobility to get ahead we examine life after relocation from the perspective of three women: one who has remained in public housing, one who left voluntarily and one who was evicted nearly two years after dispersal.

Lastly in the concluding chapter 7, theoretical offerings and data findings are summarized in ways to better inform policymakers, housing administrators and scholars as to the adaptive processes of deconcentration. These become policy implications of this study. Acknowledging there might be more to the study of low-income residential mobility beyond surveyed satisfaction in a preferably lower poverty neighborhood captures the need to dig for process. By examining life course detail we come to differentiate residential needs and preferences in order to maximize administrative effort as well as better insure residential resettlement. In all of these ways, further research aims are offered to focus the scholarly future for mobilizing low-income families that will take full advantage of the efforts of federally subsidized housing assistance.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We create a blueprint of our life course by mapping available resources, the premises, our intentions, the awareness, the fears and hopes… in determining how experience registers, how environments are selected or modified, and how the stages of life are negotiated.

Block (1981, pp 40-41)

How we sift through personal experiences, by what processes we make sense of

constraints confronted and what we bring to these encounters is the essence of what

Block (1981) described above as our blueprint of the life course. This construction

summarizes individuals as agents who sift and face up to, thus interpret experience and

choices made in proximal context, continually negotiating one's life course direction.

The combined forces of any of these elements define the uniqueness of the individual

and by what pathways a life course unfolds.   Such mapping also implies relating, in a

larger social context, to how we go about getting personal, familial and cultural needs

and wants met through our personal choices and developing lifestage negotiation.

The implications of overarching elements of structural authority, evident and

necessary in every day life, must also be acknowledged in this blueprint. In ways that

illustrate the need to interpret experiences, individuals often personalize such authority

in a relational context. For example, when people express emotion at "the system",

most likely they are recalling encounters with individuals who represent the system. In

this study, "structural authority" is the local public housing authority and, for these

residents, the *relationship* of authority representatives becomes defined in expressed

terms including trust, communication and support. While subsidized residents usually

come into contact with a myriad of institutions, the focus remains on the local authority

as the predominate example. Drawing on reciprocal elements, including social trust, in

interaction with institutions becomes one way to examine attempts of public housing

residents to meet needs, wants and aspirations by taking advantage of proffered

opportunity after household dispersal. Therefore, the crux of this study pivots on

exploring *how* these individuals perceived such relation and used elements of their

psychosocial selves to appropriate the life course chances brought on by

deconcentration.

Using a life course perspective of risk and resilience, the purpose of this study is

to demonstrate that deconcentration of poverty, from a residential perspective, is an

experience of change and adaptation. As we review from Chapter 1, such perspective

centralizes the micro-level experience of agency, layered by a set of nested influences

that include proximal (meso) factors of family/culture and (macro) structures (See

Figure 1.2). Further, this perspective is affected by converging early pathways of

family in childhood, schooling during adolescence, teenage motherhood and work-

related tenure, coming together with present day needs, wants, and hopes. These

pathways are the independent variables of study.

To operationalize the experience in ways of exploration, we denote the emotional reaction and behavioral response to three phases of deconcentration: coping with *dispersal*, met familial/cultural needs of *relocation,* and prospects of *resettlement*. Factors of adaptive resilience will tell us how an individual will experience the change brought about in each phase. These three phases are the dependent variables of study.

A primary focus of this study is to explore the second phase 'relocation' and how residents go about making decisions after dispersal. Of particular interest is how skills of resilience are used in the face of such change as well as how age and lifestage familial/cultural needs are met through the role of mother. In this phase, the mobility behavior and social action of residents can be explained as the overlapping combination of three spheres of influence: *micro* characteristics of human agency; *meso* influences of linked lives in family and culture on the embedded motherhood response to household need, want, hope; and *macro* transactional synergy of constraint and opportunity between the household and the institution of public housing.

 Thus a summary goal of this dissertation is to increase scholarly understanding of deconcentration of poverty by addressing the effects of the policy from the resident's perspective, told in her own words. To do so, I describe current circumstances of lifestage need, explore life course pathways of childhood family and adolescent school and thus seek to explain the mobility behavior and social action in the aftermath of household dispersal. I use a sample of 12 displaced public housing mothers who, with their families, relocated from a downtown complex over four years ago. In Chapter 1, we were introduced to the associated ills of poverty concentration that have necessitated

the executed policy of deconcentration, signaling significant change in structural features of public housing philosophy, proviso and programming. The call for a more focused look at resident behavior and social action also was made, particularly as we search for the ways and means residents go about making relocation decisions.

That such significant change marks significant shift in residential everyday life has not been adequately examined in terms of *how* affected residents form relocation decisions in the aftermath of household dispersal. Thus, here in Chapter 2, an explanation of the life course framework used to explore residential meaning of deconcentration and the behavior of housing choice in the context of social change is introduced. Included are the cultural elements of the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism as synthesized by Denzin's (2002) focus on relation, explanation and biography of personal experiences, limits of structure and public policy dictates. This focus lends a deeper understanding of the individual of study. If we do not develop critical insight into their subjective world, we lose the ability to interpret the learning experiences and turning points of those involved (Denzin ibid).

2.1 The Life Course Perspective

In the ways that the nuance of experience among residents differentiates what is regarded as a global policy of deconcentration, this study is designed to operationalize as well as humanize the processes of dispersal, relocation and resettlement. That is, while we "break down" phases to allow recognition at each step, we also provide critical (and overlooked) elements to aid in understanding how low-income families react, respond and resolve the impact of sweeping social change that has reformed

subsidized housing. Life course analysis gives central attention to this relationship of social change bringing opportunities, renewing constraints and affecting individual lives. We gather such evidence through personal histories that give insight into interlocking choices and motives abutting the macro forces of structure.

As both a paradigm and a concept, studying the life course serves as one of the best ways to document social change – such as that underway in subsidized housing assistance - because a primary focus is on the relationship between institution and individual across age and life stage (Heinz, 2003). Yet it is important to not polarize stability versus change or continuity versus discontinuity into an either/or situation. That is, the inevitability of human development must allow for both malleability as well as consistency across the life course (Caspi, 1998; Hinde, 1988; Settersten, 1999). Nonetheless, capturing the interplay of personal, social, cultural, political, and economic developments across the life course, such interdependency provides a useful multidimensional framework whereby we can examine the pathways of individual lives.

In this life course review study, we are interested in not only understanding the impact of the more recent deconcentration events on these women, but also situating their earlier life experiences in broader context. In Figure 2.1, we examine Elder and Caspi's (1990) model for studying the connection between earlier and later life events. While these authors presented two models, we focus on Model A for this study. Moving back through time, we build in past events that may be directly linked to the outcome of interest. Here we examine the outcomes of dispersal, relocation and prospects of resettlement through the distal processes of family in childhood and school in

adolescence moving into the event of teen motherhood. We also incorporate more proximal events of life before deconcentration by spending time learning about life at Jane Long Terrace.

Model A
Linking outcomes to events

Model B
Linking events to outcomes
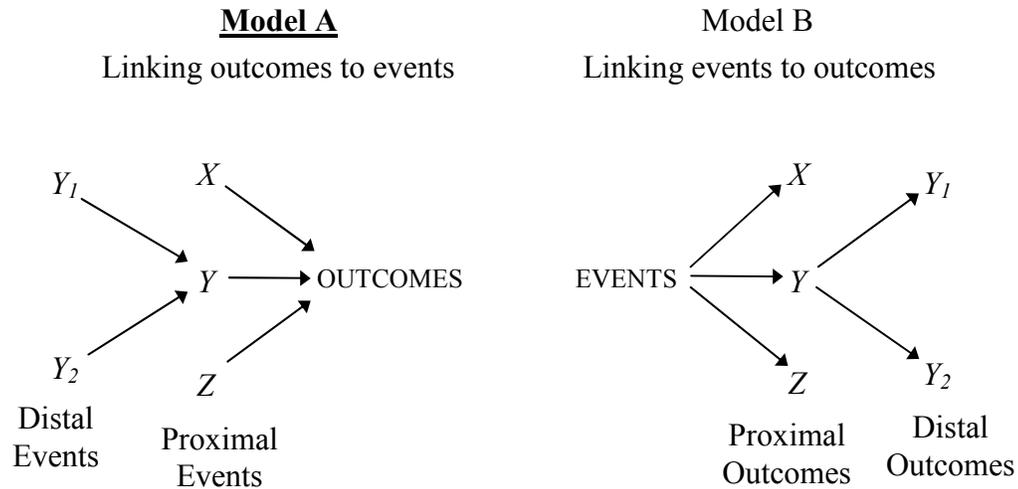
Figure 2.1 Studying social change in the life course: Two models.

Source: Elder, G. H. Jr., & Caspi, A. (1990). Studying lives in a changing society: Sociological and personaological explorations. In A. I. Rabin (Ed), *Studying persons and lives: The Henry A. Murray lectures in personality*. New York: Springer. p. 212.

Life course scholarship grew during the 1970s after the more cyclical life cycle approach was criticized for being too static and normative. The historical contributions date back to the Chicago School (1915-1935) where researchers inspired inquiry and observation into all manner of social phenomena observed at the group and individual levels (Elder, 1978). In those early studies, scholarly interest was in adaptive behavior of groups and individuals in response to specific historical circumstances. They particularly focused on how individuals adapted to change brought about by what was a

usually stressful situation. In this way, social change, as adaptation, came about through the interaction of social structure and specifics of the situation. An important feature of life course study is the emphasis of individual and the family within social context. We can study in nested form the individual, the interdependent lives of family members and the relationships between family and institutional spheres (Elder, ibid).

The more flexible and complex life course viewpoint of human development also provides a useful way of linking personal choice and psychosocial functioning that informs not only the internal life of an individual but also the selections they make (Featherman 1983). Of special interest is the interaction between individual life courses and structural contexts, recognizing the empirical links between early and later life events across the lifespan and the interdependency of various life events and pathways (Elder, 1985a; O'Rand, 1996; Vartanian & McNamara, 2002).

Elder (1994) summarized five core life principles that explain the link between the life course and the adaptive impact of social change, specifically focusing on how individuals and families adapt to the experience of change. Figure 2.2 illustrates how each is important to this study, with particular emphasis on concepts of human agency and linked lives.
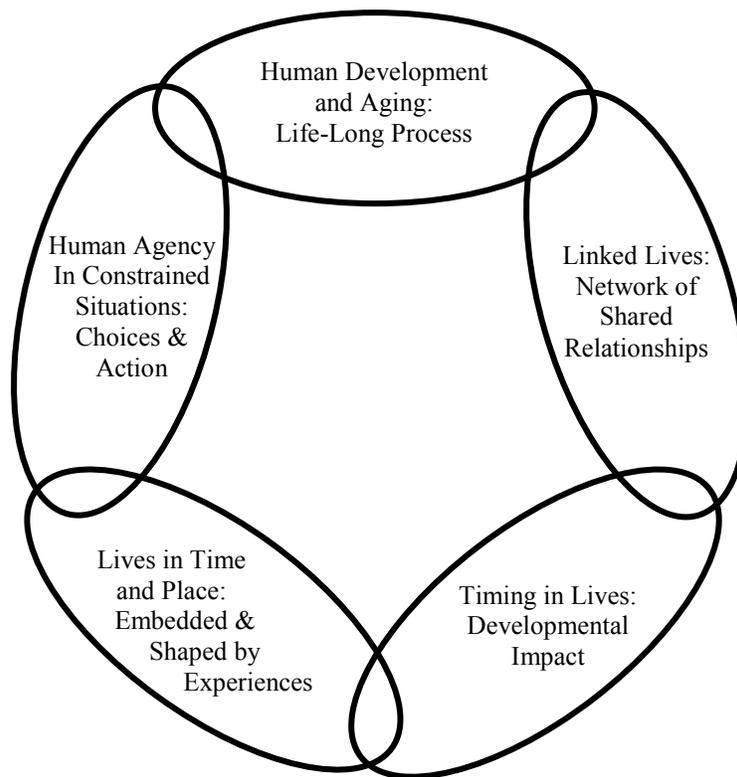
Figure 2.2 Principles of life course theory.
Source: Glen H. Elder, Jr., 2003. The emergence of life course studies and theory
Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica

Life course study comes with a myriad of terms that require some explanation.

In this study, the terms, *pathway, turning point and trajectory* are used most often and

are defined as the following. Pathway, a somewhat straightforward term, is a

theoretical construct derived and carved by prior events that have potential for affecting

future outcomes (D. P. Hogan & Astone, 1986). The empirical links between early and

later life events span the life course and demonstrate the interdependency of various life

pathways. In these ways, the study of the life course throws perspective on the

individual in a psychosocial light.   This is best characterized as the intersection of

pathways during an individual's life course. This means "linked lives" of family will

shape the form of one's life course in pathways taken and the development of social

identity (Elder, 1985a; O'Rand, 1996; Vartanian & McNamara, 2002).

Trajectory, another core concept of life course study, charts experiences within

specific domains over a longer period of time (Elder, 1985b, 1998). Elder (1985)

posited trajectories as distal range developments within particular social and economic

contexts.   Thus, trajectory is considered a long-range pathway over the life span.

Marked by long-term patterns of stability and change, continuity and discontinuity, a

trajectory typically follows patterns of pauses, loops, forward movements and

directional shifts (Pearlin & Skaff, 1996).   Moreover, the correlates of trajectories of

poverty and the status of children's mental health demonstrate the cumulative negative

effects of living in chronic poverty (McCleod & Shanahan, 1996).

In addition to pathways and trajectories, another key component of describing

and analyzing lives is *turning point*.   This concept has been somewhat difficult to

consensually define, generally falling along the lines of subjective (feelings of) versus

objective (actual observed) change. Clausen (1993, pg 17) therefore outlined a turning

point as the perception of "new possibilities for self-realization" and the potential for a

"new sense of identity" as critical aspects of perceived turning points in people's lives.

Pathways of choices, influences and relationships of youth form trajectories of

adulthood in ways that bridge individual and family development to macro-social

processes highlighting the synchronicity of self, culture and socio-historical time

(Hareven, 1977). While no claim of prediction or consistency from childhood to adulthood is made here, exploration of childhood and adolescence can give important clues about how earlier life decisions chart subsequent pathways, impacting present day behavior and functioning (Elder, 1974, 1999). Therefore this study examines pathways, spanning childhood, adolescence and adulthood, covering trajectories of family, school, teen motherhood and work. In this way, conceptualizing the life course as a bridge allows us to consider the relationship between personal and familial experiences and those larger social changes incorporating the effects of history, social structure and individual meaning. It also allows us to consider the interdependent nature of individual, family and social development.

The life course approach encourages a myriad of data collection techniques and analysis, ranging from surveys, in-person interviews as well as longitudinal statistical procedures that highlight events, transitions and trajectories. Yet some scholars have identified shortcomings. The lack of interdisciplinary standardization in measurement and definition makes it difficult to systematically test hypotheses derived from theory. Further criticism leveled is that the life course perspective is multidimensional rather than inter-dimensional (Dewilde, 2003). That is, there is no shared vocabulary, no standardized measurement for testing theoretical hunches pulled from concepts, definitions and methods about the differentiation and heterogeneity of the life course. The lack of a solid theoretical foundation is also a drawback to empirical research (Dewilde, ibid).

While these criticisms point to the "borrowed" traditions and insights of other disciplines (such as psychology, sociology and anthropology), Marshall (1996) pointed to such diversity as the reason that the theoretically divergent field of social science has been so widely received. The contributions of life course study are many, but perhaps most significantly inquiry into "human lives" has lead us to question how social context affects human lives and vice versa. The framework of life course research is to search for ways to study the dynamic and contextual nature of our lives (Settersten, 1999).

In ways that capture human agency of choice and age/lifestage roles of individuals and families, the life course illuminates embedded social and cultural relations across linked lives. Illustrating the changing contexts of daily life and underscored by the implied vibrancy, there is great need to study lives in an interdisciplinary fashion that bridges concepts and methods. For these reasons, the life course perspective is chosen to lay the foundation for a better understanding of the personal meaning of change in the deconcentration of poverty.

2.2 Changing Times: From a Resident's Perspective

The notion of stability and change, a classic theme in much of social science research, is the bedrock of life course scholarship. Here we expand on what Elder & Johnson (2002, pg. 4) identified as a critical element of life course study: "making sense of lives in changing times." In ways made clear through the words of these subjects, for them these are changing times. Such sweeping change may also compound the fact that low-income households are often in a state of flux. Here we are interested in how the processes of deconcentration, forming a set of unique pathways for these families, will

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reveal how residents will be able to take advantage of such change. And while the research focus remains squarely fixed on the lived-through experiences of the mother as head of household, the implications of change reverberate through all family members, particularly those of her children.

That is why we look to the life course to determine how personal choices and social influences lead up to present day functioning. Many choices of the relocating mother may have been made in constrained situations of change that, in turn, may also affect development and outcomes across her household. Because the life course is in continual flow, personal choices and social influences surrounding issues, decisions, reactions, and responses to deconcentration continue to affect development and outcomes for these women and their families.

Presenting the resident in age-graded roles and expected patterns along with the influence of emerging pathways of personal choice and experience indicate changing life stage needs and turning points arcing the life course (Elder, 1985a, 1992). The concept of cohort also gives meaning to the study of the impact of age across the life course, giving a perspective to societal age structuring (Clausen, 1972). Recognizing micro, meso and macro explanations of behavior also means recognizing the intersection of a social life, the impact of social change and the boundaries of social structure (Elder, 1995; Elder & Pellerin, 1998) as a means of exploring the experience of deconcentration. Further, social change can impact people in different ways according to characteristics of age, gender, economics, etc (Elder, 1974).

Within this general consensus are two diverging concepts: large-scale change and individual/ small group level change. That is, looking through the life course lens can give important clues about the impact of social change on the lives of individuals as well as the social structures of daily life that constraint and enable. In transactional context, the strategies of deconcentration intent on changing "the geography of opportunity" (Galster, 2002; Galster & Killen, 1995) touch on all of these motivations for social change. Therefore, if we were to identify one major impact of deconcentration on residents it would fall under the category of change.

In a general sense for determining how individuals respond to change, we follow the debate of how individuals tolerate discontinuity over continuity. Alwin (1995) proposed two developmental views: one of flexibility and adaptability over the life course; another of flexibility in early life only to become rigid, as we grow older. Geared to mobilize individuals out of poverty and transport households into locales once inaccessible, the deconcentration of poverty pivots on the proposal that changing the unsuitable social and economic environments of isolation and desolation can improve the chances for changing individual life course opportunity over a lifetime. In these ways and by policy initiatives, we can expect that individuals remain flexible to such change.

The broad topic of change reaches every aspect of this study, relating not only to individual/family change but to policy formation and implementation as well. In a general way, change has been termed the result of conflict among creative elites, of new modes of thinking, of external forces, as well as individual motivation to achieve

(Lauer, 1977). Each of these aspects could be used to describe the changes underway in federally subsidized housing. The conceptual change from place-based subsidy to person-based mobility has enormous implications and, some hold, has come about as the result of partisan conflict exerted from external forces such as policymakers and administrators. Yet social change has often been discussed without a definition of the concept, and has been used variously by researchers to refer to everything from attitude change to the historical evolution of societies (Lauer, 1977). Even Andersson (1999, p. 134) reminds, "it is a complicated endeavor to study the link between individual and social change."

Nonetheless this is an expectation of deconcentration of poverty; that we can know the degree to which the individual is personally changed by the social changes made in one's environment. In a global sense, spatially de-concentrating low-income households represents major social change for all involved in the fight to combat urban poverty (Goetz, 2000; Khadduri, 2001; Rosenbaum, 1995). To a large extent, policy strategies pivot on interconnected change at every level; change in market demands, change in community re-composition; change in housing administrative protocol and change in the daily lives of affected residents.

Much is speculated about the changes underway with market demands and necessary community re-composition frequently couched within parameters of structural resistance and mobility obstacle for in-migrating subsidized households. The literature has focused on a number of critical barriers that thwart residential effectiveness of such change. This is particularly true for families attempting to convert

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vouchers in the private market, barriers highlight the actual and potential for discrimination in the housing search (Lenz & Coles, 1999; Turner et al., 2002). Likewise, the scale of effort and potential for political opposition also thwarts a low-income family's attempt to relocate to better circumstances (Goetz, 2000). Hughes (1993) reminded us that the lack of political interest across a fragmented metropolitan is deconcentration of poverty's greatest enemy. Then again, dispersal of poor neighborhoods has also been viewed as a means of dismantling minority political and social synergy (Harrison, 1974).

To a lesser degree of consideration, change underway in housing administrative protocols involving re-structuring service delivery has been recognized as a potential source of maximizing individual efforts. Yet there remains a paucity of apparent interest, save arguing the efficacy of comprehensive relocation counseling to relocating families (Polikoff, 1997). Others have argued that any relocation counseling costs must be offset by a reduction across other categories of expenses, including health care and welfare (Goering, 2003).

What seems as a lack of coordination across upper level policy administrators and trickled down to the local level is what Abravanel (2004) identified in his call for fundamental administrative reform. We revisit this issue in Chapter 7, but for now recognize the need for change. Paying particular attention to the issues of communication, management and autonomy, Abravanel pointed to the monitoring relationship between the federal and local housing agencies as in need of an overhaul.

The author particularly focused on how such decentralized reform might play out as improved standards and best practices for the oversight of public housing residents.

For all the talk of change at various levels with various stakeholders, seemingly even less attention is paid to how change affects the household of the public house resident. As discussed here, change brought about by deconcentration affects the psychosocial dimensions of daily life, impacting mobility behavior and social action, thus impacting related factors of market demands, community re-composition and housing delivery. That is, by continuing to conceptualize residential change as externally driven we fortify, perhaps erroneously, the singular notion that to change structure (for the better), will change the person (for the better).

To be sure, the social shift in housing philosophy has created new ways of thinking about low-income housing and for some residents, through dispersal and relocation, has lifted opportunity and seeming aspirations of motivation. Yet the literature has tended to highlight the important conflictual aspect of external forces that thwart relocation (i.e. racism and classism) while largely overlooking how the individual, at the psychosocial level, has been affected. This study seeks to recognize both the conflict of structural hurdles and the individual capacity to reconcile change as important to our understanding of public housing dispersal strategies and relocation policies for low-income families.

2.3 Framing Life Course Change: Acknowledging Risk and Resilience

The exposure to risk factors that can qualify an individual for public housing assistance factors into behavior, so failing to note such exposure, particularly when

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talking about the resident as agent, would be remiss. However we add injustice to the discussion if we fail to note the accompanying features of resilience that, for many, balance personal hardship and adversity. The ebb and flow of the life course tells that for every diminished quality there is also evidence that mitigating forces in the form of resources, support and services can help to moderate life course trajectories and effects (Marks, 1996).

This is certainly true of a life course carved by risk, for many formed in the early years following into adulthood. The notion of the "disadvantaged life course' is marked by stratified interaction with the State, the market and the family over the individual life course. Usually these long-term implications are magnified over time (O'Rand, 1996). Stratification *over* the life course defines intra-cohort differentiation of 'cumulative advantage and disadvantage' formulated by Merton (Dewilde, 2003) signaling stratified opportunity and resource allocation within cohorts defining unequal access and also increasing over time.

There is also evidence that individuals demonstrate trajectories of resilience; "bouncing back" from earlier deprivation to "self-right" over time, demonstrating coping capacity in the face of multiple life events and transitions (Vaillant, 2002; Werner & Smith, 2001). The source of such capacity is said to be a set of protective factors that concretize strength in the biopsychosocial framework (Settersten, 1997) including biological makeup, dispositions, social support, and opportunity life events (Hutchison, 2005).

In a specific sense, this study explores the impact of change by theorizing the distinct phases of dispersal, relocation, resettlement. In the process, we attempt to humanize the experience of each through the explanation of mobility behavior and social action of these families. By focusing on mobility behavior and social action I recognize both the psychology and the sociology of my endeavors; that is, I firmly position the resident in psychosocial contexts of agency, culture and structure viewed from a life course perspective. Working in a nested fashion, here understanding behavior means "peeling back" the individual, first as self, then in life stage context of mother, cultural identity of public housing neighbor, community member and beyond.

Framed by psychology gives an opportunity to enrich not only what we know about the developmental aspects of a growing and changing self, but also allows us to explore the individual in ways not readily used in most mobility studies of public housing residents. That these women use something of themselves to deal with daily stressors implies they might tend to call upon these same mechanisms to deal with the changes brought about by household dispersal and relocation. Elder and Caspi (1990) identified the *accentuation principle* related to environmental changes and life course impact. The principle provides a link between social change and life experiences. This principle states that when confronted with new situations, particularly during times of stress and challenge, individuals will use their most prominent traits to deal with the change. That is, in times of transition, one's psychological disposition is emphasized. We then come to "predict" one's behavior to a present day situation based upon previously similar exposures during transitional periods (Rutter, 1994).

Additionally, Atchley's (1989) continuity theory proposed that, although humans seek change, we also need certain psychosocial equilibrium of constancy/continuity. Adapting to present day change is linked to one's perceived past through psychological traits and sociological influences that have worked in the past. In these ways, psychosocial factors of coping used to deal with the unknown become pronounced and utilized in order to deal with change. In both accentuation and continuity we find a critical aspect of information about psychosocial functioning in the face of everyday life as well as serious adversity.

Through a sociological lens, we uncover processes for how, weaving in the merging pathways of family, school, teen motherhood and work, present day social life is formed and managed. Retrospective framing across the life course is important to this study because the focus is on behavior, a concept heavily loaded on the basis of psychological motivation not only by individual differences and internally based personality traits but also by the social context in which we live and strive to belong (Ferguson, 1989). Likewise the notion of linked lives in embedded social relationships, a core concept of life course scholarship, means behavior as well as collective social action is grounded in the connection with others. In this study, respondents are embedded in the lives of their families.

Therefore, we come to consider mobility behavior and social action of deconcentration not merely as "an outcome" measured in snapshot format but rather as a culmination of factors that extend personal choice. Such factors span familial/cultural influences as well as the boundaries of structural stability and change that impact not

only current but future psychosocial relationships, influences and strategies of action. Equipping the urban householder with psychosocial capacity in ways that acknowledge trait differences along with the impact of familial/cultural relationships influences the degree to which these individuals negotiate "getting ahead" versus "getting by", albeit amidst structural opportunity and constraint. In turn, such detail lends richness to our understanding for mobility outcomes. It activates and layers a person-place milieu in ways previously overlooked. Instead of couching mobility behavior only from the impact/draw of one place over another, here "place" takes on a personal, cultural and social meaning that carries impact on behavior and social action.

Such notion of the impact of place follows Gotham's (2003) ideas that we may come closer to understanding the behavior and the social action, thus the agency of the urban poor, if we redefine their agency in terms of assigning spatial meanings that constraint or enable personal behavior and social action. Such understanding takes the view of the individual beyond the more stereotypical assignment of resistance and/or adaptation as means of explaining behavior and social action in a spatial context. In these ways, space is reconceptualized as "a material product of social relations, a manifestation of social relation and a social relation itself" (Gotham, 2003, pg. 724).

<u>2.4 Finding Meaning Through Symbolic Interactionism</u>

Symbolic interactionism, a microsociological theory of social interaction, gives further understanding to the *meso* implications of familial/cultural influences that nurture and impact human behavior. Borrowing from a theory that emphasizes the culturally shared meaning of action in evolving interaction (Plummer, 2000), the focus

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on meaning gives an opportunity to explore all three phases of deconcentration of poverty but particularly the meso-layered interaction of familial, cultural and social relationships.

Credited to the early 20th century philosopher George Herbert Mead, but largely theorized by Blumer, the conceptualization of this theory outlines the cultural and historical contexts in which social interaction is grounded in meaning, customs and norms. The interrelation of self and community is vital and comes to symbolize how people find their place in the world, consisting of larger world societal processes (Stryker, 1980) as well as every day micro-level processes (Goffman, 1967). Such a place, i.e. community, connects us to others in ways that foster a developed sense of self in terms of how we are defined by others. The value of communal belonging and sharing is compromised however without a stable community context (Erickson, 1976). In these ways, it is the collective experiences, the stories and the situations of how people live a day-to-day life (Ashley & Orenstein, 1990).

It is a theory steeped in the notion that meaning carries importance in human behavior, that self is formed through meaningful interaction and that there is a relationship between individual agency and social constraints (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). This captures the idea that a resident's decision, made at any step in deconcentration efforts, has farther-reaching implications than the draw or deterrent of place-effects. This approach maintains social action begins with self-interaction, an active reflection of self that individuals bring to their situations.

In turn, self-interaction becomes interwoven into group interaction by the very nature of group membership, thus impacting overall social interaction (Blumer, 1969). Here the nexus of social meaning pivots on face-to-face interaction and as such, at the micro level, allows us to examine meaning, action and interaction in ways that focus on the dual development of individual identity and socialization. Linking a theoretical merger of self and social interaction we come to see that the individual is actively shaped in social context and that an identified group is composed of people who share a common set of symbols and understandings (Wallace & Wolff, 1998).

Through shared meaning, experiences and symbols for understanding those closest to us, these "building blocks" of shared alliance become explanation and communication of action in a cultural sense (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Sewell, 1992; Swidler, 1986; Wuthnow, 1994). That is, self-identity - thus the individual - develops out of interaction with others (present) and through culture (past) going through the processes of socialization. In fact, we become social beings only because of our interaction and communication with others (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1994) through shared and meaningful building blocks.

Symbolic interactionism is a theory of microanalysis and hence, views structure as process. That is, interactionists examine structure, ideology and power in pragmatic perspective, locating the subjective, lived experience of the affected individual (Denzin, 1992). In this way, Denzin (2002) borrowed from the analogy of the *sociological imagination* (Mills, 2000) to frame an important link between micro-biography and macro-history. Noting the incongruence between personal experience and societal

demands, such as that endured by those who live in poverty, such perspective gives keen insight to one's life course stories. Mills (ibid) projected a social science agenda that recognized the private problems of individuals and the relevancy of corresponding social issues. He maintained they were embedded in ways that captured personal problems as public issues, yet recognized these two aspects were often at odds with each other. This was best illustrated, he added, when society pressed upon the disadvantaged certain ways of living, conflicting with the realities of economic and social barriers.

Here the research focus is on relation, explanation and biography of personal experiences, limits of structure and public policy dictates. Further, this focus is situated on understanding the individual of study; if researchers do not development critical insight to the personal subjective world of subjects, we lose ability to interpret the learning experiences and turning points of those involved (Denzin 2002).

While some have criticized the theoretical negligence in adequately explaining the theory's role of structure (Alexander, 1987; Smelser, 1988), Maines (1977) defended the tightly woven individualized association among structure, process, interaction and form the theory offers. Citing Bottomore's (1975) view that structure is both "product" and "producer", Maines (ibid) maintained the theory was energized by the process orientation, thus countering the more fixed and impersonal functionalist view of ways structure has been sociologically theorized.

2.5 The Theory of Mobility Behavior and Social Action

Utilizing a theoretical framework that draws together the social forces of institutions and the individual level experience of these forces describes and explains life course outcomes. This framework also borrows from the tenets of symbolic interactionism to convey the importance of family and culture to shape adaptive behavior and social action (Plummer, 2000). Here individual identity develops out of interaction with others (present) and culture (past) in the processes of socialization. The necessity of a common understanding of a situation, characterized by Mead's "generalized other", means ability and willingness to interpret the viewpoint of another.

Denzin's (1989) method of interpretive interactionism links the traditional symbolic interaction of thought (Blumer, 1969) with qualitative research methods such as semiotics and fieldwork (Manning, 1987) and case study methods (Yin, 1985) that necessitate creative self-story construction to better understand the day-to-day life experience of ordinary people. The theoretical assertion views structure as outcomes of negotiation between different interest and resources in a world of unequal distribution of power and resources. In these ways, the individual and family are connected to the larger societal picture that permits a natural bridging of personal development in a socio-cultural context amid macro-social structures and processes. Thus, the individual biography, the decisions of human agency and institutionalization of social roles frame and shape the life course (Mayer & Tuma, 1990).

Reflected in this nested configuration moving from the individual outward is what Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorized as an ecological perspective to describe the

expanding concentric circles of human influence. It is in this environmental framework of interlocking levels where culture and subculture influence interaction over all. Such a perspective demonstrates how we develop and adapt in relation with others and how change in one aspect affects all spheres of influence. To consider the interaction of the changing individual in changing context means that individuals are not passively exposed to external factors, but that they assume an active role in their own development and thus influence the context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Sameroff, 1983).

Bronfenbrenner (1977) is credited for recognizing that, as we grow up in families and neighborhoods, the changes we experience - thus the adaptive behavior we exhibit - are couched in the social contexts of roles, rules and expectations of belonging. A recent update of this theory, along with personal characteristics, processes and context, recognizes such consistency over time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Overlaying the ecological approach with the life course framework allows for studying both the individual as the micro-emphasis as well as charting social contexts such as how the timing of a life event (e.g. housing dispersal and relocation) might have developmental impact on the individual and the family. In this study, while taking liberty to conceptualize Bronfenbrenner's developmental model a bit differently, the ideas of influence, relationship, change and culture firmly remain.

Examining this link between person and context is done through the inspection of processes of individual change and development as well as social structure of family, community and beyond (Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 1998). A classic definition of the life course captures such linkage as we consider "age-graded life

patterns embedded in social institutions and subject to historical change" (Elder, 1992, pg. 1121). It is in this environmental framework of interlocking levels where culture influence interaction in ways that capture how culture expands behavior, extends learning and channels choice (Bohannon, 1995). Needed is a way to couch culture is ways that grasp both the objective and subjective, the individual and the collective as well as the constraining and enabling aspects that we all encounter in interactive ways everyday (Durkheim, 1966; Wuthnow, 1987).

Activating culture as a means to further explain human behavior has led to operationalizing the somewhat passive stance of culture as goals, values and ideals into more prescriptive explanation of day-to-day "getting through" life. That we collect a set of tools to accomplish this becomes the cultural metaphor of "toolkit" that we pull prior experience, stories and confirmations from in order to make sense of the world around us (Swidler, 1986). That we use culture as a means of informing social action underscores how agents use culture to mobilize resources of power in new and unfamiliar circumstances and how such access further enables culture as a way to guide thought and action (Sewell, 1992, 1998).

2.6 The Model of Mobility Behavior and Social Action

Offered here is another way to expand what we know about outcomes of policies to deconcentrate poverty. In the ways that the outcome of relocation has become the central feature of deconcentration, this study seeks to recognize what the resident "brings" to the task of relocation that can span events happening even before hearing the news of a pending dispersal on through to the months and years afterward.

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We begin to consider the adaptive elements needed, here through the mechanisms of agency, family/culture and structure. Such a look might give important insight into how and why people end up where they do. Instead of a result-oriented look at destination, one important purpose here is to reveal the developing course of events that lead to relocation outcomes. As a result, the intention is to also expand the somewhat static focus of *outcome* that generally captures scholarly interest to a more dynamic exposure of the *processes* necessitated by dispersal, relocation and likelihood of resettlement.

Coming to better understand the link between *reaction* to dispersal as an emotional and cognitive process that leads to a behavioral *respons*e to deconcentration means recognizing the day-to-day need to reconcile adaptive changes imposed on the life course of the resident. In affective and cognitive terms, this notion of reaction before response is rooted in ongoing debate about the relationship between emotion and thought precipitating action. The social constructionist theory maintains that human emotion depends upon recognized social concepts (Lazarus, Kanner, & Folkman, 1980; Solomon, 1980). In ways that differentiate high order thinking, humans have a social consciousness imbued with norms that, as we grow older, become less spontaneous and more directed as a result of learned social concepts about how to think and feel. In this way, the link between emotional reaction and behavioral response is formed.

Alternately, naturalistic theories hold that emotions, independent of thought, norms and interpretation, are physiologically produced. This means that in a biological sense, the basis of emotion is rooted in mechanisms of genetics and does not require the transmission of some cognitive cue to produce a feeling (Zajonc, 1980, 1984). More

middle range theorizing comes as we consider the interwoven psychological and cognitive nature of emotions (Vygotsky, 1987). Insisting that emotions are psychologically based phenomenon recognizes the necessary cognitive appraisal in experiencing them (Birnbaum, 1981; Lazarus, 1982).

Here emotional/cognitive reactions and behavioral responses are operationalized by the synergy of three factors: *micro* level agency of individual traits and differences*, meso*-level relationships in familial and cultural proximity; and *macro*-level structural associations and oversights of institutions, such as the State and the local public housing authority. Therefore this life course study seeks to offer an explanatory model of mobility behavior and social action by operationalizing the capacity of personal agency, the influence of culture and the parameters of structure as the integrated determinants of relocation behavior and the likelihood of subsequent resettlement.

This explanatory model recognizes both proximal and distal relationships and alliances that give information about the decisions of mobility behavior and social action. That is, we recall *micro* capacities of agency; *meso* interactions of family/culture; and *macro* negotiation through institutional bargaining. With regard to macro-structural explanation, it might stand to reason that those residents who are able to more constructively and efficaciously bargain the institutional parameters of housing assistance to their advantage will demonstrate not only a different outcome but will experience a different set of processes.

If we are to understand how individuals, groups and social systems interact we must recognize the relational identity that each represent in the larger scheme (Ritzer &

Gindoff, 1992). Clearly such representation will be reflective of many factors that give a great deal of information about the resident as agent of change. Improving understanding of how residents, particularly mothers, with an imprint of trait differences interface not only with their families and extended cultural networks in these processes but also with the structural authority of institutions is the basis of this study. We turn to a brief summation of the need to study mothers.

2.7 The Study of Mothers

I chose to study mothers because they represent the one group that consistently heads the list of poorest households: namely, female single heads of household. I chose to study black and Hispanic women because by race and ethnicity they represent the majority of residents living in federally subsidized housing (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). The largest number of women who live in public housing are heads of household of dependent children, which narrows the subject field to mothers.

Low-income householders– primarily mothers with children living with them and no male present - represented 26.4% of families living in poverty according to the 2000 U.S. Census. Of these female-headed families, the racial breakdown was 35.2% black and 37.0% Hispanic. Conversely, only 4.9% of households with a male present were considered living in poverty (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001). Based on 2000 Census information, the poverty statistics of the county, in which this major southwest city is located, indicated 20.5% black and 19.1% Hispanic. The poverty status by family indicated that the proportion of single female headship (22.8%) was greater than married-couple families (4.5%) and single male headship (11.0%) combined.

Another reason mothers are studied here is illustrated by the proverbial female figure at the hearth, solidifying this notion of place attachment and "meaning of home" eloquently described most often in popular literature. While "housing" is a word conjuring technical meanings of facilities, "home" is a descriptor of the experiential components of day-to-day living and underscores a myriad of relationships with self, others, and the environment (Benjamin & Stea, 1995). The term "home" also represents both our physical and social worlds, and in this way, signifies space, place and face of living amongst others (Kubisch, 1996). Yet the scholarly literature has been somewhat sparse on the subject of home, with Chapman and Hockey (1999) noting that the discipline of sociology has remained relatively silent. Typically women are biologically, psychologically and sociologically "wired" to be nurturers, and as such implies that they, as a group, will place import on the physical and social aspects of family, housing and neighborhood. That there may be exception remains uncontested in this research agenda.

I do make an underlying assumption that the women under study possess trait differences readily considered personality as well as some degree of interpersonal skill, problem solving ability and notions of aspiration when it comes to making decisions. Even for those persons living in poverty there are shared mainstream objectives about work and home, even as they struggle with lack of material resources (Edin & Lein, 1997; Seccombe, 1999). As we will see, these women make decisions from a psychological perspective, as well as through cultural and social cues that figure heavily into the processes that characterize their mobility behavior.

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The purpose of this study is to examine the adaptive nature of dispersal, relocation and resettlement as three phases of deconcentration of poverty from a life course perspective of affected families. The evidence of these three spheres of influence, culminating in implications of resettlement, is studied through the outcomes of mobility behavior, also termed as adaptive behavior. The detail expected from exploratory questions of process necessitates qualitative inquiry. I used quantitative methods for selection of sampling purposes. The degree of exploration that an in-home interview affords not only gives insight into the experience of deconcentration, it allows for a preview into the spatial context of current lives. I used the research method of *narrative analysis* as the collection of stories as data, detailing, in first-person accounts, a review of life course experiences across a variety of domains (Merriam, 2002).

The mobility literature stresses the purpose of deconcentration of poverty is to ostensibly relocate low-income households into lower poverty, middle class neighborhoods. The implication that "location matters" has yielded evidence for significant life course improvements. Neighborhood conditions – that is where one lives – can affect access to education, work and developmental hurdles, particularly in children (Ellen & Turner, 1997).

By these ways, the mobility relocation objective is to preferentially create proximal living arrangements whereby in-migrating family members are exposed to – thus begin to inhabit - values, living standards, codes and conduct expectations of the middle class. The implied reciprocity across in-migrating and receiving households is important. That is, there is an "ideal" model - representative of middle class expectations - for how society at large expects relocating public housing tenants to behave in these new neighborhoods of advantage.

For example, attributes that substantiate independence, academic achievement, planfulness, respect for property and constructive leisure among others are attributes characterizing for many what is considered "middle class" values (Cohen, 1955). These are terms of adaptation to person-based mobility according to a code of middle class living. Living next door or within "neighborly" distance, according to policy objectives, such exposure is transmitted. However, the mobility literature remains relatively quiet in enumerating exactly how and by what means the adaptation to middle class living is supposed to happen other than in simply proximal terms. It also overlooks the potential for other influential aspects that may affect adaptation to middle class living.

A primary focus here is to explore the adaptive mechanisms that public housing families use to make relocation decisions as they reconcile the fundamental shift from *place*-based subsidy to *person*-based mobility. Bearing in mind that "successful" relocations are generally relocations into lower poverty, we seek to better understand how relocating residents are able to adapt, by degree, to societal expectations as they

attempt moves into middle class settings. The exploratory and explanatory mechanisms offered consider measurement across three levels of influence: agency, family/culture, and structure. We look at how micro characteristics and proximal relatedness, resources, and support might facilitate goals of relocation. Lastly, we pinpoint in macro-structural context, how the institution of public housing might also shape relocation pathways of family, work, education and [eventual] resettlement.

The distinction of exploratory *mechanism* is important, as it is not the intention that agency, culture, or structure be defined as *causes* of future choices, behavior or outcomes. Rather, each mechanism is used as a conduit of psychosocial exploration to better understand how relocating families use skill of adaptation and resilience as they negotiate the continuum of constraint and opportunity. That is, while we can readily observe behavior and begin to assess through qualitative inquiry, understanding comes from recognizing the myriad of factors at the individual (micro), familial/cultural (meso) and institutional (macro) levels that influence adaptive behavior.

Here, we might view behavior configured in different and unique combinations of influence and overlap, visualized much like a Venn diagram of relationship and potentially activated differently in any given situation at any given time. Understanding such diagramming as evidence of residential strength and deficit becomes one way to begin to understand the experiential effects of deconcentration. It also pinpoints potential areas of individualized relocation assistance.

While the literature pays a great deal of attention to how place-effects sway or deter relocation outcomes, we know less about how the psychosocial characteristics of

the individual impact these choices. Namely, is there more to learn about mobility behavior and social action than what might be viewed as adaptation to constraint? Understanding the terminology of "successful" and "non-successful" relocation into lower poverty we recognize adaptation as one's ability to change to fit that which is already in place. It means we must examine how low-income householders "measure up" to a variety of expectations and adaptations necessary to make the leap from high poverty into lower poverty middle class living.

Figure 3.1 illustrates such an ideal model, incorporating those personal and social characteristics – under the broad category of personal agency – that are recognized and rewarded as "ideal" middle class principles for which to strive. These psychosocial variables - as *micro-level* traits that influence the successful transmission of agency - include: dispositional optimism, internal locus of control, problem-focused coping, planfulness and self-efficacy. Here agency represents these individual influences within structured pathways that characterize the fundamental interplay between personal choice and the boundaries of structure.

Another influential aspect of individual adaptation to middle class expectation is included as the degree and quality of social life/ support received. While some people may indeed develop adaptive mechanisms is more isolated instances, here it is the enriched development that occurs within supportive social networks that captures scholarly interest. The model of Figure 3.1 recognizes a familial/cultural aspect of adaptation that incorporates proximal relatedness, support and resource, using the mother as influential head of household. For example, the implication of mother

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knowing and identifying with her neighbors carries import for how her children are also faring. This defines the life course perspective of "linked lives" as an indication of adequately matching familial need and relocation destination.

The model also identifies a general list of *macro- level* expectations that the institution of public housing holds for the "successful" relocating family to be able to make it in opportunity neighborhoods, preferably of mixed income. In many ways, the institutional assumptions of citizenship mirror the broad middle class values of productivity and sufficiency. That is, the personal implications of receiving housing assistance pivot on gainful employment (or active job searches) as well as compliance with housing rules and regulations that signal successful transitions into authority owned mixed income settings.

If we are to examine how individuals exhibit characteristics, behaviors and societal expectations, we have to consider more closely how individuals perceive such adaptation. This means identifying those elements – both internal and external – that facilitate (or hinder) heads of household to convert opportunity structures. This study incorporates three levels of influence that can affect individual behavior and social action by exposing how social actors understand their own abilities and life chances amid constraint. In the ways that agency is an individual level variable that can impact meso and macro spheres of influence, we expect to find the impact of agency to carry significance, directing the potential for successful or unsuccessful adaptation.

Middle Class Values

Independence	Ambition
Academic achievement	Individual responsibility
Control of aggression	Planning
Respect for property	Social skills / etiquette
Success	Acceptable conduct
Delayed gratification	Self-reliance

	Agency (Psychosocial Well Being)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	Dispositional optimism Internal locus of control / causality Problem focused coping Self efficacy / sense of mastery Planfulness Interdependence	Mother knows / identifies neighbors Mother - contact with teachers/school Children doing well in school Children play with others in neighborhood; friendships Family/friends visit in new home Interacts well with housing personnel / onsite management	Gainful employment. Active job searching Law abiding citizen Housing compliance; rules, regulations Maintains stable home environment; child-rearing, job, education Participates in housing based "self sufficiency" programs
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	Less dispositional optimism External locus of control Emotion-focused coping Diminished sense of mastery Short term viewpoint	Mother does not know/identify with neighbors Mother - no contact with teachers Children having difficulty in school; Children do not play with others in neighborhood Family/friends do not visit new home Does not interact or poorly interacts with housing personnel	Unemployed No active job search initiated Record of arrests & convictions Housing noncompliance – breaks rules Chronic instability in home environment: parenting, work Refuses to participate in housing based "self sufficiency" programs

Figure 3.1 Ideal model: Adaptive mobility behavior.

Table 3.1 Tabulated Assessment: Successful Adaptation

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	+ + +	+ + +	+ + +
Nonsuccessful Adaptation			

At the end of every life course story, a summary is offered using this ideal model as a template to illustrate findings for each subject. An assessment of resettlement evidenced by adaptation, modeled after Table 3.1 and Table 3.2, is also offered at the end of each.

Table 3.1 and 3.2 illustrate how successful and unsuccessful adaptation to ideal middle class living might be assessed. Such evaluation looks at how the resident has been able to incorporate the three spheres of influence into dealing with dispersal, finding appropriate relocation settings and approaching resettlement. Please note, the use of three markers as "ideal" is simply an arbitrary choice of the researcher. To remind, the use of the term "ideal" denotes representative expectation, not meant to be judged as good versus bad, positive versus negative, etc. Rather, in this qualitative study, these markers are intended to categorize the degree to which the resident is able to adapt. The number of markers in each cell is the assessed finding of the researcher, evaluated after using the psychosocial literature to analyze interview data; a careful review of field notes was also used.

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Table 3.2 Tabulated Assessment: Non-successful Adaptation

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation			
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+ + +	+ + +	+ + +

This qualitative study used a purposive sampling of 12 minority self-identified heads of household, viewed first as individuals, then as mothers. Latino and African American mothers were chosen because they represent the majority of residents living in federally subsidized housing (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001). Research markers of age/lifestage of the mothers, self-assessed personal agency scoring and the poverty status of the current neighborhood were used to form this sampling.

I was interested in their age in order to explore assumptions about lifestage of motherhood as an indicator of behavior. The factor of age was not used in any comparative way across groups, but rather to give a reference to how these women balance their current motherhood needs and the demands of relocation. I was interested in exploring their agency in terms of a select number of survey questions querying overall functioning and wellbeing they had completed before moving from JLT. As this study indicates, the mother, as head of household, sets the tone for the familial experience across three phases. Getting a sense of self-described functioning in areas such as coping, dispositional optimism and locus of control can give important clues. I

discuss the assessment of questions used as well as scoring process later, but for now I say that agency scores were not used in a comparative sense.

I was also interested in the poverty status of current neighborhood for discussion of their relocation and resettlement processes. I wanted to quantify destination into categories of either higher-poverty or lower-poverty depending on where they were living at the time of the study. I did so using several indicators. I was interested in not only identifying poverty status through standard means of City Poverty Tables by zip codes, but also assessing how the women judged their neighborhoods for themselves. The mobility literature makes clear the explicit benefit of lower-income families living in proximal association with higher-income neighbors. Yet the implications of how relocating residents see themselves living in such configuration are often conflated in satisfaction surveys that do not always allow for exploring how they perceive the class and economic status differential.

Many households have made multiple moves, so poverty indicators of current neighborhood allowed me to gauge decisions to move into similar higher poverty or into targeted lower-poverty locales. I was interested in not only identifying poverty status through standard means, but also assessing how the women judge their neighborhoods for themselves. Here the boundaries of neighborhood poverty were first determined by the use of the geographic distribution of poverty indicators by City Zip Code. These indicators designated highest quartile to lowest quartile percentage of population at or below the poverty level in the county.

I also used subjective assessment as I drove the streets of these neighborhoods. A great deal of information can be gleaned from visual inspection of the condition of schools, businesses, streets, sidewalks (if there are any) as well as house fronts. Looking around the neighborhood to assess the distance and condition of commercial buildings for example can give a sense of neighborhood commerce, stability, and viability. Later, talking with subjects in the interview about their neighborhood experiences, I visualized the boundaries of neighborhood in much the same way that residents refer to their own "neighborhood" that more accurately denotes a block group than a Census tract. The residents primarily defined neighborhood in the spatial association of social networks, accessible stores and the immediate vicinity of next-door neighbors, extending to surrounding blocks at short distances beyond the property line of the places where they live.

Table 3.3 is presented to orient the reader to the various details used to identify and categorize the study subjects.

Table 3.3 Chart of Study Subjects

NAME	AGE	RACE	Children / G-children	Higher/ Lower Agency	Status of Neighborhood
Meg	27	H	3	L	HP-Private (left; married)
Vernita	28	B	4	L	LP-PH Mixed
Corrine	29	H	4	H	LP-PH Mixed
Suzette	30	H	4	H	Working Class (left PH)*
Anna	36	H	4	H	HP-Private (evicted PH)
Georgia	38	B	3	H	LP-PH Mixed
Debra	39	H	4/1	L	HP-Private (left PH)*
Rhonda	43	H	2	L	LP-PH Mixed
Joanne	66	B	12/50+	H	HP-PH (place-based)
Lucille	72	B	6/23	H	LP-PH Mixed
Penney	74	H	6/16	L	LP-Mixed
Nell	82	B	8/14	L	HP-Voucher

Table 3.3 legend: LP – lower poverty; HP – higher poverty;
                     PH – public housing;
                     * Left public housing immediately after dispersal

The general purpose of this study was to explore behavior and social action of each phase of deconcentration through the lens of agency, culture and structure as behavioral determinants using age of mother as head of household, self-assessed

wellbeing of the mother and poverty status of neighborhood as guides. Through these respondents, I explored the processes that each woman faced through a study of agency, culture and family nested in the embedded influences of the lifestage of motherhood, familial/cultural networks as well as the macro-structural implications of constraint and opportunity that undergird residential mobility policy for low-income households. In effect, I worked my way backwards from these residents' current situations past the relocation decision made four years earlier, to retrospectively explore the myriad of life experiences that got them to the place they were now living.

I looked at deconcentration of poverty not merely as a "result" tabulated as an outcome of relocation, but rather expanded the experience to include the interrelated factors of dispersal, relocation and resettlement as dependent variables of study. In order to plumb that depth for qualitative data, I used independent variables of childhood, adolescence, teen motherhood and work pathways. The field of qualitative research, as an empirical canvas on which to develop such ideas, gives way to extending exploration through multicultural, gendered processes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) unavailable in strict quantitative analysis.

3.2 Quantitative Methodology: Sample Selection

Quantitative methodology was used to select a study sample. The individuals of study were taken from a larger data set of residents who experienced housing dispersal at the same time living in the same public housing complex. Because this study was confined to minority mothers, I used demographic responses on a pre-move survey to identify gender, race, motherhood status, and age of the mother. I first separated out all

black and Hispanic mothers in the total population sample of residents dispersed from Jane Long Terrace. Those women who identified themselves as mothers and grandmothers with children living with them presently or in the past were included. These children or grandchildren could be living in the household or elsewhere.

I also wanted to identify study subjects by a subjective agency score, along with current poverty status of neighborhood and age, broadly categorized into three groups of young, middle and older mothers. I extracted a set of questions from the pre-move survey related to psychosocial wellbeing in order to obtain a measurement of an individual's personal agency. Each question was scored using the Likert scale to determine the degree to which each respondent agreed/disagreed. The scale used a 5-point spread. Respondents who scored higher than 28 were deemed "higher" agency.

This score was used as an indicator of how they rated their wellbeing at the time of the move and used as a marker in exploring short-term relocation effects on functioning. I selected 50 items related to personal agency in assessing coping style, self-efficacy, optimism, relatedness, planfulness and trust (social trust and trust in authority.) The results of this analysis allowed me to divide the potential respondents into two groups: those with higher agency and those with lower agency.

The 50 items from the pre-move survey included: seven questions asking about styles and methods for "working through a problem"; eight questions asking about personal involvement and participation in communal situations; 18 questions asking about familial and cultural associations about "you and your neighborhood"; five questions asking about how individuals self-evaluate themselves on a series of efficacy

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statements; and 10 questions asking about individual efficacy experiences related to "your education and work." A list of those survey questions, entitled Pre-Move Personal Agency Questionnaire, is found in the Appendix.

The selection of these specific survey responses gave information about a number of influential factors pertaining to self-assessment, decision-making, preferences and needs. All were considered elements of anticipated mobility behavior including perceived neighborhood quality as well as perceived neighborhood problems. Additionally, determining evaluative personal characteristics shed light on residents' self-reported coping strategies. These strategies were related to aspects of behavioral and affective functioning, as well as dispositional optimism for each selected mother as head of household. Each of these elements had potential impact on the reaction to dispersal, the response of relocation ad the likelihood of resettlement.

The minority mothers selected out by agency score and poverty indicator of destination were also sorted by age/lifestage of the mother using broad categories of younger (ages 19-30); middle (ages 31-49); and older (50+). These categories reflected not only the age range of the entire sample population of minority mothers; they also reflected the lifestage of motherhood by age of her children and grandchildren as well as the social and economic implications and expectations in the lifestage role.

Therefore for purposes of sample selection only, the women were assigned into three categories of a 2x2x3 contingency table giving the possibility of 12 potential data sets: 1) an assignment of "lower" or "higher" agency as a result of pre-move survey responses to get a sense of psychosocial functioning; 2) the identified poverty status

("higher" or "lower") of the neighborhood in which they were interviewed at the time of this study; and 3) individual assignment by lifestage/age into three categories of younger, middle, older mothers.

Table 3.4   2 X 2 X 3 Table

Age / Lifestage ⟶

		Mothers: Ages: 21-35	Mothers: Ages: 36-50	Mothers: Ages 51+
Neighborhood ↑↓	Higher Poverty	Higher Agency Lower Agency	Higher Agency Lower Agency	Higher Agency Lower Agency
	Lower Poverty	Higher Agency Lower Agency	Higher Agency Lower Agency	Higher Agency Lower Agency

In order to determine the 12 women I would study, I generated uniform pseudo-random numbers for each of the 12 data sets; I sorted each data set by ascending order. Next, I chose the first person at the top of each list to contact for participation. In a later section entitled Participation and Non-response I describe in greater detail this aspect of selection.

3.3 Site Descriptions

That we, as actors, operate from a constant balancing act between agency and structure undergirds much of this study and is examined frequently in the literature (Giddens, 1984). That we overstate the impact of mobility structure above the agency

of dispersed residents is also repeatedly noted as an oversight in the literature. Without doubt, the "pull and push" of place effects greatly influence decisions of destination for us all (Rossi, 1955), influencing how we confront constraints and choices, exclusion and accessibility (Clark & Onaka, 1983).

Clearly this study draws much emphasis to the context of spatial and social settings of neighborhoods. Therefore, included here are emphasized site descriptions in order to adequately describe such settings in context of current functioning. This is an important emphasis because this study identifies the spatial context of subsequent relocation for these mothers as a means to explore prospects of resettlement. Such emphasis also recognizes the significance of reviewing the spatial context in which they lived when they received news about dispersal. This way we get both a sense of life in Jane Long Terrace and an overview of the push and pull of new neighborhoods from the residential perspective.

Even before household dispersal the local housing authority had intentions to construct mixed-income development. For the immediate dispersal though, local housing officials offered two destination options that were considered *temporary*: project or scattered-site public housing and scattered units in a variety of locations, some in high poverty, some in lower-poverty. This notion of "temporary" was just that; until the mixed sites could be constructed, displaced residents were relocated into housing meant to be short-term. However, one destination option, considered *permanent* by the authority, was an existing mixed-income complex located in a higher income neighborhood and purchased by the authority soon after the initial dispersal.

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Once a resident moved into that location, there were no more relocation opportunities offered.

According to local housing authority records, many residents have made multiple moves since moving from JLT. A few remain, nearly 4 years later in these temporary units, unwilling or unable to make a "permanent" decision. A few have been through the formal procedure of eviction while many more have simply left "under unfavorable circumstances", usually due to financial reasons, leaving seemingly to avoid the process. Still others chose a regular Housing Choice Voucher early in the relocation process, essentially removing themselves from further assisted moves through the authority. To follow is some background on the original public housing development and the steps leading to housing dispersal for the affected families. Next I depict the intervening sites these families moved to and the resultant public response, finally drawing out the details of the neighborhoods where I find the study subjects today.

3.3.1 Jane Long Terrace Homes

The history of the Jane Long Terrace Homes (JLT) development reflects the mid-20th century American practice of downtown placement of public housing (Bratt, 1989). That the residents who lived at JLT, albeit in aging housing stock, continued to enjoy the amenities of close-in libraries, accessible city buildings, parks and river front living makes it somewhat different from most deteriorating and isolated complexes under fire today. Nonetheless, in 2001, when the negotiations were finalized to disperse and relocate the residents of JLT, such action echoed what Secretary of Housing and

Urban Development (HUD), Henry Cisneros had identified in 1995 as the proliferation of "highly concentrated minority poverty… as urban America's toughest challenge" (Cisneros, 1995).

The tract of land known as JLT - over 20 acres of verdant rolling landscape - was first designated as public housing in the early 1940s, constructed with the front doors facing the street and back doors opening onto common courtyards and playgrounds. True, the deterioration of existing housing stock, like much of subsidized stock across the country, had accelerated with a shift in federal appropriations, sentiments of concentrated poverty as well as the inevitable march of time (L. Keating, 2000; Rubin et al., 1992). However, the plot on which the development now sprawled afforded the families the convenience of catching frequent buses or walking to free downtown events for family enjoyment.

When Corrine, a 29-year-old mother of three recounted the excitement of her children at being able to enjoy front porch access to the various downtown yearly parades, she was echoing what many had come to enjoy about JLT living. That some could rattle off their concerns over criminal activity and fear of safety while others maintained that the section where they lived allowed them to at least not witness such interference further substantiated the inability to generalize life at JLT with life in many large urban subsidized neighborhoods.

To be sure, the residents were negatively affected by associated problems of spatial concentration of poverty that continues to plague public housing throughout this country. In pre-move surveys, many families reported the perceived problems related to

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drug dealing/usage and associated violence as the neighborhood's biggest concerns. Others related personal and property crime as well as the fears that come with gang-presence that negatively impacted quality of life (Barrett, Geisel, & Johnston, 2003). Mixed in was varying assessment as to what the community in toto represented to them. An overwhelming percentage related that indeed they felt safe living at Jane Long Terrace with approximately a quarter of them reporting feeling "very safe." That many said they would leave their home given the opportunity may seem at odds with the response that they were not dissatisfied with life in their downtown neighborhood (Barrett et al., ibid).

The downtown location afforded close-in ties with centralized service jobs and childcare located so that walking was a viable option for many of the residents. Otherwise, a bus ride was only a short walk from any one of the front (or back) doors of the red-brick apartments, opening portions of the city otherwise inaccessible as many did not own nor have access to a running vehicle. As forms of entertainment, many families recalled their experiences at city-sponsored parades, particularly on the Fourth of July when they simply walked outside to enjoy the festivities of fireworks. Mothers alike recounted how a trip to the downtown library or the opportunity to throw a blanket on the grounds of a downtown city park or at the riverbank was both a retreat for them and low-cost entertainment for their children (Barrett et al., 2003).

3.3.2 The Sites of Temporary Destination

The eventual destination sites for the families who remained a part of the Jane Long Terrace Relocation effort were narrower in selection than if families decided to

use a regular Housing Choice Voucher in the private housing market. That is, as newly constructed mixed-income complexes came on line, many of these families were encouraged to "turn in" temporary vouchers and relocate into these authority-owned and privately managed developments. As mentioned earlier, a few have not responded to that encouragement and as of March 2006, 23 out of the original 258 dispersed families still held temporary housing status around the city (Distributed Relocation Office Report). The objective to "permanent" relocation has not been without resistance, from both the geographically receiving communities and the residents themselves. Many community stakeholders including homeowners, landlords, and private market merchants voiced early concern over the potential for detrimental consequences of in-coming public housing families. Such sentiment mirrored the effects of relocating low-income families on the middle class infrastructure of communities across the country (Popkin et al., 2000). And while some dispersed households have not responded to authority deadlines to convert temporary issuances, most have moved into what the local housing authority has termed "permanent placement," signifying finality to official relocation efforts.

Today, of those dispersed families who have made their way into authority-owned mixed-income sites, some express satisfaction while others offer protestation over the ways and means of such placement. Before these sites were available, temporary destination took many households into the far corners of the city although a handful moved directly into centrally located existing public project sites. One of these public housing developments is situated on the eastern fringes of downtown within

throwing distance of a heavily trafficked freeway while the other is located in a historically poor section of town far from downtown. While existing public housing was a relocation site offered, many eschewed the choice, while others moved there only temporarily.

None of the twelve women studied here, save one, moved into traditional public housing after JLT. One said she and her family left housing assistance straight away after dispersal for fear that another public housing complex was their only choice. The description of these sites is important because we come to see and hear where these women decided they did not want to relocate. The traditional site located near the eastern-fringed freeway is a typically configured complex with row houses of aging housing stock but also close to downtown. The families who decided to move to this location straight away, I have gleaned from informal conversations, focus groups and annual surveys, did so because it was closest to downtown and they knew people who already lived there.

This traditional site, close to downtown yet known for a long history of associated problems, is further stigmatized by its somewhat isolated and landlocked position of limited access into and out of the property. The women of this study, when queried about temporary relocations echoed these problems as definite deterrents. A drive-through on broad streets with high speed bumps takes one past redbrick one-storied apartments fronted by yards of little to no grass ending at the modern multi-storied housing headquarters. While there is dependable public transportation and

convenient bus stops there are no real amenities to food, shopping or entertainment nearby.

Hugging the far eastern edges of the city is another local public housing complex that some relocating families also moved to directly and where Joanne, the 65-year-old mother of 12 who is a part of this study, lives today. A well-known enclave for poor minority families, this site also has a rich historical connection to the heyday of the railroad. The community once was a vibrant ethnic enclave with church and neighborhood activities, according to local residents, but has now long been replaced by the ill effects of economic isolation and concentrated poverty.

The local housing authority set a timeframe whereby all residents should be vacated from JLT. Some moved right after receiving news of relocation. Others sat out over the spring and into the summer, insisting they were waiting to move until after the school year ended so that their children would be less disrupted. Still others waited until the very last days. Deciding when to take action might give important clues as to how individuals reconcile imposed change and as such is explored in this study.

While the initial contractual agreement stipulated temporary relocations into lower-poverty impacted neighborhoods, it soon became evident that the number of lower-poverty sites necessary to fill this requirement was not available. Representatives of the JLT Resident's Association agreed, after on-site inspection, to allow certain proximal, high poverty neighborhoods to be included on the list of temporary sites. These locations were chosen to fill the need for relocation housing among landlords willing to accept incoming tenants. In the immediate aftermath of household dispersal,

some households chose to leave the rolls of housing assistance straightaway while others spent a short time in a temporary setting before leaving the housing authority all together. Such was the case of Suzette, a 30-year-old Hispanic, who with her four children, had moved directly into a house provided by a family member. Debra, a 39-year-old Hispanic and her family had settled into a high-poverty neighborhood after buying a house, necessitating a move off of housing assistance. Meg a 27-year-old and her children had initially moved into a high poverty temporary unit but her decision to marry had also meant leaving assistance.

Eschewing a conventional public housing unit, others nonetheless made their moves into similarly high-poverty neighborhoods with high concentration of minority families; some of these moves were temporary and some have been permanent. Vernita and her three children moved temporarily into a 3-bedroom house located in a near east neighborhood of poverty, reportedly happy living among minority families but could not stay after the year's lease expired.

One such neighborhood of high poverty that many moved to temporarily has become over the years the destination for many low-income households. Nell, an 82-year-old mother of eight and grandmother to 14, moved there directly from downtown to be near her eldest care-giving daughter. At the time of the interview she had no plans to move, although she did identify some of the problems associated with the neighborhood. Developed as a middle class white community and still home to a prosperous country club, in recent years this area has become a magnet for poor minority residents. Here we find low-income families now living in a geographical

bubble surrounded by a number of remaining middle class white households. The on-going racial tension is somewhat abated by visibility of city police and their substation prominently located in the heart of this community.

Because there were no enforced stipulations about destination that would steer them into lower versus higher poverty, where these households eventually relocated can give important information about the hurdles that leaving families faced, the intentions that propelled families to strike out as well as the encountered problems of "navigating without a net." Some of the stories of those families who probably wanted to continue to be a part of this cohort but who eventually left under unfavorable circumstances are included here, again to explore how decisions of relocation post-eviction were negotiated.

3.3.2.1 Public Response to the Relocation

As the relocation of these families got underway in the early months of 2002, public sentiment reached fevered pitch, most notably from those living around the existing mixed-income site the housing authority had purchased earlier. An early Sunday morning march on the mayor's home depicted the mounting fear, anger and apprehension from area citizens who were highly critical of what they termed as the "ambush" of the relocation. They were especially vocal about the lack of prior communication from the local housing authority that could have adequately announced the purchase of the middle-income property as well as an acceptable explanation for the relocation of the displaced families. A footnote to most studies- but a major focus here - is that such a public stance propelled some of the dispersed residents to matter-of-

factly move to this site, while for others, the reaction dictated avoidance. In the words of one resident who declined, " I won't go where I'm not wanted" (personal communication, 7/25/05).

However, several families moved into the existing mixed-income site straightaway. Anna, her three children and new husband lived there immediately after leaving JLT but were evicted nearly two years later. Lucille, an African American elder raising her teenaged grandson, moved there because the lower-poverty apartment she had lived in since leaving JLT no longer met her needs. She had enjoyed the general locale and the proximity of a bus stop of the previous unit but had to leave when it became apparent she needed other accommodations.

After a series of community meetings were held where citizenry concern was raised and opposition was voiced, the City expressed support and, in the end, the local housing officials finally closed on the purchase in mid 2002. The authority provided the set-aside of a total of 58 subsidized units - with the rest reflecting market rates – and set about to actively fill the subsidized units. Again through informal conversations and focus groups there was raised discussion that some residents had wanted to move there, but previous experience, such as one woman's prior misdemeanor, had precluded them from moving in. One woman, not included in this study, did in fact move there, but when her record was revealed, she was asked to leave. She subsequently moved into the previously described high poverty neighborhood on the east side.

3.3.3 The Newly Constructed Mixed-Income Sites

The redevelopment of traditional public housing at JLT has meant the demolition and sale of the existing site and the construction of mixed-income developments within the City for those affected residents. The sale proceeds of the downtown housing site provided a portion of funds needed to fulfill these redevelopment plans which necessitated the purchase two pieces of property: the existing complex in the middle class neighborhood that had raised fears and the ire of local citizens and a tract of undeveloped land in a far southwestern corner of the city. The latter tract was developed, constructed and completed in mid 2003 as a 216-unit complex, of which 54 units were to be set-aside for public housing residents with the remaining available for moderate-income occupancy, all below market rates. The complex configuration is two-storied town homes with straight in parking in front.

The localized amenities of this development at first appearance put residents in close proximity to a large discount retailer and grocery store as well as a number of varying-size businesses clustered in strip storefronts within a moderate walk. At second glance one realizes that to reach those amenities requires navigating a four lane heavily trafficked thoroughfare that has no traffic signals to facilitate pedestrian crossing. Furthermore, to catch a public bus, which serves this area with greater infrequency than downtown, again one must cross this thoroughfare to do so.

In 2003 groundbreaking ceremonies announced the construction of a third site of mixed-income replacement housing that would eventually become the destination of several JLT households in late 2004. This development, a 280-unit multifamily

apartment complex spearheaded by a partnership of public and private entities, would provide 47 subsidized replacement units for dispersed JLT families. Such a partnership would make it one of only a few subsidized housing sites to be a privately owned and managed community.

The site of this development is in a far southern sector of the city located on another busy 4-lane thoroughfare, surrounded by other apartment complexes and middle-income single-family dwellings within walking distance. Moving here also meant families were now located in a different school district necessitating a set of changes for school-aged children and families. The academic standing and reputation of this district is higher than the one that represented downtown.   The closest bus stop is approximately two blocks up the street, while retail stores for groceries and shopping are approximately one mile away.   Here there is a fenced playground area located near the leasing office. The apartment units are spread out over ten 3-storied buildings with stairs; there is no elevator access.

3.3.4 Private Housing Sites

For a number of reasons, some JLT householders were no longer living in authority owned properties. Because I used the original pre-move list of names, I was hoping for a stratified selection random across all locations including those who remained on the housing rolls, those who had left voluntarily and those who had left involuntarily.   The pull of names provided that spread of residents.   The sites representing these varied destinations included those neighborhoods where residents used a regular Housing Choice Voucher at some time during the approximate four years

since the initial dispersal. Some had taken a voucher as the first destination after the downtown relocation while others first made temporary sites their new home as a part of the original cohort and then selected vouchers in the private housing market. The neighborhoods where residents who left assistance now live were also included.

Of the 12 mothers in the study, four of them no longer lived on local housing authority property. Of these four, all lived in neighborhoods considered "high poverty", although Suzette, who is purchasing her home located on the fringe of an industrial section but within walking distance of well-kept framed homes, nonetheless sees herself separated from those neighbors. Two householders gave up housing subsidy directly after leaving JLT. These women, one who lives with her fiancé and her children and one who lives with her four children, moved into houses that they are, at the time of the interview, in the process of purchasing.

One woman, who temporarily relocated to a high poverty neighborhood after dispersal subsequently got married, and relinquished assistance under favorable circumstances. Today she is also in the process of purchasing her home, located in a working class, higher poverty neighborhood. The remaining householder, having first moved into an existing mixed-income development purchased by the authority, was subsequently evicted. Today she lives with her husband and three children in a high poverty racially segregated neighborhood.

Using residents who both remained and left housing assistance (whether by voluntary or involuntary means) can give important information not readily studied in low-income mobility from public to private housing. The remaining eight women all

continue to receive housing assistance, with five living in newly constructed mixed income while three now live in high poverty. All women in the older age category remain in public housing with one living in traditional public housing.

3.4 Qualitative Data Collection

My primary method of qualitative inquiry involved in-depth interviews conducted in the home of each subject at a prearranged time. They were paid $25 for their time, approximately an hour and a half to two hours in length. My use of qualitative inquiry seeks to add to the quantitative based research that has generally used large data sets, empirically testing such elements as neighborhood effects and employment outcomes using bivariate and multivariate techniques to identify correlates and tests models. When more psychosocial outcomes such as those that measure residential satisfaction and general wellbeing are gathered, results are generally analyzed for trends across these variables of place and work. And while these empirical findings have informed on a number of hypotheses, they have not been able to adequately dig into the nuance of daily life among relocated public housing families.

I used a psychological assessment tool called *Early Recollection*, first utilized by neo-Freudian theorist Alfred Adler to determine how an adult views herself in present day. While Adler was seeking to reveal more about what an adult strives for in an anticipatory manner and has been termed "a prediction of the present" (B. M. Allen, 1997, pg. 84), here I used aspects of the tool to also prompt retrospective remembrances to one's earliest times. As such, this frame of questioning nonetheless gives opportunity

to recall oneself as a child, although Alder was much more interested in a general conception of life.

In interviews with the subjects of this study, a version of Adler's technique was used as I asked them to remember the earliest thing they could recall and answer a few questions about that time. Adler theorized that the selection of that memory becomes a summary statement of personality and gives important clues to the person's "style of life" (Allen, 1997, pg. 86). Using the Adlerian technique of assessing present day lifestyle as a way to assess the aspirations and strivings of these women, the interviews were built around conversations to retrieve information about internalized messages and experiences as well as determine, through imagination, what their future might hold.

In these ways, we can assess how these women regarded themselves as children and now as adults. Questions were filtered through one's recall and reflection as well as prospective outlook and forward thinking and as such reflect a multi-purposed approach. Questions were designed to set the rapport, bring background and locate previous functioning. Inquiries that follow the life course thematic framework were used to listen for the interplay of linked lives, personal agency amidst structural constraints as well as the developmental risk that living in poverty exposed. Questions were also geared to explore, from earliest recollections and through the theoretical contribution of symbolic interactionism, how close and early familial and cultural interaction, support and guidance can impact life course implications for these women (Kendall, 2004).

Open-ended and broadly defined questioning provided the bulk of data on psychosocial traits, abilities and present day functioning as indicated by the use of qualitative exploration that encompass not only the *whats* but also the *hows* (Gubrium & Holstein, 1992; Silverman, 1993). Expanding the research agenda into the native setting gives enriched opportunity to make important uninterrupted observations between place and person not possible in any other way (Adler & Adler, 1994). Hearing a woman's story is one important component of data gathering. So is watching the interaction with her children, extended family and neighbors as well as visualizing her day-to-day life in the physical surroundings of home and neighborhood.

There are various ways to study household decisions, but I argue it is first important to locate the individual in the multi-social context in which these decisions are made. In this way, the individual serves as the unit of analysis, while the social milieu in which the individual must interact links the household to meso-familial and cultural factors and macro-level issues – social, economic and political – that will impact the micro-level destination decisions.

I specifically wanted to examine how residents made these decisions through life course analysis using mothers as my sample for a number of reasons. I establish that the experiential impact and consequences of an involuntary move and the skill set necessary to navigate the transition will be varied according to the individual's life stage (Dewilde, 2003). Therefore the lifestage of motherhood will impact certain behaviors and actions based on both the needs of the mother and her children across all

ages of the mother. I hold that lifestage distinction is spatially applicable in decisions related to family, housing, neighborhood and beyond.

To provide anonymity for the 12 women who agreed to be a part of the qualitative study, I considered several options. One popular way is to allow the subjects to select a favorite name they would like to have the researcher use. Other methods to mask identity is to use letters and numbers (e.g. Subject A or Subject 2). Still other means to conceal identity is to simply "make up" a name for a subject. I rejected all of these ways because of the size of the sample, the impersonal nature of using abstract symbols and the potential bias for naming them myself. Instead I turned to a website named Random Name Generator (http://www.xtra-rant.com/gennames) that allowed me to select randomly paired first and last names taken from existing genealogy sites. After two random selections where the computer lists 50 names at each selection, I chose the first females names beginning with the letters, A, C, D, G, J, L, M, N, P, R, S and V. Because I had no use for last names, the first names were the only ones I used.

3.5 Data Analysis

In order to focus on the individual for qualitative study, I asked a series of questions that gave me the ability to examine the lived-through processes of deconcentration in order to discern how dispersal impacted relocation and by what need/preference point did they make relocation decisions. The general flow of questioning followed a broad predetermined set of topics, which included: family history; personal traits, attitudes and values; previous coping strategies; motherhood and family; personalized social networks; public housing living; employment history, view

of the future as well as their perception of the spatial and cultural context of present-day neighborhood and community. Respondents shared these and offered other topics for discussion as well, bringing together a contextual look at psychosocial functioning and environmental affiliation, which enriched the data and generally confirmed their comfort in the interview process.

The broad concepts that emerged from the in-person interviews included: coping by individual style, interpretative meaning associated with familial, cultural and social membership and perceptions of macro-structural impediments of constraint and mobility policies of opportunity. By thorough perusal of the transcripts of each interview I searched out shared words, phrases and statements from interviews that allowed me to define and refine emerging patterns and themes taken from these topics and concepts. Having three interrelated measures of mobility behavior previously identified and defined helped to categorize data into *micro, meso or macro* groups of related information. The relevancy of emerging information was the source of continual analysis (B. G. Glaser, 1978) and as I persisted in conceptually linking process and outcome of relocation, I formulated a file entitled "the story of" inserting each woman's name in the title. By stream of thought I wrote down all I had gleaned from each life story, not stopping to rank or evaluate the output at that time.

Borrowing elements of grounded theory I use psychosocial terms readily identified with the research. Grounded theory, a research general method, forms hypothesis based on conceptual ideas of both inductive and deductive reasoning, constantly compared with other concepts, and never formulated in advance of data

collection (B.G. Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Because it is through the conceptualization of data (and not "raw" data per se) that information is analyzed as potential indicators of the research of interest, grounded theorists use terms such as concepts, categories and propositions (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Here "concept" is used to identify events and experiences while "categories" are used to look for similarities and differences that illustrate concepts. These emerging pieces of information, coming through narrative extracts and the multi-sensory memory of time and place, became more evident after reading and re-reading the transcripts.

I was thoroughly immersed in the richly contextual data. First, it was through hearing it spoken to me, then quickly writing field notes, later confirmed by multiple sessions of listening to tapes and emerging in the tactile experience of typing the words onto a page. Combing through these pages for themes and categories, at times, physically cutting and pasting with scissors and glue all culminated in a full sensory immersion that gave me the ability to construct story-oriented narratives. Such rigor is creative, disciplined and analytical, forming a cyclical framework by which to scrutinize data over time (Lareau, 2003). This diligence helped to contextualize the individual perspective and here gave broad understanding to personal agency, interpretive interactionism and overarching social structure. This became especially important in looking for lifestage similarities and differences in the ways and means that individuals, as a composite of psychosocial functioning and life experiences in cultural settings, form mobility decisions within the constraints of structure.

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3.6 Study Limitations

The limitations of this study expose the tradeoffs of a small sample size against the benefits of the generalization of study findings. While the former exposes depth not readily available otherwise, the latter can draw broader research conclusions. Further, because this sample is limited to those who were involuntarily relocated from this specific public housing complex, I have no basis here of studying whether the voluntary as opposed to the involuntary nature of dispersal would offer differing processes and results. Nevertheless, considering the preparatory processes of relocation and the prospects of resettlement allowed me to study the behavior and social action of women confronted by a significant change in their lives as well as their family's lives.

The way we consider generalizability of quantitative findings points to a limited ability of qualitative work to generate aggregated numbers that could inform full-scale about the social conditions of residential relocation. Yet Donmoyer (1990) cautioned that while thinking in terms of traditional generalization may be more expedient, as qualitative researchers this traditional view otherwise limits the reconceptualization of roles in social science thinking, particularly in human development and functioning. In terms of generalizing these findings here, I am remindful that several aspects of housing dispersal and relocation in this study were uncommon amongst most deconcentration of poverty efforts. For instance, when we look at this particular housing development we find atypical elements that set it apart from other developments and could make generalizability difficult.

That the location was downtown, on a scenic river and accessible to many of the amenities this urban center offered makes it somewhat different from the isolated enclaves in entrenched impoverished areas that characterize much of today's subsidized structures. When many think of the total deprivation that public housing can engender, most bring to mind developments such as Chicago's Robert Taylor Homes, notorious for all that is wrong with low-income housing. This development under study was different if by size and degree. And while countless complexes are demolished around the country, many, if not most, are following gentrification plans that could possibly bring some of the relocated families back into the neighborhoods from which they were dispersed. This was not the case here, however.

Another element of research limitation is focused on timing issues. That is, had I been able to do in-depth interviews before these women left JLT, interviews conducted four years later may have been more meaningful. While a pre-move survey was conducted - a data source many relocation studies lament they do not have access to - the only regret is that more qualitative exploration, such as focus groups, were not held before the move out.

Nonetheless, as most of these women have been in their current neighborhood for at least three years, I found a tendency for some residents to romanticize that which they perceived they had lost. This is a natural tendency measured against current day problems and worries. For some, four years after dispersal might be too short a span to assess any real hint of resettlement given the issues of re-building a sense of community that many said they had at JLT. It would seem the "timing" necessary to achieve a

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sense of communal rootedness to the satisfaction of the mother will differ across families based on the elements of agency, familial/cultural need as well as a perceived institutional alliance.

3.7 Participation and Non-response

The nature of study participation was based upon voluntary agreement to return surveys and undergo person-to-person interviews. Similarly, those who chose to participate in the Relocation Program obviously utilized, to some degree, the services made available to the residents. A number of residents, for various reasons, chose not to participate in the program and were lost to my study sample. They may have revealed different destination decision-making processes. Particularly, the involuntary nature of the issue studied – residential dispersal and subsequent relocation – sets up the potential for residents to choose not to participate in any phase of the study. The monetary incentive of $25 paid to those who were selected and interviewed for this study, was used to pay for one's time.

In the end and after varying degree of difficulty in contacting, setting up and finally conducting the in-depth interviews, only one refused outright while two never returned my repeated phone calls and front-door notice to participate. From the first wave of pre-move collection to the time of the qualitative study, the whereabouts of some residents were lost. While the tracking of those who were evicted or left was often difficult, they still remained a part of the original sample and thus a potential for my study.

As a field researcher, I made repeated attempts to contact family and friend contacts, sought the assistance of the local housing authority, made inquiries in the last known neighborhood and wrote letters hoping for forwarding addresses. Yet often such efforts were unfruitful. However, staying in touch with the remaining residents, often I would hear a name mentioned with whom we had lost contact; further inquiry sometimes lead us to a new address and renewed contact. The rigor of maintaining contact with subjects is just one of the requirements that a diligent researcher must hurdle. I turn now to a general overview of my experience as a researcher.

3.8 The Role of the Researcher

My introduction to the residents began when I first walked the hills and sidewalks in their downtown neighborhood, announcing my university's research intention and soliciting participation in these efforts. My presence as a white woman amongst the predominately minority residents stood out in ways that got me noticed. Children were the first to approach me, asking me what I was "giving away." As they eagerly fell into step with me, I asked if some of the older ones would help me find the units of those residents who had not responded to our mail outs and front door notices. They obligingly lead me through the twisting streets of the development, guiding me to apartments I had had difficulty finding and pointing out the residents who lived in these units as they walked on the property.

Because there were few street signs and even less posted unit numbers, I had spent a considerable amount of time trying to find the front doors where I could drop off survey reminders. I later learned that a significant number never went to their front

door, instead preferring to come and go by their back door that opened onto a squared courtyard with other units. Enjoying a cool beverage in the shade of the property's towering oaks with my "helpers", I learned a great deal about life there from their perspective.

Over time and with repeated visits in the months leading up to the first wave of move-outs, I began to develop a rapport whereby I knew many by first name and would wave to them from across the property: with time, many waved back. While most never knew me by name, ever so slowly they began to associate me with the university and not the local housing authority. Throughout my contact with residents, both downtown and in their new homes, I always wore a predominately placed name badge identifying me by name and my university affiliation, yet several continued to initially misidentify me as a local housing employee. I found that with steady contact and some prompting, most could recall my affiliation and recognize me as "the lady who wants to talk to us." Yet that was a hurdle that for a time affected access and rapport building because, as a perceived housing official, I was suspect.

With particular attention to the abilities needed to delve into the more psychosocial aspects of retrospective and current day functioning, I used my years of clinical experience as a licensed professional counselor as well as my vast reading and knowledgeable grasp of the literature. Utilizing aspects of grounded theory terminology, I use this informed and experienced platform from which to examine individual pieces of data in order to discern consistent themes and sub themes for study, much as I might in a counselor/client situation. As Strauss & Corbin wrote, an

informed and experienced researcher must be able to recognize the "plausible relationships proposed among concepts and sets of concepts" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, pg. 278).

With a clinical background in a therapeutic milieu, I am particularly aware of the role and influence I played in this research and in the in-depth interview specifically. My interview style is generally reflective, moving from listener to conversationalist, attempting to mirror a respondent's story using her words so as not to rename her experience through my own. Building and maintaining rapport is key; the authenticity that one hopes for must not only feed off of this connection but must continually exceed the power differential that can (consciously and otherwise) place the respondent in a subordinated position (LeCompte, 1993). In all of these ways, I generally allowed the encounter to follow a broadly unstructured flow, guided by each woman's story in her own words, prompting only for clarity or further thematic exploration.

3.9 Interviewer Bias

Seen as a constructivist approach to research, qualitative work is meant to "stretch" the observational, interview and interpersonal skill of the researcher in ways that satisfy real world inquiry and personal curiosity (Janesick, 2004). Acknowledging such curiosity is one way to emphasize the reflexivity of qualitative work. That is, an innovative way to demonstrate interviewer investments, biases and the ways researchers can "overlook" or suppress certain points of view (Gergen & Gergen, 2000). Qualitative methods of inquiry also stipulate a certain level of trust, commitment and

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access that must be initially acknowledged between the researcher and the participant in order to set the course of discovery (Janesick, 2000). If these are in any way compromised there can be methodological problems that point to validity issues. Further, it is the quality of this relationship that will, in effect, keep the response rate up and refusals down and thus directly impact both the quality and the scope of the study. As a researcher coming into people's home and using in-depth interview technique, I am aware that qualitative work situates us as "guests in the private spaces of the world" (Stake, 1998, pg. 103).

In developing a series of individual encounters within a case study of dispersed and relocated mothers, the primary focus of research is to recognize and illuminate what I expect to find based upon a review of the literature and an exploration of my own hunches. Through rigorous collection, coding and analysis of located regularities and patterns that may shed light on explanation, I am responsible in placing data into relevant categories that I think link back to the thematic umbrella of mobility behaviors in matters of destination decision-making. This means that, unlike hypothesis testing where the researcher sets out with a priori assumptions attempting to deductively discover, here I set about to inductively uncover and continually refine what I see as the psychosocial processes of behaviors, beliefs, cultural values and personal/familial preference that form the basis of the phenomena under investigation.

Denzin's (1989) "research act" pivoted on the subjective meaning of experience. While symbols are critical to research they are not determined through abstract explanation but through the setting in which they are used. Here subjects are

creative, active participants who construct their social worlds; they are not passive conforming objects of socialization (Blumer, 1969). Taking the view of the subject, researchers must step out of the objectivity that often obscures the role and stop short of imposing one's own meanings and preconceptions. Fulfilling such endeavor is seldom easy and there will always be an "irreducible conflict" between the two (Denzin, ibid, pg. 81).

That the interviewer comes with a set of biases defines the fundamental humanity of the relationship between field researcher and those we are interested in studying. The distinction becomes evident when we consider there are no "raw" field notes because as we write them down we use terms, tone and description to judge that we have seen, heard and felt (Ottenberg, 1990). The status of this relationship between field researcher and respondent cannot be overstated in qualitative study. The vigilance necessary to build and maintain a rapport of trust allows for greater access to the phenomena of interest. However, as Fontana and Frey (2000) suggested, the understanding that comes with rapport must be tempered in ways that does not cloud the research objectivity.

CHAPTER 4

LIFE BEFORE DECONCENTRATION: REACTION TO DISPERSAL

It is the degree of personal choice that separates mobility loss from benefit.

Fischer, 1977

I was happy to hear I was getting out. That I had already wanted to do. I knew I would find me and my grandson a better place. But if I stayed until the end of this they would help us find a better place. And which they did, in a way.

Lucille, age 72

Miss Steffie told me about it, but I didn't pay attention though. Then when it was time, I didn't really want to go because I was content. My kids was all right. But then I had no choice but to move cause I didn't have the money for deposits to rent no place else.

Vernita, age 28

This chapter is devoted to a life course exploration of two women, Lucille and Vernita, and their experience of an involuntary household dispersal from Jane Long Terrace Housing in 2002. These women were chosen for this part of the study for several reasons. Lucille's agency score was tallied in a higher category while Vernita's had been scored lower. Recalling from Chapter 2, the agency scoring was taken from pre-move responses surveying psychosocial wellbeing and overall functioning for which coping style was one aspect of agency assessed. (See Appendix) It is important to note, these scores were not widely ranged but fell into two categories. The

nature of finding a cut-off point to differentiate "higher" and "lower" is more noteworthy than comparing one score as "higher" or "lower" than another.

Both women continue to live on public housing property but in a different context. Lucille lives in a 'true" mixed income setting, populated by neighbors who represent a variety of socioeconomic levels. Vernita's neighborhood setting is an authority-owned mixed income complex where, at varying levels, all tenants pay rent below market. Important to this aspect of the study, each woman had spent considerable time expressing their experience of dispersal in different contexts. At first glance, these women are very dissimilar in age and lifestage of motherhood. With that focus in mind, I was interested in exploring the extent to which age/life stage mattered in coping with the changes of an involuntary household move.

4.1 Introduction to Lucille and Vernita

NAME	AGE	RACE	Children / G-children	Higher/Lower Agency	Status of Neighborhood
Vernita	28	B	4	L	LP-PH Mixed
Lucille	72	B	6/23	H	LP-PH Mixed

Lucille is a 72-year-old African American woman, mother of six and grandmother of 23. She has lived with her 18-year-old grandson Paul since his mother, Lucille's baby daughter, died of a long illness at age 32 nearly 10 years ago. Lucille is fairly pragmatic in that way that many older women appear. Yet in listening to her recall her childhood it seems she has always approached life in much the same way. Her

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gaze is often direct and prolonged. She is not afraid to challenge or display brief anger. Her overall demeanor could best be described as somewhat flat, especially when talking of especially painful periods.

She provides a self-assessment this way. *If I decided to do something, I am gonna do it, you know. I'm just that kinda of person. I don't poke around with what I need to do. I think it out. I know what I need to do and I do it. I just get it done. And you know what else? I try to not let myself get stressed out, specially by the little things.* Issues of trust and vulnerability come up early. She says she doesn't know how she can be of any help with this study. *And I don't talk about my problems very much. I think about them and then I decide you know. If there's nothing I can do about this, why worry. I'm just not going to worry about it. And I just leave it alone. I say if you can't change it, why worry about it. Now, that's the way I see it.*

Vernita is a 28-year-old African American mother of three who lived downtown at Jane Long for almost 10 years, moving there one month after the birth of her first child. She will tell you she generally went about her business there, recalling there was much she liked about the downtown location, her apartment and the fact that moving there had signaled a time when she felt finally on her own. Vernita also has an air of pragmatism about her, appearing guarded, largely because as she says early on, *I don't trust much.*

As we talk, I soon notice that Vernita talks in a cadence that has both a melodious tone and a clipped tempo at the same time. I often think she is "rapping" her thoughts as we talk because the ending of her sentences end on the same note.

Her omission of words that would normally bridge her thoughts becomes a symbol of the economy in which she, at least initially, chooses the words to convey her thoughts. In much the same way, her initial observable display of *feelings* about a subject, most any subject, are at a minimum. She clearly appears more comfortable in telling you what she thinks rather than what she feels.

Her stories are threaded with hints of distrust and rebellion but also something approaching wistfulness for something else. *No doubt, I was a renegade and maybe still am. I was finally kicked out of one middle school for extortion. I used to bully people 'cause I was bigger than everybody. But I think I'm like my grandmother that if people need help they can come stay with me.* Talking about her relationship with her grandmother seems to energize her; voice rising she remembers, *she always taught me, respect yourself first. Work for what you want, nothing is free. My fiancé tells me, you've got your guards up all the time. But that's how I was raised. My mother raised us, not my father, and I learned to do it myself. I am independent so I feel like I don't need nobody to help me with my situation.*

Issues of trust, authority and vulnerability are common, particularly early on in interview-style encounters. Vernita asked did the housing authority look at this "report" and might she read it when it was finished. Lucille continued to discount her input even as she increasingly shared painful details. While both of these women spoke of these issues, albeit in a round about way, each was able to participate in ways that gave important information. It must also be noted that both women understandably held back information, vaguely alluded to but never explored by this interviewer. Therefore there

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is much about life course review that we won't necessarily know about. Both will tell you they were poor as children but didn't know it, because everybody they knew seemed to look like they did. But Lucille recalls her mother's tendency to eat last. Now she understands this was a way to insure often scant food would go first to the children.

In exploring how these women learned coping style over a lifetime of experience we are able to better understand how they will call upon such skill later in dealing with the change of dispersal. As such, we focus on a critical aspect of understanding subsequent mobility behavior after dispersal. That is, how one's psychological self – evidenced here as personal agency – theoretically lies at the core of motivation and serves as one tool for coping with imposed change. (See Figure 1.3) While agency is a key component of life course analysis, we best understand it when conceptualized as "agency within structure" (Settersten, 1999, p. 25). Individuals are embedded in institutions, in such a way as to provide continuity and consistency through resource, support, and opportunity (Leisering, 2003). Thus, embodying an individual, who sets about to actively construct a new life course with the tools of mobility and opportunity, defines the first of three distinct phases of institutional policy execution from a resident's perspective: here the coping reaction to household dispersal.

Identifying Lucille and Vernita as agents allows us to explore *how* they used elements of agency with the built-in features of planfulness and optimism to approach change. This is evident not only in adjusting to news of dispersal but also over a life course, in both their inner worlds and in their social networks. Abilities of selection, adaptation and influence demonstrate behavior and social action, operating within the

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structural opportunities and constraints of social change occurring in public housing. Having choice within constraint, such as the prospects of dealing with an involuntary household relocation, understandably qualifies for such change.

Both women, though different in age, lifestage of motherhood (and some might say outlook), represent many of the women who come to live in public housing. Without doubt, the life course of those who need housing assistance, many with tenures of several years, is often marked by the exposure to accumulated risk factors. For many, accumulated risk involves exposure to long-term hardships such as poverty furthering the likelihood of developmental difficulties, familial deprivation, and poor access to remediation (Strickland & McPherson, 1994). Gathering momentum, from childhood through adolescence into adulthood, we find important studies that demonstrate exposure to multiple adversities can lead to costly behaviors (Elliott, Huizinga, & Menard, 1989; Robins & McEvoy, 1990).

Lucille shares straight away that she is battling a myriad of health problems including chronic high blood pressure and advancing disease requiring special diet, volumes of medication and outpatient treatment three to four times a week. There are many days lately when the demands of getting to and from her treatment as well as the residual physical effects have taken their toll. She seemingly is able to handle these demands on a day-to-day basis, yet Lucille is quick to point out she has not taken care of herself over the years, noting her problems started when she was young adult without health care. *I've been doing this treatment for 3 years now. I have this disease because of my high blood pressure that I've had for years. They tried to tell me a while back that*

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I would have my problems. And of course it took it about 20 years, so I figured they were wrong.

Vernita, for her young age, also has significant health problems and limited access to health care. She points to the dispersal and her present housing dissatisfaction as a reason her blood pressure, a familial problem, has become serious. *I have high blood pressure and sometimes all these problems with my housing don't help that. It's hereditary. Both grandmothers had it. I don't go to the doctor. Stupid, I know. It would cost me $20, but I don't want to go. I don't want to hear what they have to say. I have bad headaches. I'm dizzy, my legs swelling. I have hit the wall. I've been that dizzy. Mother says better safe than sorry. She gets on me about my kids without a mama.*

While there is a physiological toll of chronic risk, the psychological toll may account for lower self-esteem, the distraction of harmful habits, and a reluctance to be proactive, all potentially detrimental to the ability to effective cope. That is, chronic exposure to individual, environmental and interpersonal problems (Fraser, Kirby, & Smokowski, 2004; Hawkins et al., 1998; Jenson & Howard, 1999) can interfere with one's ability to effectively cope, especially with multiple adversities and hardships. In all of these ways such exposure poses the potential to disrupt what we might consider more normal developmental trajectories (Rutter, 2001).

As Lucille talks about her life-threatening health problems, she also admits by her own neglect she has not helped herself. *Today I worry about me getting older, not being able to take care of myself. Like now I think I'm falling apart. And I worry about*

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that. I don't want to live like that. Noting her doctors have been admonishing her to quit smoking for years, she links the relief she gets from smoking to her ability to cope with her problems. *I've got some serious breathing problems. And I know I need to quit smoking, oh but it helps. Believe me, it calms me down. I can be mad as hell. If I go sit down somewhere and smoke a cigarette I'm fine. I guess it's silly to depend on a cigarette to do that, but it does, it really does. But I still wish I could quit because of health reasons. But I know I'll never quit smoking. I know that. I've tried too many times, but it just doesn't work for me. Every time I just start back.*

Vernita says she has been known to run with a "rough crowd" and that such exposure, along with lack of access, has largely been the reasons she has neglected self-care. She's a current two-pack-a-day smoker and alludes to a past drug habit, now behind her. She wonders aloud about the worth of taking better care of herself even as she insists her children need her. *Yeah, I got negative thoughts about myself, like I didn't finish school so I'm not that smart.* With few friends, only "associates", Vernita claims she is not one to try to please others, that *what you see is what you get. I act the same all day everyday no matter who's around me or not. I'm not changing for nobody. It's not difficult for me to voice my opinion. I won't try to hurt your feelings, but I'm going to say what needs to be said. I make my own decisions. People don't talk me into things.*

In this chapter we ask several questions to better explore aspects of coping with dispersal – and thus explore coping style - as life course indicators of resilience. 1) Does coping style mitigate the effects of an involuntary relocation? That is does a

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problem-focused approach help in ways that a more emotion-focused approach does not? 2) Did pre-move agency scores matter? Here coping is viewed as one important aspect of resilience or the ability to "bounce back" in the throes of change and stress.

<div align="center">4.2 Coping: The Stress of Change</div>

Coping, a notion developed by psychologists, has come to be used in interchangeable ways to convey personal mastery, adaptation and defense (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1991) particularly in times of stress and upheaval. A stressful encounter involving a person-environment interaction often demands appraisal exceeding one's resources. This is a basic definition of coping (Lazarus, 1990). Another applicable definition that captures the synergy of affect, cognition and behavior in the coping process is offered by Lazarus and Launier (1978, pg. 311) who theorized, "coping consists of efforts, both action oriented and intra psychic, to manage (i.e. master, tolerate, reduce, minimize) environmental and internal demands and conflicts."

Rather than use the vernacular of productive as healthy and unproductive as unhealthy, instead we explore coping as problem-focused versus emotion-focused (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The former denotes attempts to directly change the conditions of the perceived sources of stress, principally through planfulness, control, appraisal, support, contingency, and problem-solving behaviors (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). In line with the implicit action involved in these behaviors, active coping is a form of the problem-focused variety (Carver & Scheier, 1994). The latter form of emotion-based becomes an attempt to alleviate stress by controlling or ameliorating an emotional reaction principally through defensive styles of distance, avoidance,

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intellectualization, magical thinking and palliation that might mitigate symptoms but not problems (Folkman & Lazarus, ibid). Individuals, who may feel unable to constructively deal with the change and instead feel like they must endure, most often use the latter strategy (Scheier & Carver, 1987).

Figure 4.1 illustrates this model of coping, adapted from a conflict model of decision-making (Janis & Mann, 1977) used to sketch the algorithm of Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) binary styles of coping.

Threat or a Risk

Stress
Uncertainty
Anxiety
Fear

Cognitive Appraisal

Emotion Focused

Problem Focused

Ineffective Coping

Effective Coping

Decisional Conflict

Unresolved
Denial, Avoidance
Hypervigilance

Resolved
Adaptation &
Adjustment
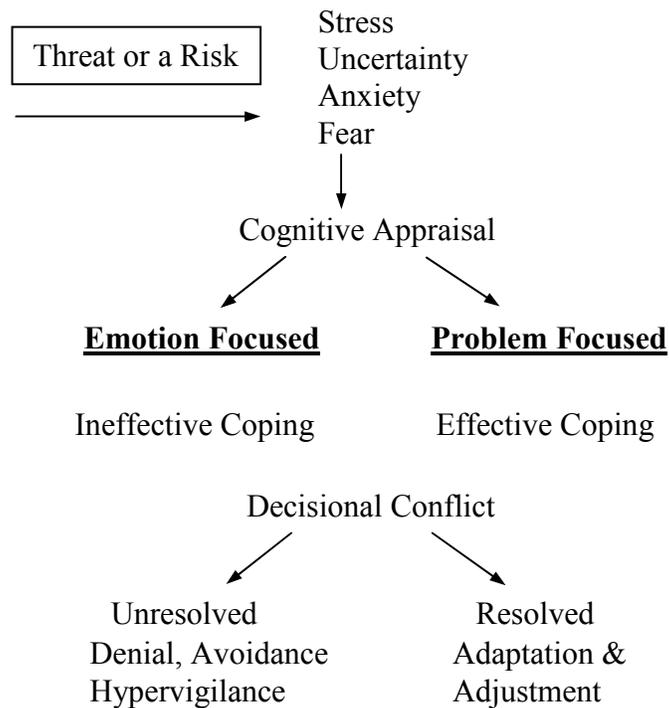
Figure 4.1 Styles of coping.

Adapted from: Janis & Mann, 1977, Conflict model of decision-making,
Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, Theory of cognitive appraisal, stress, coping and adaptation.

Running through this discussion is the notion of control. Facing stressors head on we will see that Lucille's decisions of change have largely come from her locus of control, while for Vernita, through the stories we hear later, many such decisions have been imposed upon her. The impact of such change as that evident in a household dispersal will not only affect coping style as learned skill but may also affect the subsequent processes of deconcentration of poverty.

4.2.1 The Resilience of Coping

Exploring dispersal means exploring resilience. Exploring dispersal also means recognizing agency as a constellation of psychosocial factors that can color the experience. We see that a critical feature of coping is using mechanisms along with familial/cultural relationships to foster skill and abilities to deal with life events, both those of great stress and of everyday life. Resilience is not one solitary attribute that some have and others do not, but a concept so complex that theoreticians and researchers have not been able to agree upon an accepted definition. Whether defined as positively adapting to significant adversity (Luthar et al., 2000), adjusting to disappointments and demands in a rather ordinary life (Joseph, 1994) or used to identify those, who as children, adapted and coped despite formative exposure to deprivation (Milgram & Palti, 1993), the topic of resiliency is vast.

Most agree that resilience, although considered individual ability steeped in wellness to "bounce back", is a clustered set of skills that is not necessarily stable and accessible across all situations. That resilience says more about exposure than avoidance (Rutter, 1993) strikes at the heart of exploring those whose lives are exposed

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to developmental threat and social adversity and who gain the ability to positively adapt despite such assault (Garmezy, 1993; Rutter, 1990; Werner & Smith, 1992). This means an individual's capacity to "bounce back" despite adversity can compensate for a life course of risk. We are interested in the extent to which coping, as a strategy of resilience, helped to mitigate the effects of dispersal and subsequent relocation for Lucille and Vernita.

In ways that capture temperament and dispositional orientation (Oulette-Kobasa & Puccetti, 1983), social and cultural competence in the throes of hardship (Rutter, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1992) as well as honing a sense of coherence to life's unpredictability (Antonovsky & Sagy, 1986), it is theorized we come to assimilate traits, learned abilities and adaptation to the stress process manifested as coping. Therefore resiliency is a constellation of factors that aid in coping, encompassing encounters in family, neighborhoods and schools, not merely a descriptor of personal characteristics.

4.3 Pathways Taken

As we begin to travel the life course of Lucille and Vernita, we do so by way of pathways taken at a number of junctures from early life. Pathways, another construct derived from the life course, allows for theoretical analysis of sequencing of events that have potential in affecting future transitions and outcomes (D. P. Hogan & Astone, 1986). It is the familial and cultural intersection of "linked lives" embedded in personal choice and action within the socio-historical context of change that illustrates the collectivity of an individual's chosen pathways (Hareven, 1977). The "socio-historical"

context is particularly important in this aspect of the study as such context will offer differing conditions, norms and expectations for each woman by stressing the importance of developmental time periods. (See Figure 2.2 for review). Lucille and Vernita were born in two different eras and have navigated their life course through those parameters. How much of that colors the pathways of life course offered and taken is an important consideration.

In order to adequately explore coping style as a mechanism of dealing with change of dispersal as well as life course resilience, we first have to explore the pathways that can give better understanding to the adult today as a child of yesterday. We turn to a brief overview of family and school in Lucille and Vernita's early years as well as the events leading up to teen motherhood.

4.3.1 Family: The Early Years

Like other women studied here, Lucille and Vernita come from fragmented childhood homes, having left school early, largely unnoticed. Both had their first baby out of wedlock by their 17th birthday. They each had used various tactics to cope in childhood with the associated risk of absent fathers, overextended mothers and a lack of attention at home and school. Today they both insightfully, if not regrettably, identify these problems as their needing something but not knowing how to get it.

Raised in a rural part of the state in a small town of a few hundred citizens, Lucille's parents separated when she was about ten years old. Her younger siblings, three sisters and a baby brother, soon became her charges. She recalls her parents argued frequently and at times, violently. Her father moved out, but always stayed in

the picture, never living far from his children. In the small community, he was still a visible presence to her. When she was at odds with her mother, often frequent, Lucille would go stay with her father till things cooled off.   Today she rationalizes her parents' problems but recognizes she got lost in the conflict. *My mother, she had to work and take care of us because my dad didn't help her either. He was out of the picture completely even when he was there. She was a hard worker. She was a cook, a very good cook. So she was gone a lot too and I would have to take over.*

Vernita, the baby in what she initially describes as a working class family, says her earliest recollections were about her neighborhood. *It was lovely there cause there wasn't no gang members, no fighting, no shooting. It was calmer and classy back then. Back then we fit right in with the white neighbors. No one was racist. We all got along, for real. My mama always had a house. That's why I want a house for my kids.* In time, Vernita paints another side of her childhood, marred by parental absences, verbal taunts and mounting anger. Her mother worked long hours at a couple of jobs, her much older siblings were always on the go and her father, while living in the household, was largely absent. *He was there but only sometimes. He worked for rich people. But my own daddy never did anything for me. He might give me one dollar. Hey I need more than a dollar from you! When I'd say something, like I needed more, he'd say I'm talking back to him. He did discipline us. He's the one who said I was bad girl. And I guess I was.*

As the baby, she says she learned early on how to use that, getting into trouble even as she clamored for attention. Taking on the family nickname "Stinky", *you know, like a rotten kid, a bad kid,* she attempted to live up to it.   At age 11, Vernita was sent

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to live with her maternal grandmother who lived in public housing near downtown: not Jane Long Terrace. By Vernita's account, her bullying behavior at school had escalated, spilling into her neighborhood. Her parents considered moving her as the best and only solution. The move necessitated her enrolling in a new school and leaving behind, rather abruptly, her life in her previous one. The move also coincided with the fact her grandmother needed someone to live with her, as she had recently fallen into poor health. That is the way Vernita remembers the primary reason. The sting of involuntary relocation was early.

In their shared sense of independence, both women say they have carved a life course largely with little help. This may say something about their familial expectations they grew into as well as their models of strong mother-centered households who seemed to operate without a lot of assistance. Yet we see seemingly different ways they have gone about carving their subsequent life course. While Lucille tends to meet her problems head on without a lot of obvious outward emotion, Vernita will use her diversion of defiance, distance and, in some cases, denial to deal with her stressors. In these ways we come to understand how they might take divergent tacks to coping with dispersal.

4.3.2 School: The Adolescent Years

Lucille recalled her school was close by in her neighborhood of *all black folk. Not a lot of kids. Everybody got along. We went to church there. We could walk to it. We walked to school. It was a pretty safe neighborhood. I dropped out of school about the 10th grade. I think I was about 15 years old. It was my decision. I just refused to go*

to school. You don't know how many days I had wished I had went. I tried to go back I think one time after I got married and my husband was still there, but I gave that up too. He didn't want me to. He was so jealous. I left school because I just felt like I didn't want to be there. Something else was more important. No longer in school, Lucille began a long tenure of work that she continued until her grandson came to live with her.

Vernita's decision to drop out of school early she says started back in elementary school when she started getting into trouble with other children. As Vernita admits somewhat mischievously today, her bullying was just a way to get noticed, even when it cost her friends and ultimately took her away from her childhood home. *They called me a hand-full. By that I mean things were available and I would get into everything I could. When nobody was looking I would sneak. I was sneaky. I'd always like to get into their stuff. You know just tearing stuff up, acting like I didn't do it.*

Her early years at school was when she realized it was going to be different from her home life where she was able to get "anything" she wanted. In the ways that being "bad" at home felt familiar, Vernita soon found that these tactics did not work at school. Yet increasingly Vernita pushed the limits, getting into trouble, drawing negative attention for bullying those she determined were trying to "bully me." As these incidents intensified, she soon came to the attention of teachers and administrators, who promptly called upon Vernita's mother to intervene. Trouble at school and the reputation she had gained drew the ire of older children that followed her back to her home neighborhood as well. *Moving in with my grandmother was supposed to straighten me out, I guess.*

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4.3.3 Motherhood: The Late Teenage Years

As for many of these women, the pathway to motherhood followed soon on the heels of leaving school prematurely. Lucille lamented she could get neither her mother nor her father to pay attention so she began a relationship with a much older man who never acknowledged her either. Later when she had a child by him he never once came to visit her or his daughter. When he died several years back, she recalls, *somebody from back home called me and said, "JR" died and I said, so…that ain't nothing to me, man. He wasn't a part of my daughter's life growing up, shoot, no. She knew who he was to see him but that was about all.*

Unlike Vernita, Lucille had pursued marriage. Such a pursuit might indicate the socio-historical timing of cultural expectations of an earlier time in U.S. society. Today Lucille rationalizes the wrong reasons that propelled her. She believed she had to leave what had become unbearable living in her mother's house, her father had grown unreliable and she had fallen out of favor with the father of her infant daughter, now nearly 2 years old. Her husband-to-be, although much older than Lucille, also still lived at home with his mother subsequent to their marriage. *In the early days I had hoped for a lot of happiness. There was never any happiness in our marriage. No, I can't remember any happy days with him. He mostly let his mother run his life and I don't know. I just felt like I had made a mess. I knew that I would leave him. I hadn't planned on staying with him that long after I'd find him out. Yeah, I found him out good. I knew him to be steppin' out. I already knew what he was, but I went on and married him.*

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Vernita related a history of troubled relationships, recalling *when I was a teenager and had had my first, I had my face fractured by my oldest son's father. He went to jail this time for that.* She was often in the company of incarcerated men. She says many trafficked in drugs and gangs, most who were either recently released or awaiting sentence. She says she has never once considered marriage to any of the men she's been involved with thus far. She freely acknowledges she has always been drawn to the "bad boy", perhaps to compliment her "bad girl" image. Yet she complains bitterly about how the fathers of her children, two who are convicted felons, have ignored their own children much as her own father did.

4.3.4 Pathways to Jane Long Terrace

Lucille tends to chart her remembrances as "before" and "after" she took her grandson in to live with her nearly eleven years ago. Over her adulthood, Lucille had lived off and on in subsidized housing spanning her fluctuating work career and the needs of her children. She had always regarded public housing *as a place on the way to somewhere else*. So she had not been any too eager to re-enter the rolls. But now with a growing child to feed and clothe she needed housing assistance. *Before making that decision to raise "Paul", I had sold all my furniture and all that kind of stuff so I could find me a room with a lady. Just a room. I didn't want to be stuck with an apartment to take care of, in case I wanted to get up and go somewhere.*

The extended role of parenting often finds older residents raising grandchildren, coming into the household sometimes unexpectedly. At first such additions are often considered temporary but eventually many reach into long-term status (Pruchno, 1999).

In most instances, the middle generation is increasingly absent from the home, becoming more common for the grandparent to step in as parent, with or without legal guardianship (Bryson & Casper, 1999). Even when the middle generation is present, the older household member often provides affordable options such as extended daycare (Goodman & Silverstein, 2002). In the case of financial hardship, typically the affected parent and child move in with the grandparents (Jendrek, 1994).

The U.S. Census Bureau reported in 2000 that 5.8 million grandparents, 64% of them grandmothers, lived in homes where grandchildren under the age of 18 were present (Simmons & Dye, 2003). From the Census we also learned that approximately 2.4 million grandparents had full responsibility for their grandchildren with 70% of those households run by grandmothers. Within these households, black grandmothers ran 31% of them while Latina grandmothers headed up 16% (Bryson & Casper, 1999).

Coming out of "retirement" at age 62 to take on sole custody of her grandson had meant that Lucille would have to change her plans of travel, sleeping late and doing as she pleased. She and her grandson moved into Jane Long Terrace in late winter 1997 because Lucille as recalled, *I was unable to work. And here I was a mother again, responsible for this seven-year-old boy. When I took Paul in to live with me and raise him that was my biggest decision I've ever had to make. I just didn't think I could handle it, or for how long. But I did. He was just like my own child and I was on my own. That's what it's been like. But I prayed about it a lot. My daughter, the one who had tried to keep him a while, asked me, how you gonna take care of him? How long can you take care of him? And I told her, until I either die or he's grown.*

Vernita's path to Jane Long Terrace had been a fairly predictable one. Faced with the demands of single parenting only weeks after her beloved grandmother had died, she was determined to *do it on my own. Be in my own house.* She moved into her apartment when her son was only a month or so old. She acknowledges she took offered help after the birth of her son with mixed feelings, uneasy for being in such a vulnerable spot. She says it was with reluctance that she relied upon her mother, other grandmother, and sister to take care of her child while she went back to work at a local warehouse. Torn between showing she could take care of her son and having to work, Vernita decided to return to her job. She saw this as a necessity as having her own money was of utmost importance to her and taking "hand-outs" per se was out of the question. She had a car and was pleased that she never had to take the bus or rides from others.

She also described this period in her life as "the hardest", after losing her grandmother and quickly confronted with the birth of a child she realized she would have to raise alone. While she had expected no help from the baby's now-incarcerated father, Vernita had dreamed of raising her baby under her grandmother's guidance. Noticeably softening, she recalls her thinking about <u>becoming</u> a mother, although she acknowledges she gave no thought about <u>being</u> one. *Before I had my first baby, I just played and took care of a friend's baby a lot. So I knew that was what I wanted. My sister can't have kids. My brothers have no kids, so I figured I'm the only one. I gave my parents the only grandchildren. That's what I've done.*

4.4 Life at Jane Long Terrace: Preparing for Dispersal

Both women paint a picture of life at Jane Long in similar terms to a point. By all accounts neither actively socialized, pretty much keeping to themselves, venturing out occasionally to take in many of downtown amenities. Both point to the physical location of their apartments on higher ground overlooking the river as something that sustained them for as long as they lived there. While Lucille's forceful words even four years later convey her eagerness to leave downtown, Vernita's account has remnants of longing to get back to a place - maybe not the best of neighborhoods in her opinion - that has become in her mind better that her present housing situation. In much the way we tend to romanticize the past in our minds Vernita's Jane Long Terrace has become almost idyllic.

Lucille had convincing reasons for wanting to move on. Especially strong were the memories of her youngest son and his young life lost several years back due to a fatal altercation on another public housing property. Stepping in among neighborhood gang members, he had died trying to help someone he didn't really know. Lucile said she couldn't help but spend much of her time downtown worried about the welfare of her growing grandson, an outgoing athlete who also liked to help others. Sharing these memories, she also repeats her elation about what the dispersal would accomplish for her and her grandson.

Now I was happy to get out of Jane Long. That I had already wanted to do. I had always wanted to be staying someplace else. I wanted to get out. My biggest concern was getting him [grandson] *out of there. I wanted him to have a better place to*

live than in the projects. That's what they were calling them you know. I wanted him to say yeah I live in an apartment with my granny. Don't say I live in the projects with my granny cause when you use that word projects people look at you different. So I knew if they sold it we'd have to leave and it would help. I wouldn't have to go out and try to find an apartment I knew I couldn't afford. But with them, I could afford to stay there and get of there at the same time.

By Vernita's description she was content at JLT and so were her children. It was after all, the *only home my children had ever known.* She worked to keep it clean and she was proud that she kept a nice house. *It was all good. I stayed inside my house most of the time I lived there. I'd go to work and come home. It was quiet the side where I stayed. Way up on the bluff side, looking down on the river. I stayed in the good part, where it was mostly quiet.* When queried about her neighbors, Vernita is quick to say that she had not socialized there much. Among her outside "associates" however she says she felt looked down upon because she lived in public housing. Yet for her it meant putting a roof over her children's head *but only until I can get on my feet, I'd have to put up with this nonsense.*

In Lucille's words we can hear the emotion as she describes her reaction to the official news of dispersal, echoing what for her meant a move in a positive direction. Seemingly buoyed by optimism, she downplayed potential conflict even in the throes of possible adversity when her neighbors expressed anger toward her for her enthusiasm. Something a bit out of character for her, she acknowledges it was more important to get her grandson out of JLT than it was to *please my neighbors.* In a show of how she has

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leveraged her way, Lucille demonstrates her understanding for how she could 'work" the change to her advantage.   Instead of having to find a better place on her own, she would use the programs, funds and advantages offered by the housing authority to make such a change. It is an attitude of strategy and pragmatism that runs throughout her life course stories.

The meetings that were held at the community center, called by the staff of the local housing authority as well as the organized residents themselves, Lucille says were helpful. *Oh yes, I went to all the meetings. The others didn't really want to go. I knew they was upset, but not just with me. I wasn't the only one who wanted them to sell it. There were a few other people. So I would go to these meetings and listen to them. I didn't say anything. I'd just listen. But I didn't really agree with what some of the* [resident] *leaders were saying about not being in agreement about the sale. I just wanted to stay informed.*

But there was an unexpected snag in Lucille's enthusiasm for leaving JLT: her grandson's reaction. She had not been prepared for his initial feelings of anger mixed with sadness.   As much as his grandmother had tried to dissuade neighborhood alliances, Paul had made many friends in and around the complex over the last ten years. She mentions briefly there was tension, as Lucille's exuberance had run counter to her grandson's silent moping. *Later on, he didn't fuss. He just got with the program. That pretty much describes our relationship. I've always told him just do the best you can do and go along with it.*

Lucille is quick to say that he has never "given me a bit of trouble" and continues to be thankful for escaping downtown before anything happened. When she had taken him into her home, she had decided she wouldn't work anymore *so I could be home for him when he came home. Most of the time when my children were growing up, I had to work. A lot of things, they got away with, cause I was too tired or not there. So, I wanted to do it different, and I did. I've been more involved in his life. Now if you asked him about this he'd probably say he did most of the things he wants to do. I didn't smother him - guess you could say that. I gave him a lot of freedom. But I've always talked to him about things he should and should not do. So he hasn't had any problems that I know of and he don't give me problems… No, no, no. I brought him up like that. He knows what I will and what I won't take. And if I say I don't want this, he knows this just ain't gonna be. But I've always tried to be there for him.*

She has remained adamant about his staying in school, in the same school he had attended even after dispersal. She insured all the subsequent locations would not jeopardize putting him into another. By Lucille's accounts, Paul is an exceptional student, excelling in academics, proficient in sports and well liked by many. At the time of our interview, he had graduated high school two months prior and Lucille enthusiastically reported he had been accepted to a college on scholarship, albeit several hundred miles. She was already talking about her plans to travel, sleep late and generally do as she pleased just as she had dreamed before Paul came into her household.

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Despite her dreams to be somewhere else, Lucille says she will continue to live in public housing, most likely where she lives today. She cites her diminished health and need to be nearby her doctors as her reasons. That is, in the mixed-income development far removed from the vestiges of downtown she longed to escape. Yet, Lucille remains pragmatic about her housing situation. *I can pay my own rent and stuff so I can afford to live here. I can't afford to live any other place cause the rent is too high. And in public housing the rent, they just go by 30% of your income. But you know, it's okay. But I wouldn't stay if I could stay some place else. And that's about the best I can put it. I'd rather stay some place else, but it's okay if you can't do any better. Right now I know I can't do any better.*

Unprompted Lucille does offer opinions, however haltingly, about the general state of public housing and perhaps the reasons it has been gained the reputation it holds in her community. *I think housing is a pretty good deal, I really do. I might … what would make it a little less… oh, I don't know. No, I do know what I want to say. I think they should screen the people a little closer than they do. If I could change some things that would be what I would do.* [It would] *be to screen more people. And I don't think just anybody should be able to get in housing. If you did something awful, then you messed yourself up. I think some get in too easy. Now that, I think I would change. I would look into them a little deeper. You know, try to find out something about them a little more.*

For Vernita, the topic of life at JLT, particularly related to dispersal, was the only topic she talked about without prompting. In some ways it appeared that in her

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attempts to explain how much she missed downtown she might be able to justify her current housing situation. In many ways, the dispersal represented a breach of trust. Trust – and what seems the inevitable distrust - is a subject she peppers into many of her stories. Vernita reported being "content" at JLT with no plans to move. Therefore the rumor that the complex would be demolished forcing everyone to move she regarded as simply that: a rumor. She said she took no thought to moving because she had largely avoided neighborhood chitchat altogether. Dismissing such gossip as "trash talk", she gave short shrift to speculation. She reported hearing growing rumblings about resident unrest and hastily called meetings at the neighborhood center, but did not inquire. Tending to ignore much of what the housing authority did on the property anyway, she figured that if she were a law abiding resident who paid her rent on time, why would they want to change that.

While she did not actively socialize, she had forged a friendship with one older lady, "Miss Steffie." When Vernita had moved into JLT, she had been a teenager with an infant, grieving the loss of her grandmother and confronting the challenge of single parenthood. She had learned early on to trust little and now without her grandmother - "the most important person in my life" - she had proceeded cautiously. When Vernita would often stroll her children out and about, over time, she would stop and talk with Miss Steffie. She offered Vernita much needed parenting tips, filling a need as something of a mother figure.

It seems Miss Steffie, a self-appointed activist among the residents, had been busy gleaning information about rumors and future plans for the complex. When Miss

Steffie had come to her door one evening to talk about the renewed rumors of a sale, Vernita says, *I told her I really thought it wouldn't go far. Everybody was content here because utilities were paid. We only had to pay for rent. We had reliable buses downtown. It was close for everybody. They wouldn't mess that up.* Vernita seemingly could not face that if her life was content and stable that larger forces would disrupt that. \

But as we hear in her stories, official letters from the housing authority soon arrived on her door, community center meetings were called and the disgruntled rumbling from a core group of residents gained momentum. The complex was fairly abuzz now with a wide range of speculation, rumors and for some, excitement. Vernita was not one of the latter. In fact, as rumors were confirmed, she says she grew increasingly angry. Yet she was still not willing to join the organizing group of dissatisfied residents in any visible way.

She directed much of her ire at the local housing authority and began to see herself, again, in a very vulnerable position. Rumors were substantiated when the necessity of temporary moves and talk of incentives was introduced. Yet such talk appeared to anger Vernita even more, as if it was all part of "a bribe." In many ways, it brought up her old defensive methods of first ignoring, then striking out. *Then it got to be a money thang. You know, a free computer and all that kinda jazz. Hey, that stuff don't make a person want to move somewhere else. If you don't want to go, you don't want to go. You're content, especially if you've been here for years.*

Today she freely admits she was (and still is) wary of those in authority, particularly housing authority representatives. The indifference that Vernita routinely displays may be her way of dismissing those whom she categorizes as untrustworthy. For Vernita, the issue of trust is a thematic "thorn" that runs through most of her stories of childhood family, school experiences, relationships with the fathers of her children as well as authority figures. *I'll just tell you, I don't trust the housing authority. They try to stay in your business. I don't trust much anyway. I didn't trust people at Jane Long. I just went to work, came home, stayed in the house. And I don't trust nobody out here. Cars and houses out here get broken into. People get robbed. And I don't trust the police, not at all. They're crooked cops. They are all sneaky.*

While she has little trouble in revealing that she does not trust, tends to discount authority and is seemingly dissatisfied with her present situation, if one listens closely enough there is vulnerability underneath all of her bravado. She will tell you she's learned "the hard way" not to "sweat the little stuff", that her children are her most important source of support and that her goal is to leave public housing for good. She also recognizes the value of being more assertive (and less aggressive) as she recalls an incident where her car was towed from in front of her apartment.

I went down there and talked crazy to them [apartment management]. *But it didn't work, so I went back and told them I needed help 'cause this wasn't even my car. It's my cousin's car. They were nicer that time.* When queried, Vernita laughingly agrees that by asking for help (instead of yelling and talking "crazy") she had accomplished something. She says she knows being more assertive in her requests can

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go far, but that it is sometimes hard to remember in the heat of the moment. She says she would be like to be more like that in order to have people respond more positively.

Lucille's notion of trust across neighbors and institutional affiliations is equally guarded but she declines to identify any particular group as more or less trustworthy. She does share that she does not think those in authority – like the local housing staff – consider her as a person capable of making decisions. *Living in public housing means a lot of choices are made for you. It don't seem fair, but that's the way it is. It's true that the housing authority don't see us as people who can make decisions. It's more like you need to go here. You need to go there. But you know I haven't given up. I'm never gonna give up.*

4.5 Lucille's Stories of Coping

Lucille's foray into marriage had failed. She says she knew from the very beginning it would. While the problems of dissolving it with seven children were apparent, Lucille says it was her ability to focus on what needed to be done next that got her through this difficult period. Lucille had married a man much like her own father: a man with violent tendencies. She realized early on she would have to "work out" her escape so as not to alert her husband of her plans. Lucille's tendency to internally strategize her problems, as she recalls she had no one to confide in, explains much of how she has coped with stressors of the unexpected as well as her initiated plans.

But Lucille did not leave him straightaway. She would leave and return, leave and return as dependent mothers with children often do. Her picture-book idea about marriage and happiness as well as her mother's insistence for her to just endure (as she

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had done) were still driving forces. So she would return, thinking this time would be different. But it never was. *When I left my husband and I left him several times, I kept leaving my children there. And I'd go back, but things wouldn't get any better. Back when I had seven children to think about well, what I decided was for them too. One day, I was just sitting there thinking about me, my children, my life, and I knew I had to get away from him because he was going absolutely no where. So I decided in my mind, well, there are women out there with more children than I got and they manage. When I left him that last time, I left him all the way – I got a divorce. And I think he knew why I left him but he never talked about it and I never talked about it. One day I made up my mind, this is it, no more.*

In talking today over those days when she left her husband, Lucille tends to downplay the struggle that ensued. When she left, she had rented a small house in an adjoining rural community and began to buy her own furniture by scavenging thrift stores, albeit slowly. She boasts that, in the end, she had taken nothing from the house save her children and their clothing. She could do this, she says, because she was working, having never been financially dependent on her husband. *Everything was fine until it came time to pay the child support. He took me to court. He had a better lawyer than I did. He got away with not paying any child support, but he got my oldest boys. But not my baby boy. I wasn't about to let him go! I had my baby and my two girls cause my oldest girl had already left home by this time. But I still saw my oldest boys. Who do you think raised them?*

4.6 Vernita's Stories of Coping

Vernita had been moved, unexpectedly by her accounts, into her grandmother's house to address some of her bullying problems in school. The move had meant enrollment in a new school, presumably a place to "start over." Today Vernita generally resists recalling the experience of actually moving through the eyes of an 11 year old. Rather she feels comfortable in identifying herself as making the decision to become a part of "Big Gram's" neighborhood. She also tends to intellectualize her mother's decision for relocating her, but easily accesses the residual anger when she discussed what dispersal from JLT had signified to her as a decision *made out of my hands*. When talking about early recollections of childhood and school, she described herself in the words she heard used by the influential adults in her life and says that her behavior had followed. *I was bad and I rebelled. I was so spoiled, so I showed them. But there was also a lot of rules and regulations in my household. If you talked back, you'd get discipline.* Vernita says her mother was the head of household and the one who would *whup me good* while her grandmother's punishment was to *pinch me.*

Clearly, today there are residual feelings about being uprooted at the age of 11, yet she steers clear of blaming her parents. She remains close with her mother but is estranged from her father for all the reasons one might expect. She acknowledges she does not ask for help from anybody. Yet her mother may be one of the few people Vernita says has earned her respect, albeit with qualifications. *The only person that can say what I <u>have</u> to do is my mom and she really can't now cause I'm grown. She can voice her opinion. But I may not tell her what I think cause she's my mother.*

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Vernita also stops short of "blaming" the neighborhood where she lived at the height of her 'troublemaking" for her subsequent decisions. In her words, it is the person, not the place who is ultimately responsible. *People think projects are so bad. It ain't where you stay. It's what you make out of the place where you stay. Where you live is not who you are. It's like where you live doesn't matter as much as how you raise your children. I grew up in the projects but that don't mean I'm acting like I'm from the projects.*

Because it may be easier and often serves to soften the blow, we tend to think of earlier experiences through the mind's eye of ourselves as adults. Thus, today Vernita acknowledges her mother had a difficult life living with a difficult man such as her father. She says she regrets, as a child, physically and emotionally lashing out at her mother for "siding" with her father. She shared that she had been forced to have a "secret" relationship with her grandfather, so as not to raise the ire of her grandmother whom she lived with from age 12 until 17. It seems that her grandfather, "Big Pop", who lived in the same city, had moved out long ago from Vernita's grandmother's subsidized apartment. Even though Vernita would "sneak out" to see him out and about, his name and reputation was *person non-gratis* in her grandmother's household.

In this chapter, we have examined, in depth, the coping styles of these two women in order to better understand how the lead up and preparation of dispersal might impact resettlement. In Figure 4.2, Lucille's findings are summarized using the ideal model of adaptive behavior indicative of resettlement (see Figure 3.1). Table 4.1 is a tabulated assessment of these abilities.

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NAME	AGE	RACE	Children / G-children	Higher/Lower Agency	Status of Neighborhood
Lucille	72	B	6/23	H	LP-PH Mixed

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	**Optimistic** **Clean home environment** **Problem focused coping** **Internal locus of control** **Expresses personal satisfaction**	Close relationship with grandson – leaving for college One daughter lives close; visits occasionally; talks on the phone infrequently Interacts well with housing personnel	**Maintains housing compliance** **Maintains stable home environment** **Takes individual responsibility for readjustment to relocation** **Access to running automobile**
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	Poor health compliance Inability to take the viewpoint of another Short term viewpoint	**Estranged from two daughters** **Does not know her neighbors** **Has few friends, none visit her, and she would call on none for help**	Has had trouble in past with communication with PHA & apartment management representatives Expresses desire to live somewhere else; out of public housing

<u>What Worked for Lucille</u>

Agency: Lucille's sense of personal agency, as a decision maker, has helped manage the many changes in her life.

Family/Culture (supportive networks): She does not have a large network, but does have support from one grandson & one daughter who lives close by

Structure: Understands the leverage of using public housing assistance to make an improved move into lower poverty.

Figure 4.2 Summary of study findings: Lucille.

Table 4.1 Tabulated Assessment of Lucille

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	+ + +	+ +	+ + +
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+	+ + +	+

4.7 Summary of Lucille

It doesn't take long to talk to Lucille before you catch on to her economical efficiency in word and in deed. She cuts to her point, sparing little time for chit-chat, extemporaneously offering just enough detail to further whet the appetite. When I met with her for the interview she had ushered me into her sunny living room dominated by an oversized mantle with a neat orderly array of 'knick-knacks" interspersed with trophies she beamed were her grandson's for his sports and scholastic achievements. Centered on the wall over the faux fireplace was an oversized framed head shot of a black woman with a softly curled bob, and light dancing eyes, full lips in a high wattage smile. Inquiring, she offers it is of herself at the age of 19. When I comment that her looks are striking, she laughs heartily and, with a wave of her hand, declares, *yeah that's what they always told me, but I didn't really pay them no mind. I was just so headstrong as a girl. You know, you couldn't tell me nothing.*

I include this moment because in an instant it captured something of her, in days gone by, that still exists despite the years in between. On that day, a floral pink kerchief covered her thinning hair which she shared has been ravaged by her health. Her eyes,

while still striking, even piercing, no longer dance as they did in the photograph. Yet her smile, occasionally breaking into deep hearty laughter, remained her same upturned feature. The woman who greeted me was a tall thin woman, posture erect underneath a freshly ironed housedress. She carried a lighted cigarette in one hand, while motioning me toward the kitchen table with the other. She immediately gave an air of sensibility and no-fuss, even as she graciously offered a beverage.

Throughout our talk, she often referred to her *feelings* of rebellion, anger and sadness, but her recounted behavior, from early on, seemed to have been measured so as to downplay any emotion. She is clearly not demonstrative, but rather seems to do a great deal of internal thinking and processing about her problems, her stress, and her plans. Even as she later related the death of her children as some of the most painful moments in her life, there is something of a disconnection between her words and her affect.

Clearly, her life has been marred by loss on the scale that would shake most. Her father, who she remembers today with bittersweet fondness as man who did the best he could by offering shelter during her rebellious period with her mother, died in a train accident after Lucille was grown and had left her mother's house with her first baby. She thinks it is from him she gets her single mindedness and her tendency to remain in the background. Her mother, who lived independently into her nineties, died only one week before one of her teenaged son's tragic death in an argument with an acquaintance over a bicycle.

Some might stay Lucille's rather detached recounting of these and other painful events is just her way of coping. She shares easily enough, but is understandably guarded. It seems that her method of relating is to stick with the facts with little emotional commentary. When it is reflected that she has indeed endured major loss in her lifetime, she offers an insight into the way she has coped by telling the difficulty her best friend had in reconciling the death of her son. When that friend recently died, Lucille insists it was because of a broken heart, never recovering from the untimely loss.

She just needed to be told you know. Just leave it alone, I had told her, let God take care of it. But she just grieved herself to death. And I'm not going to do that. I'd be flying backwards if I did that. I don't know why but sometimes I just feel like I'm stronger than that. Like when I would lose one of my own children, I would sit down and think about it, you know. I miss them all right. But this wasn't my fault, nothing I could do about it. And nothing I do can bring them back. So I just accepted it. It's that simple. I just accepted the fact that they're gone and that's that.

Lest we fall into considering Lucille's behavior as strictly denial and thus holding to a popular notion of an escape from reality, it is important to remember that denial can be a useful way of coping, in particular ways and at particular times. It is a defense mechanism that protects from being overwhelmed, particularly related to matters of coping with illness and disease (Maes, Leventhal, & DeRidder, 1996). It also helps us to absorb some of what happens to us, when it happens quickly and painfully. Lazarus (1993) concluded that there are no universally good or bad coping

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styles, though there are degrees of some better or worse than others. Further noting, there is often the necessity for positive denial. Demonstrating that is the use of a form of denial where an individual minimizes the extent of the problem, paradoxically adding benefit to the recovery of individual (Maes et al, ibid). Likewise there are important differences between denial and avoidance. The former says, it's not true for me while the latter says, I won't think about that. Taken to the extreme, either can delay the task at hand: that is, the ability to work through the stress process.

Figure 4.3 illustrates Vernita's summarized findings of adaptive behavior. The tabulated assessment of these findings is found in Table 4.2.

NAME	AGE	RACE	Children / G-children	Higher/Lower Agency	Status of Neighborhood
Vernita	28	B	4	L	LP-PH Mixed

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	Optimism – especially when talking about future of her children Resourceful / Industrious Self image as a strong black woman Self efficacy – in the role of mother Maintains clean house / children	Supportive boyfriend: childcare, bills Supportive mother / grandmother: helps with childcare occasionally Trusts mother's opinion Strong cultural identity	Not working, says she is actively looking for employment Children enrolled in housing sponsored after school and summer programs Access to running automobile
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	**Front line tactic: aggressive** **Poor locus of control** **Diminished individual responsibility** **Emotional focus style of coping** **Difficulty in asking / receiving help** **Poor self image** **Personal / housing dissatisfaction**	**Children frequently in trouble in neighborhood** **Oldest child – behavioral problems in school** **Does not identify with neighbors** **Feels singled out: former JLT** **Poor social trust** **Few friends: "associates"**	**Housing non-compliance, car towed, frequent front office meetings** **Letters of warning from PHA** **Refuses to attend workshops** **Household instability, past association with felons & allowing them to visit** **Holds PHA responsible for many of her relocation & readjustment difficulties**

<u>What Worked for Vernita</u>

Agency – knows the results of assertive behavior and is working on her anger

Family/Culture (supportive networks): Identity of a strong black woman carries implications for learning to be more assertive, using her heritage in her parenting. Mother and boyfriend are strong supporters.

Figure 4.3 Summary of study findings: Vernita.

Table 4.2 Tabulated Assessment of Vernita

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	+ +	+ +	+
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+ + +	+ + +	+ + +

4.8 Summary of Vernita

While Vernita had heard the news of a pending dispersal, she had largely ignored it, much as she had ignored countless other people she now identifies who tried to help, even as she held on to her fierce independence. That she ignored the news longer than others, who had always regarded such "news" as rumors, may help to explain Vernita's frequent outbursts over what she still perceives as "injustice" for "discriminating on us."   She makes mention several times she is someone who doesn't like to reveal her plans to those she doesn't trust as *they don't need to know my business anyway,* noting she'll only ask for help from those *who won't talk behind my back.* In a mimicking voice she feigns distress when she says, *oh poor ole Vernita, she needs help. You know, like that's a bad thing. I have my picks as to who I can and cannot trust. I know who to gossip to or not to.* She prefers to live in the here and now, declaring, *I don't think in the future too much anyway. I take it one day at a time. Wait to see what today brings.*

Vernita's reaction to dispersal mirrors much the way she has coped with other difficulties throughout her life. While it is beyond the scope of this study to "analyze" motivations or behaviors, it becomes clear that Vernita has adopted what, for her, have

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been classic ways to deal with a difficult childhood. At an age of vulnerability, being moved from her home in ways she described as unexpected and confusing, telegraphed messages that Vernita has tried to shake (or prove, depending on the situation) her entire life.

In many ways, it could be argued that such reliance on self is another name for resilience but that would miss several important factors. A strict reliance of self eliminates the potential of support and shared recognition that comes with resiliency. Resiliency is that psychosocial constellation of social and cultural competence as well as temperament that demonstrates adaptability and perseverance, requiring support, to help overcome hardship (Oulette-Kobasa & Puccetti, 1983; Rutter, 1979). This means it is not only influenced by dispositional orientation, it is learned and modeled by encounters with family, friends, teachers, neighbors and other influential adults. No doubt Vernita has had her share of hardship and, from her accounts, has had the attention of adults over her lifetime that seemingly cared about her. Yet the ways she has often chosen to adapt have not always been to her benefit.

Said differently, her frontline defense of defiance has often gotten in the way of galvanizing what appears to be her personal tenacity as agency. This is particularly evident in her wanting to be responded to in a more respectful manner. Her recalled towing incident demonstrated a potential ability to assert herself more appropriately with institutional demands. That she has often met such demands in a more aggressive stance, she says she recognizes as *gettin' me nowhere.* In a reflective moment Vernita shares her mother has served as her role model, particularly after Vernita herself

became a mother. Before that her grandmother, another strong black woman, impressed Vernita to strive for the same. The role of mother is perhaps Vernita's greatest accomplishment and source of personal pride. *Whether my fiancé does me right, I'm going to have to make my goals no matter what. Whether he's there or not, I have to live for me and my kids, and nobody else really. I try to hold my composure because of my kids. I hold it in cause nobody but me can look after my kids. Nobody will take care of my kids like I do when – or if - I'm gone. So I've got to make the best of the situation.*

One the day I had met Vernita in her mixed income apartment I had early indications of her strong sense of discipline even as it comes across with tenderness toward her children. As I knocked at the front door of her 3-bedroom apartment, I had spied what looked to be three orderly collections of toys displayed separately on the small stoop. Seconds later the door had opened to a rush of cool air and children spilling out onto the narrow entrance. I had count four children tumbling out that I later learned were neighbor children visiting before Vernita's children headed out for an outing with her fiancé.

There were three remaining children milling about in the kitchen in front of an opened refrigerator, appearing to be assembling lunches into plastic bags. From across the darkened living room, I could hear rather than see Vernita cautioning, in her booming voice, against the opened fridge door even as she inquired whether one had taken his daily medication. She inquired of each by name what they were taking, admonishing against the lack of the fresh fruit she had just purchased. Inviting me in while at the same time verbally herding the congregated children out the door, she

called out in a stern yet playful tone in her caution to be careful and mind "Joe ya'll." They hustle out after hugs and encouragement to "ya'll better be good."

Vernita will tell you that she comes from stock of fairly independent-minded women, who, in word and deed, passed on the lesson of doing things on one's own if you want them to be done at all. That message telegraphed that especially when it comes to realizing your dreams –for Vernita a little house with a backyard that she still carries for herself and her children – the likelihood of finding a partner to share and make those dreams happen is little more than that: a dream.

In many ways, she appears stuck at that point four years ago when she had to leave downtown, yet, because of the demands of parenting three growing children, Vernita seems to be resigned that this is the way it has to be. Although when asked if she could imagine what life might have been if had graduated and postponed her first baby, she is able to reflect that *I would have a good job by now. I'd have my own house. I'd be on no government assistance though. I wouldn't need it. Nothing could stop me from working. Nothing could stop me if I didn't have three children at my age.*

Vernita might be called a pioneer, using terminology to capture the actions if not spirit of those who forge a path for others to follow. Similarly used to describe how another group of low-income mothers, under the edict of Gautreaux vs. the Chicago Public Housing Authority, had ventured into the white suburbs in search of better housing (Rosenbaum, 1991). As the term envisions, a pioneer is someone who charts new territory and confronts new problems, often for reasons not easily discerned. Vernita sees herself as somewhat sacrificing to be a better mother, realizing, if not

reluctantly, that being away from JLT or giving up her temporary house with a big backyard, albeit in a high poverty neighborhood, might be better for her children in the long run. *I'm getting content, 'cause I have to. I've been here 2 years now. My kids like it here cause over at the other little house there were just bigger kids that sometimes like to fight. Here they have kids their own age to play with. I sacrifice for my children all the time. I'm going to do what I have to do to keep me and my kids comfortable here. I know I have to stay in line. I know my dos and my don'ts. I won't do anything that jeopardizes me and my kids for nobody.*

4.9 Coping Style and Age

As mentioned in the opening of this chapter, one aspect of interest is the issue of coping style and age. For many, it might be convenient to tally coping strategies and reactions to dispersal along the lines of age, experience and the long perspective of wisdom. That line of reasoning might bear out the experiences of Lucille and Vernita if we did not have other valuable life course information about each woman. Indeed, Lucille seems to have fared some better with the rigors of relocation perhaps she because she says had welcomed the move. She did encounter initial problems with her grandson who was opposed to the move. Making two physical moves in a short period of time have taken their toll. Vernita, from her accounts, has been more resistant to the change and her recovery from those initial emotions has been challenging. She struggles between her own happiness in a present-day sense against the future gains of her children. True, there is more at work here than the issue of age, but looking at age

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and coping a bit closer gives opportunity to explore further notions about displacement in general.

Challenging the prominent notion that older residents would fare poorly with a forced relocation, we briefly survey by age and coping style the older women in this study. We find each older woman confronted dispersal from a variety of perspectives, disputing that older adults in general will have difficulty in changing residences. Varady et al. (2001) found negative satisfaction for elders who were given vouchers as a result of demolition of their public housing. Saunders (1989) found that while the desire to move drastically is reduced after the age of 45, the quality of new housing is an important concern to satisfaction.

Eckstrom (1994) and Allen (1998) studied senior public housing residents involuntarily relocated for housing renewal and both found a decline in health among respondents. Allen (ibid) did find some who welcomed the improvement, yet also reported findings of stress, anxiety, poor coping and overall lack of control. In fact, elder studies found that the greater the perceived control of a relocation, the better the outcome (Schulz & Brenner, 1977). While relocation stress was relatively short-lived for elders, those who relocated unwillingly experienced extended stress (Atchley, 1994).

In the case of Lucille, the 72-year-old grandmother about to send her 18-year-old grandson off to college, her elation at the news of dispersal was evident four years later at the interview. She had attended every organized meeting, openly expressing her zeal to move, risking the anger of some of her neighbors as well as the bitter

disappointment of her grandson who openly did not want to move. Her primary concern remained focused on the detrimental effects on her grandson and the potential for escalating problems to come. It would appear that her life course of risk and learned resilience motivated her to insure something different for her grandson. Thus she approached dispersal with a tendency to attack associated problems with action plans.

There are stereotypical notions that elders, as a group, either resist or submit to change (here of residence). While certainly there are those who fall into either category, such notions leave little room in the middle. Summarized across the experiences of other senior women in this study we find inconsistent responses to household dispersal, demonstrating divergent life course pathways and differing resilience coping styles. One minimized dispersal as "no big deal", turning most of the relocation responsibility over to her eldest daughter. Another had initially been angry at the news of having to leave, but later came to regard it as a chance to move closer to her children, albeit back into higher poverty. The fourth elder interviewed had insisted she had had "no say" in dispersal and "no choice" in relocation. Today she says she copes with the help of psychics and recently a new set of church friends.

<u>4.10 Conclusions</u>

A primary endeavor here has been to consider the coping styles used to prepare for *dispersal*. Dispersal, as the first phase of deconcentration, can be considered in terms of personal capacity linked to wellbeing, setting the stage for the phases to come. So how did these residents cope with the dispersal? Using Lazarus's & Folkman (1984) problem-focused (action-oriented) versus emotion-focused (distress-elimination) styles

of coping, I followed a hunch that agency score, a self-assessed summation of psychosocial functioning at pre-move, might given indication for how these mothers coped with these changes of dispersal and relocation. A further indication was that more effective coping might lead to a greater sense of resettlement 4 years later.

As is demonstrated in Table 4.3, Lucille, who had a higher agency score, seemingly has used a more problem-focused approach while Vernita, with a lower score, demonstrated a more emotion-focused style.

Table 4.3 Tabulated Summary of Lucille and Vernita

		Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Lucille	Successful Adaptation	+ + +	+ +	+ + +
Lucille	Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+	+ + +	+
Vernita	Successful Adaptation	+ +	+ +	+
Vernita	Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+ + +	+ + +	+ + +

Lucille says she "welcomed" the news of dispersal but there were stressors. She had to contend with the ire of her neighbors, the disagreement with her grandson and the physical demands of preparations. She recalls a brief hospitalization during this period as well. Yet her coping style seemingly mitigated many of these associated stressors. Her agency score rated at pre-move was remarkably close to the cut off

between levels. I am not sure of the efficacy of such "scoring" but it does serve to delineate Lucille's self-assessed wellbeing at the time of pre-move.

Lucille will tell you she's resettled, living in a mixed income setting that she says is safe and a good neighborhood for her grandson. She looks forward to him bringing friends home from college and not having to visit her in "the projects." She is also pragmatic that if something came along better tomorrow, she would have no qualms in leaving. Her dream is to travel and see parts of the country where her ancestors lived. This matches her tendency to make the best of the situation, but not give up hope for something better.

Vernita is ambivalent about any talk of resettlement. She instinctively knows she wants to be happy in her situation for the sake of her children yet she shares dissatisfaction with various aspects of mixed income living. She rationalizes the improved school environment and performance of her children as evidence of resettlement, saying her "job" is to put their happiness first. She also relates her children have been in trouble for fighting in the neighborhood. She maintains they have to stick up for themselves even as she often clashes with other mothers and complex management on her children's behalf.

She has little trouble describing what resettlement would "look like" to her, as she consistently refers to living in a house with big back yard, like the temporary site where she had lived for one year after dispersal. As she refers to repeatedly, the subsequent "force" exerted by the local authority meant she had to leave in order to

secure a "permanent" public housing unit. She admits she did little to try to stay. Her ultimate goal for her family is to go off of public housing assistance all together.

We find, through life course review of Lucille and Vernita, both seemingly used methods of coping they had used in previously stressful times in their lives. Their stories were seemingly carved by similar pathways of risk through childhood and adolescence, each using a learned skill set of resilience to cope. That one woman used a more problem-focus approach while the other focused more on the emotions of the experience at hand demonstrates the aim of this study: recognizing the psychosocial resident.

We learned from Lucille and Vernita important differences in the realm of locus of control, a significant indicator of coping style. Lucille's stories of coming, going, leaving and deciding tended to put her in the active role of change agent, albeit difficult and bittersweet at times. Vernita's stories were often told from a more reactive stance of having to follow through on other people's demands or directions. Her "forced" moves from her childhood home and the temporary site she says she wished could have been her "permanent" destination are testaments to her life long experiences of more externally focused control that seem to bring up for her eruptive feelings/actions of anger. That she says she has come to recognize the detrimental effects is encouraging.

In a strict psychological sense, personal characteristics that have been shown to demonstrate overall wellbeing and generalized stress resistance include locus of control. A perception of control and particularly a vigilance of self-control become descriptors of Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) category of *emotion-focused* coping used in this

study. Individuals, who may feel unable to constructively deal with the change and instead feel like they must endure, most often use the latter strategy of emotion-based coping (Scheier & Carver, 1987). Using these binary strategies of processing life stressors allows us to see how residents, in general, approach the inevitability of change brought on by the first steps of deconcentration. We also know that there are many factors that impact any particular call to cope.

There are also notable life course indicators other than coping style that might have influenced the initial phase of deconcentration and continue to influence these women today. For example, while both Lucille and Vernita are parenting dependent children and considered their welfare in subsequent household relocation decisions, there are significant differences between the two. Lucille is the grandparent of an 18-year-old grandson who, at the time of the interview, was leaving for his first semester in college in two weeks. True, her earlier years of single parenting six children in previous days was a struggle at times, but she will tell you (grand)parenting Paul has most often been one of joy. She has remained steadfast that she would be a better parent the second time around and she has consciously approach parenting differently.

In many ways Vernita is now living that single parent life that Lucille once did many years ago, albeit with very significant differences. Today she faces raising four young children in a climate of less certainty than Lucille had at the same stage of motherhood. The shifts in all forms of State welfare assistance mark new challenges and demands for the low-income household. As Vernita confronts her own need for personal satisfaction, particularly in her neighborhood, she struggles with recognizing

the responsibility of insuring her children's future, perhaps to the minimizing of her more present-day concerns. Yet times have changed with societal expectations shifting, particularly in matters of young mothers who receive public assistance and the reform of "self sufficiency." In these ways we might tie some of the study's variant findings to the social aspect of age/lifestage of motherhood that demonstrates that the timing of life course events of family, community, work as well as large world events may historically affect the low-income household differently.

There may also be more present-day influences at work to explain other differences of this aspect of study. We noted earlier that, although both live in public housing owned mixed income complexes, these developments are different both by visual inspection and resident population. Lucille lives in a "true" mixed income setting, populated by a range of middle class residents. The layout is a typically large sprawling complex with manicured landscaping, manned security gates and overall conventional feel for middle class apartment living. Vernita lives in a newly constructed mixed income development and, on visual inspection, lacks many of the more mature landscape features of Lucille's site. There is no manned security gate and the layout is fairly pedestrian. The residents who live at Vernita's site all pay, at varying levels, below market rate rent. This may affect how they see themselves as prospectors of improved opportunity.

CHAPTER 5

LIFE DURING DECONCENTRATION: ROUTES OF RELOCATION

She doesn't have any children runnin' around to worry about. All she has to worry about is herself basically. She's not interested in childcare or getting the bus here to pick up her kids. Her kids are grown.

<div align="right">

Corrine, age 28
Three children; ages 9, 7, 5

</div>

My daughter wanted me to move over here. Really three of my daughters now live close by. My grandchildren, they stop by or they just pick me up. I'm in the middle of my family circle. I am the maypole. I can reach around them and they are reaching around me.

<div align="right">

Nell, age 82
Eight children, 14 grandchildren, 5 great-grandchildren

</div>

5.1 Relocation: Reflection of Age, Family and Culture

In this chapter, we move from a microanalysis of agency as coping with household dispersal to consider a meso-analysis of agency as decision-making of three mothers. We are particularly interested in exploring how the rigors of household relocation might be implicated by age and life/stage of the mother as drawn by the familial and cultural needs, wants and hopes of the family. In this way, the mother becomes the primary decision-maker, albeit gathering pertinent information to make such informed decisions. The selection of these three women was based upon a

variation in age and life stage of motherhood in order to adequately explore that aspect in relocation decisions. The age ranges were broadly categorized young, middle and older. The neighborhood status is varied; one lives in higher poverty, one in a working class neighborhood and one in lower poverty. All women scored in the lower range of agency assessment at pre-move.

Much like a rolling tumbleweed, we visualize the experience of deconcentration first through the demands of dispersal, influenced by the ways of coping with imposed change indicating psychological functioning and wellbeing of the mother. Gathering momentum and now facing the rigors of relocation means that in the subsequent decisions each mother makes to secure new housing, we theorize these choices are based upon her age/lifestage needs and wants of the household. The idea that we use personal agency to choose and act based upon a host of influencing and adaptive factors captures the essence of how mothers in charge of changing households might go about meeting her and her family's needs in the aftermath of household dispersal. We understand "agency" as decision-making in this chapter, using the same set of resiliency skills of perseverance to cope, take control (in Chapter 4) and thus meet familial and cultural needs and recognize wants.

We conclude that the factors of age/lifestage, family and culture impact not only where one relocates but also the quality of life once there. This ability to both recognize and "meet needs" of the family is tied to the early lessons learned about coping, surviving and soliciting varied bases of support despite certain environmental factors of adversity and risk. In other words, the ability to first recognize, then set about to meet

certain needs is buoyed by one's skills of resilience that come to define how we use gathered life course tools to make choices that help us to navigate the hurdles.

In this chapter we ask several questions about relocation decisions. We are particularly interested in exploring the efficacy of matching familial and cultural needs to relocation outcomes and how mothers might go about that task. We theorize the more closely matched need/want are, the greater the likelihood for housing and neighborhood satisfaction. How does age/life stage of the mother impact her relocation decisions for the family? To the extent that the needs of children are different, how does the life stage of the mother (mirroring those needs) reflect that? Is there a relationship between familial need and poverty status of neighborhood and, if so, does it play a role in decision-making? Because the mothers studied in this chapter all scored in the lower range of agency assessment at pre-move, we ask does the (higher/lower) agency score hold up in present day circumstances?

As a reminder, in this study, the terms "culture" and "family" are used interchangeably. This underscores the argument that families adapt across a developing set of needs and wants, often confined by cultural limitations and largely due to external changes (Hareven, 2000). Perhaps the most important link between micro-elements of functioning and macro-imposed changes is in the cultural context of family (Hareven, ibid). Here, cultural implications of mobility behavior are examined through the theoretical lens of *symbolic interactionism*, giving basis for considering the meaning, most often through cultural description, associated with the responses of relocation. We use Denzin's (2002) synthesis of the theory to emphasize what he called *interpretive*

interactionism to convey relation, explanation and biography of personal and familial experiences by the limits of structure and public policy dictates. In these ways, the study of culture begins a study of meaning, making the lived-through experiences of study subjects readily accessible to the reader. As "culture" is further explained, we expand the more passive rendering of values and thus energize how we approach the concept.

In membership, we build a metaphorical "tool kit" from which we pull prior experiences, stories and rituals to make sense of the world around us (Swidler, 1986). Descriptive of the *meso*-layer of behavioral influence that helps to explain cultural impact on social relationships, personal agency - by varying degree - also becomes a key to which we gain access to cultural meaning (Sewell, 1992). Examining meaning through agency implies a depth of study largely overlooked in the mobility outcomes of deconcentrated public housing residents.

Another aspect of importance in matching relocation and familial/cultural housing need is the notion of social trust through the channels of social capital. Popular designation of social capital takes on associations of trust, solidarity and reciprocity whereby the community serves as the "glue" that holds together and benefits from shared values and referential interests (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995, 2000). Here trust, like a lubricant, provides order, reciprocity and reliability as group members extend expectations to each other (Fukuyama, 1999). In this way, social trust, developed over time and by reciprocal means, becomes another aspect of relocation decision-making.

This life course study seeks to offer better understanding for how the nuance of place-effects meets the personal demands of growing and evolving families, coming

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together to satisfy the rigors of relocation. That is, a young mother with younger children such as Corrine will likely have a different perceived set of needs, wants and hopes in the aftermath of dispersal than a mother with older children. As Corrine laments problems with childcare she indicates her need for accessibility tied to place. She also indicates the needs of her life stage as mother through the age of her children.

Alternately, Nell, mentioned above and a great-grandmother with a host of offspring, is filling her relocation needs and wants by being in a proximal setting to her family, thus influenced by familial and cultural factors. Implied, the needs of the mother mirror the needs of her family in cultural context, across age, roles, and time. Here, Nell made a relocation decision to live close by her older daughters at their urging, thus meeting both her and her family's needs and wants. Meeting family need and want across age and life stage has implications for achieving housing satisfaction. Galster defined housing satisfaction as the "perceived gap between a respondent's residential needs and aspirations and the reality of the current residential context" (Galster, 1987, pg. 93). Here we infer that we begin to fill that gap by examining how residents perceive change and choice aligning with efforts to meet need, wants and hopes of family through the efforts of mothers to bring overall satisfaction.

How residents perceive change is an integral part of the experience of deconcentration and here is conceptualized as mobility behavior across age. From a life course perspective, age is denoted by the subtext of lifelong development (Baltes et al., 1998) lending a theoretical map whereby we can begin to conceptualize age as a structural feature of social change (Riley, 1987). As a concept, the life course refers to

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age-graded life patterns and roles in society moving across time (Elder, 1985a, 1992). Age differences across the life course take the form of varying needs, wants, expectations and options that influence plans, choices, and actions, giving shape to life stages, transitions, and pathways in times of both change and stability (Elder, ibid).

In this chapter, we explore through the life course narratives of three women, the routes of relocation categorized by young, middle and older age/lifestage of motherhood. In their own words, we get a glimpse for how they set about to relocate to a new home in a new neighborhood. We are interested in exploring the functional pathways they took into Jane Long Terrace as well. We know that it is the sequence of life course events that will affect future transitions and outcomes (D. P. Hogan & Astone, 1986). We later explore that notion against a discussion of resettlement.

We are introduced to Meg, a 27-year-old Hispanic woman whose household is made up of three young children, ages 11, 9 and 3. Her husband of two years, the father of her children, also lives there. Debra, a 39-year-old Hispanic woman with three children ages 19, 17, and 14 also lives with her common-law husband, one stepson and a toddling grandson. Penney, a 74-year-old Hispanic woman with six children and 16 grandchildren, lives alone but all of her family live in the same large city as Penney.

In a later section, each woman's story is told, defining the demands of motherhood as each mother sees it, to get a sense for how the variety of relocation decisions were made. It is important to note there are no comparisons per se intended across age or culture implied by race, but rather to explore Elder's (1994) perspective of "linked lives." That is, we look at contrast as merely a way to examine critical

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interaction and involvement within the specific needs and wants of that family. In this way, we also avoid "judgmentally evaluating" the response to relocation – usually done by assessed poverty status of neighborhood outcome– but instead attempt to understand such response through what we know about the age/life stage preferences of each mother through the needs of the family.

The study of lifestage, designated in a life course framework, illuminates the consequences of social change at various stages of life. This is an important distinction in that macro level change is typically generalized across gender, age and/or class. Only after we begin to differentiate the life stage at which various actual experiences of social change occur, can we determine implications of that major change (Elder, 1994). In this case, an implication of deconcentration policy is the relocation choices a mother makes to fulfill familial and cultural life course needs for her and her children.

As applied across class and cultural lines, the *lifestage principle* emphasizes that social change affects divergent age groups differently, according to the stage of life at which the change occurs (Ryder, 1965). Elder (1978), building on Ryder's earlier theorizing, maintained that social change also affected cultural groups differently, with particular respect to disposable resources. This principle says that the impact of social change on the subsequent life course will be most profound in those who are most vulnerable and dependent.

In this way, the impact and consequences of the event of moving and the transition from concentrated poverty to de-concentrated poverty will be varied according to the individual's life stage (Dewilde, 2003). O'Rand (1996) posited the

"situational imperative" to mean that the more drastic normal life course patterns are effected, the greater the likelihood that the process of social change will have a lasting effect. In what direction such "lasting effect" will take is a basis of this study and can have implications across all phases of deconcentration, particularly focused on the last phase: the prospect of resettlement for the household.

Thus, we recognize there is much we do not know about the life course domains of self, family, culture and neighborhood in the deconcentration processes studied. We can speculate that they are not separate entities at all, but rather are fluid in the ways they intersect and overlap to meet the personal, familial and cultural needs of the household. Focusing on need and want, we also seek to better understand the *meaning* attached to choosing to move, stay, or leave any one particular place as dictated by the familial and cultural demands of a particular household.

5.2 Relocation: Reflection of Place-based Barriers

We recognize that structural barriers of place and race often thwart fulfilling familial need/want. Hurdles of tight markets, hostile receiving communities and institutionalized racism continue to impede and be weighed in relocation decisions of low-income households. But what else might be at play in seemingly "problematic" relocation decisions? As we examine more closely the issue of meeting familial need from the resident's perspective in a variety of settings we seek an answer.

The structural concept of *place* is an important element in shaping development and giving meaning to the social context of everyday life. Logan's (1978) "hierarchy of place" hypothesized that communities are hierarchically structured in ways that

essentially support favorable life chances for the inhabitants. Clark (1992) asserted that African Americans, unlike other minorities, might have a preference to live among other African Americans, thus partially explaining the high levels of isolation from whites. Likewise, blacks may prefer to live among others of their racial group in order to support African American institutions (L. Freeman, 2000). Yet other studies that looked at white-black polarization, found African Americans- albeit middle class – preferred to live in integrated neighborhoods (Farley, Fielding, & Krysan, 1997). That is, no less than other minorities such as Asian and Latino, blacks are no less amendable to living in integrated neighborhoods (Bobo & Zubrinsky, 1996, Clark ibid).

Studies found there are exclusionary methods used in existing neighborhoods against less-favored racial groups, even if these groups display other favorable characteristics (Alba, Logan, & Bellair, 1994; Logan & Molotch, 1987). Many have come to recognize that discriminated minority groups are less likely to be able to move into better neighborhoods, even when individual-level factors are controlled for, which also lessens the impact that human capital has on locational return (South & Crowder, 1997b). Further, more advantaged groups go to great lengths to maintain spatial and social distances (Logan & Molotch, ibid). Meanwhile, studies support that many employers use various strategies by which they tend to screen out low-income urban applicants based upon economic status, race, and residential developments (Kirschenman & Neckerman, 1991; K. S. Newman & Lennon, 1995).

These race and class based barriers to mobility are apparent. For example, problems arise as low-income families increasingly attempt relocation into the private

housing market by means of Housing Choice Vouchers. As evidenced by percentages, many low-income families fail to take advantage of housing vouchers as a means out of high-poverty and high-crime neighborhoods. In 2000, only 69% of households offered a voucher actually were able to successfully use them (Finkel & Buron, 2001). In a study of Chicago's Housing Choice Voucher program, one of the largest in the country, key findings revealed that black households were 62% less likely to move to higher-income neighborhoods than either white or Hispanic families. Reasons given for these relocation decisions involved encountered discrimination, personal choice or initial starts in the black neighborhoods most lived in already (Cunningham & Sawyer, 2005).

In these ways, the neighborhood has served as the primary focus of study, especially in understanding how de-concentration of poverty policies have impacted the lives of those affected. The term "neighborhood" draws varied geographical and social definitions for both subject and researcher creating a critical methodological hurdle (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993; Chaskin, 1994). For some, "neighborhood" is defined in Census-tract boundaries, while, for others, parameters are more localized.

Identified is a lack of multilevel designs that can look contextually at neighborhood conditions, family processes and individual outcomes to disentangle macro-locational and micro level effects (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1997; Jencks & Mayer, 1990; Sampson, 1992). Further, a lack of longitudinal design contributes to conflating the effects of neighborhood selection and observed outcomes at only one point in time. In this way, the mechanisms through which macro forces affect micro level behaviors are ignored, and the issue of self-selection into different neighborhoods

goes undetermined (Tienda, 1991).

Nonetheless, the physical draw of place will factor into these women's decisions, but we theorize it will not be the only influence to consider as we consider personal, familial and cultural needs as well. It is this social context of everyday life that raises an important person-to-person association: networks and particularly what they mean to the individual. Network has become a critical association with neighborhood, particularly as we consider the link between cultural and racial similarities, long identified as a critical component of social networks of low-income communities (Gans, 1967; Model, 1993; Stack, 1974).

Following that mobility behavior is influenced by a number of factors that begin before the family has to move, we understand that the quality of the dispersal experience is managed by the agential capacity of mother's style of coping with the pending move. At the helm of her family, the micro-psychological capacity, resource and skill of the mother to effectively cope and thus marshal resources have important implications as the family moves into the second phase of the deconcentration process. Now facing the rigors of relocation, the mother's coping style, indicative of trait differences, biography and available resources, carries impact as well as identifying age and life stage of need/want (Dewilde, 2003; Elder, 1978) at the time that the move is commenced. In nested configuration, decisions as mobility behavior first begins with an emotional/cognitive reaction to change and quickly moves into an exhibited familial/cultural response to the rigors of relocation, according to age and life stage of the mother. (See Figure 1.2 for review).

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I have considered a variety of ways to present the relocation stories of the women studied, considering a weaving of stories like those of Lucille and Vernita in Chapter 4 . But I have settled on telling each life course narration in straightforward format, allowing one woman to speak at a time, unfolding her story from the interview in retrospective fashion. Therefore, where she lives today serves as the springboard for telling, through expected twists and turns, how she got there. We begin our life course exploration with Meg, the youngest mother of the study.

5.3 Relocation: Meg's Story

NAME	AGE	RACE	Children / G-children	Higher/Lower Agency	Status of Neighborhood
Meg	27	H	3	L	HP-Private (left; married)

The address Meg gives over the phone leads me to a community of closely spaced frame houses located on the near east side of downtown. It is a working-class neighborhood, the kind where one house might be neatly appointed with flowering shrubs and a fresh coat of paint while the one next-door looks to be deserted. Each house seems to have a car parked in front on the street, making the already narrow way somewhat of an obstacle course to maneuver even on a Thursday noonday. I finally find Meg's house after a couple of runs up and down the street because few houses have readable house numbers.

Her framed house is painted white with royal blue shutters and matching trim. From the street it looks recently painted. Large trees on adjoining properties on each side shade Meg's front and back yard. I can't help but think Meg and her family have to

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rake these leaves even if the trees do not rightfully belong to them. But because on this day they provide much welcomed shade and breeze, it is only a fleeting thought. It is a very windy day, albeit a summery kind of day that blows hot air early in the morning. In the front yard stand a small scrub oak and a lone crepe myrtle, many of its late summer blooms strewn on the ground. The lawn is sparse with one small patch of ground covered by thick, green St. Augustine grass that obviously gets ample sunlight it needs to thrive. Most other areas lay shaded, completely bare of any groundcover. The front porch is large, spanning the entire front of the house and covered with what looks to be recently installed outdoor floor covering. However the leaves, blown in from the trees, lay thick as a carpet. Tamped down by so many feet it gives the house a rather abandoned look, despite the fresh paint.

I have come to visit Meg, a 27-year-old Hispanic mother of three children aged 11, 9 and 3. She had been one of the study subjects who was somewhat difficult to locate. Because her mother was also a member of the relocation cohort, having lived at JLT for over 20 years, it had been somewhat easy since the dispersal from downtown to know Meg's whereabouts through her mother. However, in the months leading up to the study, she and her mother had become estranged once again. Thus, for a time my connection to Meg was broken. I was able to find where Meg and her family now lived through her maternal grandmother, the woman who raised Meg from early childhood.

As I draw nearer the front steps, I survey the front porch. I see empty - seemingly forgotten - paint cans lining the foundation of the porch that spans the front of the house. An oversized tarp is thrown aside and a large bucket of tarring for the

roof sits with a board covering it. It looks to be a work in progress. Before I can raise

my hand to knock, Meg opens the door and beckons me inside with a cleaning towel

she holds in her hand. She says she had been waiting by the window.

The front room is small but comfortable with small-scale items. The couch is

more like a love seat, overstuffed and sitting at an angle, against a far wall that doesn't

dominate the room. The size of the television is small and is placed in a position of

almost an afterthought; it is turned off. This warrants mention because in most other

homes visited, often couches are oversized and TV's retain room prominence. In fact I

can't recall a home that I had visited that did not have the television on. Walking into

the room one can't help but notice the gleaming hard wood floors that Meg says were

under some "ratty" carpet in place when they bought the house. My ears perk up: this is

the first former JLT resident I visit who is buying a house. Several area rugs are

scattered across the polished floors, sending a shine in the room that one could say

almost illuminates it. I tell her so. There is a prominent scent of cleaning products

lingering in the air.

Meg says this is her day off from the fast food restaurant where she is assistant

manager and she's been doing some "light cleaning." Her children are with a relative

who lives nearby. Often during this season, she says, they go there to play with their

cousins. I survey her dining area, that's really an overflow from the small living area.

She appears visibly pleased to be showing her house. Everything is neatly in place.

There are no visible signs of a renovation in progress, at least in this room, as she had

initially warned. I notice that while there are a couple of oversized art prints hanging on

two walls there are no pictures of her family about. This is also a departure from many other former Jane Long Terrace residents who reported they couldn't wait to hang pictures of their family, something impossible on the concrete walls downtown.

Dressed simply in a black top and black shorts, Meg is barefooted with her thick black hair pulled straight back into a ponytail that cascades down her back. She quickly moves around the room, picking up a couple of toys, moving a stack of books she says her "girls" had been working over before they left for their visit. She has a large bandage on her right thumb; a kitchen accident she says. She is of stocky build with an air of seriousness about her. She initially smiles very little, but does so with more spontaneity as the interview progresses. She looks much younger than her 27 years.

She leads me to a window facing directly into her neighbor's house to look at a recently installed central heat and air conditioning unit. It is admits Meg the one thing she had wanted for her house since they moved in over a year ago. Today, on a day that promises to be hot, the air conditioning is not on, but she does have a large floor fan whirling into the room. She apologizes but says she has assured her husband she wouldn't run it until it got hot enough.

She motions for me to sit on the couch. I look over at the dining tabletop a few feet away, which I know would be a better surface on which to conduct the interview. It is covered in clean folded clothes. On the overstuffed couch, I attempt to set up the recorder on top of books I've brought, but to no avail. I ask if we can move to the table. She jumps to relocate the clothes to the back of the house, carefully stacking multiple items across her arm. I note how professionally folded they look, with a certain sort of

uniformity about them that comes with obvious practice. As she moves in and out of the living room retrieving stacks of clothes, Meg gives tidbits of information about how they came to buy the house.

We finally settle at the table where Meg fiddles with a place mat in the beginning of our conversation. She asks several questions about what we will talk about. She listens intently to what informed consent means and carefully re-reads the form before signing. She eventually signs, all the while insisting she probably has nothing of any value to say. She frequently hangs her head and when she does look up making near-eye contact she seems not quite comfortable enough to hold it. She appears initially nervous, yet warms as we progress.

As I notice her relaxing, she raises her head no longer fiddling. However her smile remains closed mouth, even when she recalls pleasant memories of her childhood or talks about being "mom to my kids." Often when she refrains, "I don't know" to a question or comment, she will go on to answer the question anyway without prompting. This is a reminder of the need to pause and allow silence as this is the way that Meg will process the interview. Talk naturally follows the chitchat that breaks the ice, charts the direction and warms the respondent. As we turn to talk about her early life at Jane Long Terrace, Meg interjects the discussion with a mention of a childhood issue that she says has become increasingly important now that she has three children of her own.

5.3.1 The Pathway of Childhood and Family

Meg shares that one of her biggest regrets is that she does not know who her father is and that many of her problems have been born out of her need to just know his

name. Over the years, she has vacillated between wanting desperately to know and, then again, feeling apathetic to having that knowledge. *I don't know to this day. Me, my sister, my brother have different fathers, we all have different fathers. I'm the only one that don't know who my father is. I never met my father. Never. I've had conversations with my mom and it just makes her angry to hear that I want to know cause she don't know, or she don't want to tell me. You know at one time my mom was telling me one man was my father and actually we did a blood test but he was not my father.*

So I don't know where to begin on it, you know. I told her, give me a few names. I can look up stuff my own. But she don't say, she don't tell me nothing and I don't know nothing. So, it's a conversation, painful for her I guess. So either she don't want me to know or she don't know who it is. I try not to bring it up. But I would like to know, I mean until she's ready or she remembers or something, I'm not gonna know.

Also in many ways not knowing her own father she says has spurred many of her recent decisions to marry, leave the rolls of public housing assistance, buy this house and seek full time work. The downtown dispersal, Meg says, brought mixed feelings. On the one hand, she welcomed the initiative; on the other, she felt coerced. *I feel that if they didn't push us out the way they did, that I probably wouldn't be here today, sitting in my own house. But you know it was hard, now don't think it wasn't hard, it was. But I don't know how to explain it cause I did feel pushed.*

I felt they were just moving us out because someone wanted the property or something like that. I really didn't understand it too much. But to me, it wasn't like

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such a big deal. I looked at like it would give us a chance to move out, you know to actually get out of the projects. I remember when they first told us I felt confused at first but then, after letting it sink, I started thinking, you know what, this might change my life. I was thinking about my kids, maybe this would…. because I didn't want them to grow up there. Sad to say, I didn't want them to grow up like that. Yeah I wanted to get them out. You know for them to have something better than I had when I was younger.

When Meg and her children moved to a higher poverty neighborhood of clustered run-down apartment complexes after dispersal, she says she slowly began to see the forced move as a time of opportunity instead of confusion. While she had initially felt like *I wish we could have stayed* [at JLT] *but if they're gonna relocate us okay, but where? You know, this is our future.* She admits finding their temporary home had been done with little thought about location or about where her girls would go to school. *I think I asked the* [relocation] *social workers about it. I was just looking around for apartments there in that area, so I just ask them, like are these apartments on the list? And they actually were. They just happened to be on there. So me and my girls moved in. I was there for 3 years until we came here.*

When her then-boyfriend and the father of her children wanted to move in to the new apartment, she was faced with a new set of decisions. While living at JLT, he had been forbidden to live with them, but now he was pressuring to move in. They could live together, essentially violating Meg's lease putting the household at risk, or they could take the plunge, marry and look for housing elsewhere. With his combined income, they would have prospects for housing out of the higher poverty neighborhood

where they now lived. However such a decision would mean that Meg and her children would no longer qualify for assistance. For some time, Meg had held fast to a dream of a house on a street in a neighborhood, much like her grandmother's house in which she grew up. While the reasons that she and her siblings had come to live there were unpleasant, Meg remembers that neighborhood in especially poignant terms.

My childhood neighborhood was so nice. It was mostly Hispanic and some white people. Yeah, it was mostly that, just middle class folks. And I did feel safe there. I used to walk to school. The school wasn't too far. And then like there was an after-school fire station program right there by my grandma's house. I used to walk from there to school to home. It was, you know, not like this one. I've been here for about a year already and I don't know the neighbors too much. You know, I talk, I say hi, but I don't stop to talk and like the kids don't talk to me either. I know where I used to live - it's not even that far from here - I talked to everybody there. You know I knew all the neighbors. We were friendly. My best friend lived on the next street over so I used to go to her house all the time. You know it was just real nice.   It was maybe because of the way times are now I guess, but I know then I could walk down the street and talk to the neighbors, talk to my friends. People actually communicated you know. Here it's so quiet, people hardly come out of their house. So then you hardly see anybody out here.

Perhaps attempting to recreate or at the very least hold on to her dream of a house, Meg relates, that at the time, when she was contemplating leaving housing assistance she didn't see this series of decisions as particularly difficult. In hindsight, however she often thinks of what would have happened if she had not taken the plunge

by agreeing to marriage and then giving up housing assistance. She recalls several intense discussions and arguments with her boyfriend, worried about the prospects of marriage, the fear of what giving up housing subsidy might mean to her and her girls if things didn't work out. She spends time detailing all the ways *he's been there for me since I was 15*, yet acknowledges the problems that have, at times, escalated into his leaving during their on-and-off-again relationship. She admits she had some fears before undergoing such a major change. *I decided to marry to him because he's always been there for me and for his kids. Well mostly. He wasn't much help until my oldest was born, not until actually she was a year or so old. Then we were together for 3 years and then we stopped being together. But we talked, I mean, that's one thing I can do. I think that's the reason why we're still together. He's not a deadbeat father.*

Meg relates her style of decision-making is the style she used going through what she calls a "troubled" childhood, early on left to her own devices because her mother was unable to adequately take care of her and her siblings.   As the eldest child of three, she often had to make quick decisions not only for her safety and welfare but for her siblings as well. Going to live with her maternal grandmother probably saved her life she speculates. Yet it too became a relationship of frequent conflict. As the oldest, Meg has shouldered responsibility while attempting to placate all sides. Then as now, she is often pitted in a mediator role, which she says she does not like.

Stopping short of blaming her mother or victimizing herself, Meg freely acknowledges that the pathways she has taken have largely been ones she has undertaken with very little guidance. Meg relates she is, once again, not on speaking

terms with her mother going on now for over a month. *It all started with my mom coming to my house with my sister. I was at work. My mom called the cops on my sister at my house here while I'm at work. So, I had to come home because this is my house. I had to come home and be in the middle of it. And yeah, it made me angry to have to compromise with her. I told her, I don't want an argument. Let my sister go on and do what she's gotta do and I'll try to help you. But she was constantly telling me, you always stick up for your sister. Finally I was like, I have had enough. I can't do this. She's old enough to make her own decisions. I told her, you should handle this like adults not like little kids.*

It is a familiar pattern Meg has played out over and over again: anger, blowups, estrangement and reluctant reconciliation mostly at Meg's instigation. Yet this time, Meg says it is she who had the most to lose.   She is indignant that they came into her house uninvited. The neighborhood was abuzz for days and her children were teased. She has since declared her house as off limits to both her mother and sister.

Largely abandoned by her mother, Meg and her siblings were raised by their maternal grandmother. According to Meg, her mother was chronically addicted and from time to time incarcerated on drug charges. For many of the women of this study, problems of childhood become "explained" through the rational thinking of adult minds. Today Meg talks matter of factly about the tumultuous life she had wanting to be with her mother yet realizing, in her child's mind, the inherent dangers that lurked when her mom and her "cronies" came to visit. She tends to downplay the emotional

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pain instead filtering much of what she will share through the anger she says that wells up from time to time even now.

*I understand now she had some problems. I mean, there were situations where, the way I am now, I feel is because of the way my mom wa*s. *Our rocky relationship was more about my mom's own problems. Oh, she had problems. She had drug problems. So it was more like she wanted to stay away from us, me and my sister and my brother. My grandmother raised all of us. So staying away was more for… yeah I think it was more for our protection. I thought there were times when she wanted us to go with her. Take us where she went. But my grandma wouldn't have let her take us anywhere. It was like we were there. If she wanted to see us, she'd have to stay there. But if she couldn't stay there she had to go but that meant we had to stay. I would see her. Not too much, not like you should with your own mom, like you'd be able to see your mom every day. I mean I knew who she was and I loved her, I guess. Now I'm glad she didn't take us to where she went and did stuff like drugs. There was times when she would be gone for months at a time. She'd be gone and then she'd stay with us about a few weeks at a time too.*

5.3.2 The Pathway to School

When talk turns to school, Meg shows her first flash of anger. She recalls that her mother, not present in any real sense, had nonetheless insisted that Meg be sent to a new middle school because she didn't want her daughter to attend the same one she had attended. Through clenched teeth and a bit of sarcasm, Meg says that didn't make sense then and it doesn't make sense now. So she was uprooted from the place she had seen as a refuge and sent to a middle school in another part of town. *For some reason, my mom felt that I shouldn't go to the middle school she went to. Because it was not good, I guess. My grandma did what my mom wanted to do, so she sent me to another school. It was very hard. I didn't know anybody and I had to meet new people again. All of my friends, from elementary school all the way to 5th grade, went to the same school but then I had to go to another school. I didn't really fit in and I didn't finish school cause I got pregnant at 15, almost 16, when I went to the 9th grade. I don't want my kids to go through all that, you know. I want them to have life-long friends that they say, oh you know, we went to elementary school or we went to high school together. You know like my husband.*

As she thinks of how she and her husband came to settle on this house, Meg recalls she had the location of her children's school in mind. When asked, she admits she does not know very much about the academic prowess of the school's standing. What she does know is that her children will be in neighborhood schools with cousins already attending. The importance of belonging is evident as she insists they find affiliation to school in ways she never did.

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5.3.3 The Pathway to Teen Motherhood

Today, Meg has difficulty pinpointing the exact time when the normally quiet, average student as Meg describes herself morphed into a troubled, truant teenager. Her slacking work habit, her penchant to be late or absent as well as her new found friends - troublemakers she now recalls - all culminated in a newly formed reputation among teachers and students. *Getting pregnant at 15, the main part of that was cause my grandmother wasn't there at the time. When I got to middle school, I got into trouble a lot. It was kinda hard on her cause she worked and she was taking care of three grandchildren that didn't have fathers and barely had a mother that came around. But I don't blame that on my grandma. She was trying to take care of us, trying to provide for us by working and everything like that. But I think I was just needin' attention. I think that was the most part of it.*

But I didn't have somebody to sit there and just talk to me 'bout stuff. And me and my grandma was close but… I think it was my fault. I guess I would try to forget stuff or try to avoid stuff by just going to do other things. And so we never really discussed any of it. I remember that I liked going to school, going to class, and everything. But then I started hanging around the wrong people. Because when I went to school I wasn't out there to go start trouble or to go and do heaven knows what. I was kinda just talking to the wrong people, depending on them and started following their ways. I started skipping school, started not even going to school sometimes, you know, and getting into fights.

As we continue to talk about how difficult school turned out to be especially after becoming pregnant, Meg drives home the point her children will not be moved around to meet her own needs. She has already decided how to talk with her daughters about staying in school and particularly preventing an early pregnancy. As she recalls from her own experience during the time when she left school largely unchallenged, *I know the signs. I will know how to ask them about stuff.* Although she recalls in more recent times since the downtown dispersal her oldest two have been in three different schools, she insists buying the house was, in large part, a way to keep them in a school where they could belong.

Watching Meg describe what must have been painful moments, she has flared a couple of appropriate times, but has remained fairly detached at other moments that might have raised the ire of most. She may appear shy by her demeanor and the seeming ease in which she has deferred to others to "keep the peace." But underneath, there appears to be a woman who, she says, is beginning to just now recognize how much she has had to forfeit in her attempts to bring some sense of normalcy to *my screwed up family.* Meg has little trouble in summing what she sees as both her good and not so good qualities. *I like things to be on the even. I'm always the one that's trying to make peace between my mom and my younger sister. You know, they're always like, hey Meg, can you do this? Meg, can you get them to stop? And I am the one in the middle, like here's one and here's one* [using her hands to show a middle position between two points.] *I really am like that, stuck right in the middle.*

The way I see it, if you want to talk to me, I will talk. If you ask me questions, I'm more than willing to answer. But I'm not the type of person that would just go out and just sit there and start talking to you. You want to talk to me or you want to know something, then I'm willing to tell you. You've just gotta ask me. I'm not the person to just to go out and start talking. I can't do that. So I think I'm not really a good decision maker. You know I get so confused cause I think about all the consequences. I think about what's going to happen before it even happens.

5.3.4 The Pathway to Jane Long Terrace

The intergenerational connection to Jane Long Terrace is bittersweet. Meg has come to realize it was the first stable home for her mother. It was also where she met her future husband, who had been born to a middle-aged single mother living at JLT. At the time of the dispersal, Meg's future mother-in-law had resided there for over 40 years so the impact of dispersal and talk of possible relocation sites had been a frequent hot topic at family gatherings.

At age 17 with a small child, Meg had left the home of her grandmother "for good this time" and, with no job prospects, had moved in with her mother at JLT because she says she had no other place to turn. There, living arrangements soon soured. Meg then had to return to her grandmother's once again, albeit a bit uncomfortably, when she learned she was pregnant with her second child. She subsequently became estranged from the father of her children. It was under these circumstances Meg later applied and was granted her own admission into public

housing. She requested to move into Jane Long Terrace and lived there for the next six years, living only a few units away from her mother but rarely visiting.

Meg admits she thinks at JLT she started to think about things a bit more futuristic now that her children were growing up and beginning to ask questions. She says she really began to think about her future with news of the dispersal. Apparently an internal problem-solver who finds it difficult to outwardly ask for help, Meg has slowly recognized her own agency. She refers continually about "waking up" and finally doing something "right' by her children. She has maintained an exterior of calm throughout the interview while she stuffs what must be an overflow of emotions out of her way. In these ways she seems years older than she is.   Throughout there is a sense of urgency that qualifies her anger, yet she has difficulty in calling herself "angry", no matter how justified it might seem. It is in that quiet and at times minimizing way of hers that one can see her getting lost in the chaotic life of revolving doors.

5.3.5 Pathway to Work

While at JLT Meg had been able to balance single motherhood with her need to be employed. Often she used the mother of her then-estranged boyfriend to baby-sit her children. Today Meg has risen from a prep person to an assistant manager at a local fast food restaurant chain, all the while holding the position as part time. She reports she has recently been hired to take on an additional job at a major grocery chain, beginning in one week as her oldest children return to school. Thus, she will be working fulltime with two part time jobs.   She ticks off all the things she likes about her current job and hopes to be able to duplicate in her new one: flexibility, respect and room for growth.

In an initial deprecating way, Meg denies being anything special as an employee but then shares *I think it's more than just who I am. It's how I work. I'm a good worker, you know. Compared to a lot of the workers there you know, my manager knows that I do my job when I go to work. You know a lot of people there, they smoke and that's all they like to do. Well, I don't smoke so it's nothing else for me to do. You know if there's no customers or something I relax if I have what I need done, done. So I think he looks at it like that. You know I do my job and I do it how I'm supposed to.*

Figure 5.1 is a summary of what we have learned regarding Meg and her adaptive abilities in making relocation decisions she deems best for her and family: abilities that might bring her household closer to resettlement. Table 5.1 is a tabulated assessment of these abilities.

NAME	AGE	RACE	Children / G-children	Higher/Lower Agency	Status of Neighborhood
Meg	27	H	3	L	HP-Private (left; married)

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	**Problem focused coping** **Improved self-efficacy / sense of mastery** **Clean household environment** **Improved planfulness / goal setting**	**Identifies with her neighbors, mostly Hispanic** **Begins to feel part of neighborhood; cookouts, children have neighborhood playmates** **Has supportive spouse** **Close contact with teachers/school**	**Holds two part time jobs** **Gave up housing assistance: marriage & improved household income** **Maintains stable home environment** **Has bought house in HP neighborhood** **Sense of ownership in community** **Programmatic assistance – for first time home buyers** **Access to running automobile**
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	External locus of control Lacks confidence in trying new things (but improving)	Tenuous relationship with mother Wants to relinquish role as mediator in family of origin conflict Children have had trouble adjusting to new schools in last 4 years Reconciling traditional view of spouse & familial needs of Meg's increased work schedule	Stigma of public housing Does not want children to grow up in "housing" Complaints of poor communication: PHA

What Worked for Meg

Agency: Meg's sense of personal control and mastery as confidence have improved since leaving JLT.
Structure: Asking for and receiving programmatic help with home buying has saved her and her husband time and money.

Figure 5.1 Summary of study findings: Meg.

Table 5.1 Tabulated Assessment of Meg

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	+ + +	+ + +	+ + +
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+	+ +	+

5.3.6 The Summation of Meg

Meg lived at Jane Long Terrace for six years and by her account would still be there had it not been for the dispersal. *If they didn't push us out the way they did, I probably wouldn't be here today.* In hindsight, she says she couldn't ever imagine herself taking the risks she's taken since leaving downtown. When she and her family moved into a higher poverty complex not far from downtown temporarily, she says for the first time she contemplated a different life. *Yeah, I just wanted to get them* [her children] *out of housing. You know for them to have something better than I had when I was younger.*

Without a stable home life as a child, Meg says her number one priority has always been to provide such for her children because she knows the long-range implications. She also still remembers what it felt like. It takes very little to recall the sadness of not knowing her father and the disappointment each time her mother would leave. In ways that define us, she says all of this motivated her to make major change hastened by the involuntary relocation from Jane Long Terrace. Her decisions to get married, drop housing assistance and agree to buy a house of her own are, by her account, monumental leaps. In many ways, they have also energized her to be more

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assertive with her family (in home and extended), take on an additional job and fully immerse herself in home ownership.

Meg characterizes her marriage today as "good" but identifies her husband's expectation of her to refrain from opinions and judgments as problematic at times. *It hasn't always been where we would talk first. But now if we don't agree on something, like I don't agree with him, then we're not going to do it right away. But if we can work it out, that's good. I'm just not going to let it go that easy any more.* She says while she is grateful for his attentiveness, in the past she has silently rebelled against his traditional ways. Now that she is taking on an additional part-time job, in essence having two jobs to augment the household budget, she says she feels able to vocalize her concerns. *It's been hard to talk with him about it, but he still feels that we can't handle it. That somebody would have to pick up our kids or have somebody to watch them. But not everything is just gonna fall apart because I gotta go to this job or that job. I'm the one that's gonna be doing it anyway. It's not really gonna affect him or it's not really gonna change anything with my kids, so there's no point in arguing.*

Although Meg is quick to point out she doesn't think of herself as head of her household, in many ways she holds the power of decision, particularly when it comes to matters related to her children. Alluding to having problems with weighing options in household decisions, she has no trouble in knowing how to decide how she will handle her children. *With my girls, I have in my mind how it's supposed to be and I stick to that. We don't argue about that…much.* When asked to give an example of a decision she has made on behalf of her children, she talks about what she hopes for now that

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she's made her "big decision" of marriage and home ownership. *We have had our problems, like money problems, like everybody else does. But it's kinda in a good way, you know. We get to live our own life now. We don't have to depend on anything. Yeah, it's a little scary. It was scary at first. When I was living at those temporary apartments where they moved us, he wanted to move in. So on money issues, we had no problems then. We had a pretty nice apartment for $50 a month, and I was on food stamps, so I didn't have to worry about groceries. Then I asked myself, why am I leaving all that? It was very scary.*

But she details long conversations she and her then-boyfriend had about the fact her daughters were now growing up, asking questions about his leaving again. Further, his presence in the house, in a non-committed role, was reminiscent of her own fatherless childhood and a mother who would come and go with irregularity. She laughs when she recalls it was she who pushed the marriage, even as she had initial trepidation about her purposes. She thought she could never leave housing, let alone ever consider home ownership and certainly without being married. So in Meg's mind, tying the knot meant leaving public housing, which then gave permission to take the plunge into homeownership.

Following through on each meant she was one step closer to *doing something right for a change by my children.* She recalls the day her family moved out of the subsidized apartment into this house with the back yard that she had always wanted. *I didn't want my kids growing up in housing. I wanted them to know like the real way you're supposed to do it. I didn't want my kids growing up thinking, you know what?*

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I'm gonna go get on housing because they take care of me. Because when you're on housing you can get food stamps and don't have to work. I didn't want my kids thinking that. I want my kids to see that this is the way you're supposed to live. At least try to do it the right way before you go and try to get assistance. I just want them to understand the way I honestly think you're supposed to live. Get married and take care of your children. It's not too late for us to go out there, work, and make money. I tell my kids, get an education so you can have all this. So you don't have to depend on other people's assistance.

Meg says she feels fortunate to indeed find a house to purchase with monthly payments that would rival any reasonably affordable rent. They researched their options, sought help and were grateful for proffered incentives for first time homebuyers. *When we moved out of those apartments, it was either pay a lot of money for section 8, paying like $600 a month, or trying to get a house and paying probably the same amount but it being ours. So it was a big decision. We weren't paying $50 a month anymore. We didn't have our electricity paid for us. We didn't have our water paid for us. You know we don't get food stamps no more, so it was scary...but ours!*

One way to sum how Meg has, despite a life course marred by family problems, used her skill of resilience is described how she seemingly has bounced back from early abandonment issues to understand what it will take in order to create a life course differently for her own children. Her needs and wants are fully intermingled now with those of her children. In fact, she has difficulty talking about her dreams without the

inclusion of them. She talks of taking on increasing responsibility in her work life as the way she will transition as her children continue to grow and eventually leave home.

In the role of mediator from her earliest days we still catch glimpses of her attempts to smooth potentially bumpy waters as she takes on another job outside the home. She says she has struggled with leaving the care of her youngest child age 3 to a family member but has weighed, for her, the benefits and gains carefully. That her husband does not fully agree seems, in a new day, not to have derailed her plans as it might have done in the past. She remains excited about her prospects, if not guarded about how that might affect her family. In this way we see Meg potentially weighing her personal needs/wants with those of her family.

We stop short of advocating stringent housing restrictions simply by age, family size or culture. Nonetheless there are age/lifestage specific needs and wants influenced by familial and cultural factors that become muddled in the global efforts to simply "relocate" families of poverty. In the ways that Meg spoke of early intervention in her young children's lives, we examine the processes of relocation through ways that get those needs met. We hear next from Debra, a 39-year-old grandmother. Her hopes for her offspring are rooted in both the burgeoning adolescence of her teenagers as well as the tender needs for a toddling grandson. We might expect that Debra shares some similarity with Meg but also we might expect to find some difference by age/lifestage.

5.4 Relocation: Debra's Story

NAME	AGE	RACE	Children / G-children	Higher/Lower Agency	Status of Neighborhood
Debra	39	H	4/1	L	HP-Private (left PH)*

The July day I meet with Debra, a 39-year-old Hispanic woman, she is living in a house with three children, ages 19, 17, 15 of her own, her adolescent stepson, a grandson and her common law husband who is not the father of her children. The weather is unseasonably cool, with fresh breezes reminiscent of early spring, not normally evident this time of the year. I arrive at the small-framed house, sitting across the street from a city owned park covering what looks to be approximately three acres on a shallow lot. Directly behind the park, across a narrow dirt road runs a railroad track that, in the space of one hour, has two lengthy freight trains barrel through.

A toy Chihuahua dog is tied by a short leash to a rocking chair on the small stoop. Barking furiously, initially no one responds. As the dog yelps, turns and lunges, the chair shifts and I begin to think the chair will topple over onto the dog. The front door stands open, as are all of the windows along the front of the house. I stand in the opened front doorway and knock. The house is small and I hear activity coming from several directions. Soon a teenaged girl with a biracial toddler on her hip comes to the door and, without a word to me, yells, "Mom, somebody to see you."

Momentarily, Debra appears in her shorts, t-shirt and bare feet, ushering me into a small living room colorfully decorated with oversized furniture. She plops down to

the floor in front of the couch as we make our introductions, motioning me to take a seat. I begin to spread out materials on a sectional couch of dark red velour that snakes around the perimeter of the tightly furnished living room. We recall we had met each other briefly before the downtown dispersal. As she remembers, *you were the ones asking us questions about stuff*. The kitchen table is only a few feet away, laden with bags of bread and opened jars. Three other girls who come from a back room now join the teenage girl and baby. All are now milling in the tiny kitchen. The dog, now a sentry at Debra's feet, barks incessantly for the first 10 minutes of our interview.

The mother of the 2-year-old child, Debra's eldest daughter, later comes from the back area. She is only visiting as she no longer lives at home because of the conditions Debra and her partner have placed on her relationship with the baby's father. Debra and her partner have been together nearly ten years. After the dispersal, they moved into the house they are buying together. While Debra is not legally married to her common-law husband who is the father of the boy who lives in the house, she insists she regards the adolescent as her own as his mother is out of the picture.

The house Debra and her partner are buying is a small frame house located on a relatively quiet street in a fairly rundown neighborhood located near south side from downtown. She says it is in a poverty neighborhood with some adults working. It is the place she and her daughters moved to immediately after the downtown dispersal from Jane Long Terrace. From the condition of surrounding houses, Debra's self-assessment as well as the generalized location in terms of overall low-income clustering, Debra lives in a higher-poverty neighborhood. In fact, her house is something of a standout

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with it's thick carpet of grass, edged circular flower beds spilling with late summer annuals and what looks to be a newly patched roof and freshly painted trim only along the front eaves. The house is in need of an overall paint job. Debra says that is their next big project in the coming fall.

Inside, the house is neatly furnished. All the windows, curtained with airy and brightly colored fabric, are open. A couple of floor fans whirl, bringing a fairly stiff breeze into the room.   The visual size of the house and the number of people milling about are evidence that these are tight living quarters, with the small dining area spilling into a living room dominated by what looks to be a 60+ inch flat screen TV. The baby boy is now crawling furiously around the kitchen floor, while the teenage girls congregated at the kitchen table giggle and banter all the while walking in and out of the kitchen. I later find out that Debra's daughters have friends over, a couple of girls they knew at Jane Long Terrace. Everybody is playing with the toddler who is vocally asserting his independence.

Immediately I recognize that the interview will have to take place in the center of all of this action and I comment about Debra's ability/willingness to speak freely. She waves her hands and says nothing she'll say here they haven't heard before. Her manner is nonchalant and her voice is surprisingly quiet. With the competition of the fans and the girlish chatter, I pull the recorder closer to her in order to get everything she says.   Debra is a low talker and as she tells her story one gets the sense of some shyness from a woman largely reserved around people she does not know well.

Initially, Debra says she doesn't know how she can help. She insists she has answered the questions that "the other girl" came by to ask her.   After differentiating what our meeting will be about, she agrees to participate if not reluctantly still insisting her life is "pretty boring." After about 10 minutes, Debra is talking freely if not louder, particularly voicing dissatisfaction with the choices her eldest daughter has made in her life even as Debra has sacrificed for a better life. The daughter continues to walk around the house obviously hearing these comments but offering no response.

Debra brings the conversation straight away to the parentage of the baby and the potential danger for her daughter and grandchild to be associated with the father and his life on the streets. She goes into the kitchen scooping up her grandson, cooing to him as they both fall back to the floor. The little boy remains on her lap, playful and content. I sense a strong bond, perhaps stronger than with the child's own mother. The situation of Debra's daughter has brought tension into the household. There have been heated arguments between Debra and her partner, between Debra and her daughter as well as among the teenaged daughters. *I told my daughter, you know what? If you want to live a life like that, out on the street, you're grown. We didn't raise you like that. We raised you better than that. I try to talk with her and put some sense into her. She wouldn't want to listen.*

The issue has almost lead to Debra's partner leaving the house, as in his traditional ways he had vetoed the baby to remain in the house. *Oh, we have argued a lot about that. I say to him, I don't care if I argue with you or you want to argue with me and all that. I am not going to have my grandson living on the street. When it*

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means something important to me I can stand up for that. He may say not like it, but that's that. I will raise him like my own. It took a while to talk my husband to get him to understand we won't lock that baby out. He didn't ask for none of this.

5.4.1 Pathway of Childhood and Family

As her grandson scoots off to play nearby, Debra stretches out on the floor and matter of factly describes a fairly traditional Hispanic upbringing with her parents, her two younger sisters and three younger brothers. She shares that she spent most of her time however alone with her maternal grandparents who lived across the street. Her father, she says, was a heavy drinker who worked sporadically and was often absent but would have never considered "leaving my mother." Unlike her siblings who were younger and who would all leave home by age 16, Debra stayed close to home throughout adolescence and into motherhood. *I wasn't a partying person. I really liked to be around the campfire. And then I used to stay inside a lot when I was a younger person. I'm not really a shy person. I just didn't like to be outside talking it up with everybody. So I was mostly at home. Being there with my parents, helping them out, cleaning up, doing what I had to do. I didn't have my first boyfriend until after I was 19.*

Today, although her mother lives close, they do not visit regularly. It's a subject we do not explore. She remembers *my brothers and sisters were always with their own friends.* So Debra terms her preference these days for company as, *I'd rather be with my own family than with my mother and my siblings.* Her father, who died last year on her mother's birthday and in the same month as her beloved grandmother, is

given a somewhat softened remembrance even though memories of the problems associated with growing up in his household she related with little prompting.

As a child, Debra escaped to her grandparents across the street where she, the self-appointed favorite of her Mexican-born grandmother, experienced feeling wanted, special and loved. In fact, her earliest remembrances are clearly differentiated into whether she was with her parents or in the household of her grandparents. *My grandfather used to go camping every summer and I used to go with him. Every time school was over I'd be over there with them. I used to go camping, fishing, all of that. I was having some fun then. I felt pretty special when I was around my grandmother too. My grandmother had me cleaning up, cleaning the walls. But then we'd go bowling. She was a bowler. My grandmother would come out on TV when she used to bowl. It was called the Bowling for Dollars show. Me and her won a contest where you have to put food in a buggy as fast as all that. I was about 10 years old. It came out in the papers about us. At my parent's house though, I was always there, I was always having to be inside the house.*

Debra's father was Hispanic, her mother half Hispanic, half Caucasian. But she says that she had never really identified with "the Hispanics." Her maternal grandfather, who was Anglo, and her grandmother, who was Hispanic, had given Debra a unique glimpse into both cultural worlds. Having spent most of her free time with her grandparents, today she says she sees both sides and is comfortable with her blended heritage. *My grandmother and me spoke Spanish mostly and with my grandfather, who was white, I talked English. I could speak Spanish, but not as good as English. I*

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learned a lot. I learned a lot about being a Hispanic girl from her. But I was always around my grandfather. We called my grandfather Dad. When the ice cream man would come by, I'd yell, Dad, Dad. He would give me a quarter to run go buy whatever.

It is when talk returns again and again to her grandparents that Debra's face genuinely lights up. Her stories become unprompted and she is animated as she describes being the only one of her siblings "allowed" to spend long stretches of time with them. She depicts meaningful relationships with both.   From her grandmother she says she learned to be independent and have fun while from her grandfather she learned the merits of generosity and expressing affection. Threading her storytelling, Debra has regularly communicated to the girls moving in and out of the living room in what could be described as loving, regularly calling each by a family pet name in Spanish.

5.4.2 Pathway to School

Debra doesn't have much to say about her school years. She portrays school as a place to go when she wasn't at home or at her grandparents'. From her recollection, she was an average student who passed through high school largely unnoticed, maintaining in that way of conformity that kept her in line with the rules and the regulation but little more. Debra's remembrances of school were something of a diversion, somewhere to go to learn only what she wanted to learn. She remembers no one made her go; it was just another expectation that she followed without question. She recalls no great friendships, no favorite teachers or experiences, but she did graduate high school. *I was there, always on time, never tardy. I was about average as a student. I wasn't that smart, maybe like a C and sometimes B student. I wasn't*

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perfect. I had some friends, but I never did just hang out. I did play softball at school so I stayed pretty much busy. I didn't shoot pool, do drugs like some others in my family. I kept myself busy, working and just staying with my family.

As for her early exposure to an Anglo world through her grandfather's tales, Debra says she never really felt totally immersed in the Hispanic traditions. She didn't "run" with the crowd as her younger sisters had in school and that had set her apart. Today she thinks that has helped her straddle the cultural divide she often encounters as well as hindered her relationship with other traditional Hispanics. In fact, it is one of the problems she says she encountered when she lived at JLT. She says she couldn't identify with many of the other Hispanic families there and felt somewhat unaccepted because of it. *I didn't really identify with the Hispanic residents at Jane Long, no not really. While I was downtown, I saw people do a lot of stupid things.*

5.4.3 Pathway to Teen Motherhood

Unlike her siblings who were younger and who would all leave home by age 16, Debra stayed close to home throughout adolescence and into motherhood. She had her first baby before her 20th birthday. She had had no "boyfriends" in high school and had seemingly moved through unaffected without the experience of dating, sleepovers or having crushes. *I really liked to be around the campfire. And then I used to stay inside a lot when I was a younger person. I just didn't like to be outside talking it up with everybody. So I was mostly at home. Being there with my parents, helping them out, cleaning up, doing what I had to do. I didn't have my first boyfriend until after I was 19.*

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Debra does not go into the circumstances for how she came to meet the father of her children. She alludes to a troubled relationship with this man that she maintained, in sporadic form, while still living at home with her parents. His lifestyle and ill treatment of Debra was a contentious point between her and her parents that would often escalate. The residual feelings of anger and frustration are apparent as she loudly complains this man is not involved in any way with his teenaged daughters today. *The one thing I would have a problem with him is, he'd have a good job, okay, and then he would leave, spend all the money and just party it away. I used to give him a lot of chances to straighten up his life, but then the time came… I would tell him it's time. I couldn't let my girls seeing him do that. You know, partying and not coming home. I didn't want them to grow up like that. I had put up with that for over five years before I moved on by myself.*

Although her grandmother in particular was very strict, Debra, through her adult sensibilities, explained that such guidance helped her to stay out of the kind of trouble that she saw happening to many girls she knew. She recalls what happened to her own sisters, who were younger and prone to run away often. They all became mothers by age 16. Debra, although never married, will tell that she had had her first baby "late" and had been with one man before finally separating from him for good. By her account, her life had been "sheltered." Finally "coming out," she says she had done only what she had seen her mostly Hispanic girl friends doing: having children. As Debra's housing situation with her parents continued to worsened with the birth of her

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children, she began to look for housing alternatives. It was time for her and her children to move on. She applied for public housing assistance and moved into JLT.

5.4.4 Pathway to Jane Long Terrace

Bringing up her life at Jane Long Terrace, Debra's demeanor changes from what had been somewhat girl-like as she described her relationship with her much-loved grandparents to one of annoyance, her facial expression one of a frown and voice rising. Debra lived at Jane Long Terrace for 13 years and raised her three daughters there. She rationalizes that it was a lifesaver, as she had had no other place to turn when she left her parents' house.   The girls at the adjoining kitchen table grow suddenly quiet as Debra begins to explain her difficulty in feeling a part of the JLT community. *When I first got my apartment I used to have this Hispanic neighbor and her husband used to… well, all I used to hear was her screaming and crying and all that. He'd leave, come outside. I'd be scared of him. I just couldn't see myself putting up with a man like that, getting beat up every night. I used to try to talk with her and put some things right in her mind. But it was no use. I wasn't like them.   I would stay out of it. I didn't like to be around people who would get abused and all of that.*

Her entry into public housing was a reluctant one, vowing she would never live in "government" housing. Nonetheless Debra's housing situation with her parents had dramatically worsened with the birth of her first child. It seems the relationship she has had with her parents, as far back as she could recall, had been complicated and even tumultuous at times. Involved in a troubled relationship with the father of her children, yet still living at home, Debra had had three children in fairly quick succession.

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Debra, as the oldest of six children, finds irony in the fact she was the last to leave the home of her parents. Relying upon her aging grandparents for moral support had run its course. After enduring mounting tension and a crumbling situation with her boyfriend, Debra decided it was time she moved on, literally. *I started off at JLT with a little 2-bedroom. I lived there and didn't have nothing. My grandmother gave me most everything I had. She gave dishes little by little. My sister gave me some old furniture, a bedroom set. All I had was two mattresses in one bedroom and a set of twins in the other bedroom. That was it.*

Debra was also particularly candid in many of her responses about her life at JLT. She shared that when she and her daughters first moved in to the little apartment up on the hill, she began to fulfill the lifestyle of what she had considered a typical public housing resident. *When I first got to Jane Long, back then I didn't want to work either. Back then I was getting food stamps and all of that. And I felt it was just me and my kids. But I was turning into one of them who wanted to just stay there with my kids and raise them until they could get off to school. But then what? But I changed afterwards. After they got a little bit bigger to go to middle school, I started looking at different things. I went to work so I was making money. So I could pay my grandmother what I owed her.*

Painting a picture of how life in public housing had used to be "okay", Debra laments that in more recent years just being in her house had become dangerous and the gathering groups of teenagers a bad influence on her children. *Once you see your kids growing up, you want your bunch of kids to be happy and have a better life than living*

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around the projects and all of that. You be seeing a lot of young kids in trouble, getting killed. They're just a bunch of kids.

She related a gang related incident involving a relative when she was a child and how the image of him lying in the street had haunted her. While he had survived, the implications of such associations had stayed with her intensifying as her daughters grew older, still living at JLT. *I had already seen a bunch of people causing trouble around there.* [They were] *always fighting, shooting. When we lived on the hill, there was a shooting one year and the bullet just missed the two of my kids in my bedroom watching TV. We then had to sit down on the floor low to watch TV after that.*

When the talk of dispersal heated up around the neighborhood, Debra says she was ready to go. She proudly noted that she and her family were one of the first households to vacate. *I was ready to take advantage of the help to get myself out of there.* Yet she reported feeling torn about leaving those with whom she had developed friendships, not just with residents but also housing authority staffers and onsite managers. *I would go to the meetings, but I would never get involved really. I went for information and to find out what's going on and all that stuff. I got the computer. I still have it in back there. I have to tell you I probably would have moved on anyway. Even if they would have wanted me to stay with them, I probably would have moved on. I would have said, you know, I don't want to go through all this no more.*

5.4.5 Pathway to Work

As Debra recalls what she missed most about being a public housing resident, she rattles off the number of ways that she has benefited from the various programs and

incentives. She especially mentions the help offered by housing officials to improve residents' employment and education. *I was working at Jane Long for an after-school program with kids. Working round big kids, 12 or 13 years old and some younger, like six and seven. It was convenient, within walking distance right there. The complex had a community service center near the office there, so we could have the program there. Me and this neighbor lady - she used to be my friend - she got me into that, working around the kids. My job was after they get off from school they used to come there and have community help. I helped them with their homework, took them to the ball games, swimming at the downtown Y. We'd go camping and stuff like that. I worked there for five years. After there working around big kids, I went to work daycare for the Y. I worked around babies then. I had 12 of them, me and this other lady.*

In her position as a paid worker onsite JLT, Debra says she got to know many of the residents even as she enjoyed an almost collegial relationship with housing authority staff and onsite management. She is the only one interviewed for this study to ask about the wellbeing and whereabouts of a number of people she had known at JLT, calling them by name and recalling where they had each lived. She also shares she has seen two women from JLT out and about, one at the grocery store, another standing at a bus stop. When I comment that Debra had given an impression of being somewhat isolated and disconnected downtown, she laughs heartily perhaps for the first time and shares a remembrance of how she thinks others considered her.

When I lived down there I had all these people in the neighborhood there ask me, what do I do? I tell them well, I work and we play softball in the evening. And you

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know, round the neighborhood there they knew we played softball. They'd see us leave with our bags and all of that. But I guess they couldn't understand. People would ask me, "How do you do it? Aren't you tired after all that?" I would tell them, it's easy, just do this and work it out. I'd tell them I learned to play first [base] *and then a lot of other positions and that it's good for your legs.*

Figure 5.2 is a summary of what we have learned regarding Debra and her adaptive abilities in making relocation decisions she deems best for her and family: abilities that might bring her household closer to resettlement. Table 5.2 is a tabulated assessment of these abilities.

NAME	AGE	RACE	Children / G-children	Higher/Lower Agency	Status of Neighborhood
Debra	39	H	4/1	L	HP-Private (left PH)

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	**Strong sense of role of mother** **Problem focused coping** **Optimistic – future oriented of her children & grandchild** **Clean household** **Personal housing satisfaction**	**Supportive partner: shares household expenses** **Knows / identifies her neighbors: on neighborhood softball team** **Younger children doing well in school; plays sports, avg grades** **Continues to interact well with Housing personnel**	**Gainful employment** **Maintains personal relationship with housing personnel** **Participated in housing based self sufficiency programs** **Left housing assistance; buying a home in high poverty neighborhood** **Access to running automobile**
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	External locus of control; partner Tends to not make plans to avoid disappointment Conflicted parenting with oldest child	Extended family does not visit; conflict with mother Older children having difficulty in school; grades, truancy Oldest child dropped out; has young child & felonious boyfriend	Pays half of monthly mortgage payment, but Debra is not listed on the title. Debra is not legally married House in major need of repair Lives in high poverty neighborhood; transient population

What Worked for Debra
Structure: Forming institutional alliance early in housing tenure has benefited Debra in several ways. Through the housing authority, she found work, bought a house, and used various training programs to improve her status.

Figure 5.2 Summary of study findings: Debra.

Table 5.2 Tabulated Assessment of Debra

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	+ + +	+ + +	+ + +
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+ +	+ +	+ +

5.4.6 The Summation of Debra

Today, Debra will tell you with little hesitation that most of her housing decisions have been made with her daughters in mind. Deciding to relinquish housing assistance all together and move in with her partner of ten years, she says has only benefited them all. While her eldest has dropped out, *my biggest hope is just seeing them grow up, finish high school and go to college.* She had increasingly worried about their future while living at JLT and feared her dream of them having *a better go of things than I did* was slipping away. *They are of the age where they could mess up bad,* she laments, like many of their peers living at JLT. *Downtown, those girls would come to our house, some would tell me about boys and all of that. I'd just sit there and listen, not butting in, but I'd want to say, why are you screwing up? I've been there done that.*

 She recalls her urgency to leave JLT, because many of her girls' friends had already started having children in adolescence. She wanted to escape such fate for her own daughters. While she knew there were troubling enticements at school, Debra held hope that finding a better neighborhood than JLT could offset such risks. Shrugging her shoulders today, she says she is at a loss to understand how her eldest, a good student

and recognized athlete, had made the choices than lead to her pregnancy, drop-out, continued defiance and subsequent household banishment.

Debra remembers when official word came that all households would have to go she saw that as a sign that she should leave housing for good. Even as housing personnel had encouraged her to move into a recently purchased mixed income apartment complex, Debra says she had already decided to leave. *We moved straight from JLT to here. We bought it straight out, we didn't rent it. The housing people didn't want me to do that. They wanted me to stay because I was one of the few good ones. But that wasn't best for me. I had to move on. It was time.*

She agreed to move into this house with her partner, citing no necessity to get married, however. *We're not married, but I've been with him a long time. Sooner or later we'll get married probably. The house is under his name but it belongs to both of us. I'm helping make the payments. We both work, we both pay the bills.* She says she tried to instill in her children the need to stay in school and get an education as a way to that better life. *I'm always telling them what's right and wrong. Look, you've got friends. They got babies and all of that. You should open your eyes! If you're not working, you can't buy 'em nothing.*

Though by her accounts, Debra has been in a couple of long-term relationships with men who have tended to see themselves in sole authority, she claims never to have really let go of her own independence and thus has always sought to do the things she thinks is best for her girls. *I never had nobody run interference for me, never. I tell my girls, you've always got to take care of yourself. Make sure the men you get involved*

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with work. You never know where you'll be. You need to have a good man in your life to help take care of you. But don't just go and pick up a guy, [and say] *oh, yeah he's a good person and all of that. You don't know. You have to first find out about a person. See what kind of life they had before.* [Find out] *where he comes from. And I say stop chasing boys! I didn't chase no man. I didn't go chasing your dad.*

She figures at this stage of motherhood, noting the age of her girls as well as the future of raising her grandson, she had to strike the best path by combining households with her partner. She tends to gauge her subsequent decisions to continue to work, stay vigilant with her remaining daughters and raise her grandson as holding open the widest opportunities. She minimizes the importance of living in (once again) higher poverty because for her that's a step toward providing (and expecting) the best from her children. That is, living and settling down in one's own home. Accomplishing all of this, or at least keeping it as priority, she says is her most challenging job. *I feel settled down. Now I'm happy because I can do whatever I want to do with my own house, my own garden. I live right across the street from a park. People that come to visit are down the street. My neighbor and I play softball together. She's the one that told us about the house here.*

Her teenaged daughters who live with her are in school and appear to be doing well. Changing schools after the move, both have become involved with school-related sports much like their mother and older sister. They are exposed to a different set of friends, which makes Debra happy if not a little cautious. *At first it was hard. They didn't want to be over here. They thought they would miss their friends. They couldn't*

get back to their school and be with their friends. It was hard for them. I told them it was time for us to move on. It was time to have our own house, do whatever we wanted to do in the house.   Now they don't see a lot of those kids there, thank goodness. A lot of their friends are locked up now. The new friends they have now, some are just about the same [as those at JLT.] *They're all the same. There ain't nothing called a perfect kid.*

She will say the decision to leave public housing was hers and hers alone. She acknowledges that it wasn't a simple decision, but one she felt compelled to make. *I had a choice, if I wanted to stick with the housing authority and being alone or move on and getting a better life. I 'd rather move on and have the better life than to stay in low-income housing apartments. I wanted to start the life I really wanted to have. You want to be happy. But we had to go. I had heard that some were having problems leaving downtown and I told them, I'm ready for my house. I'm moving on! This ain't no life. I had a plan and I just had to do it. Leaving public housing was my decision. I was ready to move on.*

Throughout this discussion there is an explicit understanding of age as a critical element of relocation decisions as indicated by lifestage of the mother. In that way, the mother becomes the primary decision-maker, albeit gathering pertinent information to make such informed decisions. Age is also an important concept in life course scholarship. It is the diversity in patterns of aging that give important contextual and transactional information. We now turn our focus to how Penney, representative of the older women of this study, faced her set of familial and cultural needs in relocation. We

hear how the impact of children and grandchildren as extended family on relocation issues will be no less important than in other age groups. In some ways, it may be more important. That the offspring of older women experiencing deconcentration usually live outside the household, relocation will involve reciprocity in met needs and wants if a decision is made to benefit both. Older age of the resident does not always mean dependency. Met needs and wants imply mutual gains among all family members.

It is important to note that the study of age is often confused with the study of aging. The former denotes a social construction (thus far more than chronological) of interactional process of all ages while the latter is defined as periods of growth, development, maturity and, particularly, old age as lifelong processes from birth to death. In this study, we focus on age as social construction, a concept not as well understood as that of race and gender within social groups, for example (Laz, 2003). One's social age, understood here as a fulfillment of interactional roles, expectations and constraint, along with one's chronological age as a given, continues to need further clarification. This is especially evident if we are to adequately examine age-associated conditions, consequences and methods: i.e. an understanding of the sociology of age (Laz, 1998). In this way, we are more able to understand how attitudes, actions and interactions contribute to the meaning of age in general as well as give indications for how social change evidenced by deconcentration of poverty might be handled among different age groups.

5.5 Relocation: Penney's story

NAME	AGE	RACE	Children / G-children	Higher/Lower Agency	Status of Neighborhood
Penney	74	H	6/16	L	LP-Mixed

On the road to Penney's house for our arranged interview, I check my phone for messages, noting that Penney has called. Phone etiquette and in particularly how to leave messages I had noticed over my experience with respondents had been somewhat problematic. Without Caller ID, many times I would not have been able to figure out who had called. In Penney's call, she leaves a clear message, her name and time. I return her call. She said she was just making sure I was coming and that she wouldn't leave her home until after we met. Two minutes later she calls back to alert there is now a code to get into her complex, wanting to give it to save time. When I pull into her complex scanning the buildings for her building number, I spot a petite woman furiously waving to me as I pull my car into a spot close by. She is standing on a balcony amidst a jungle of green plants, some hanging, others lining the somewhat fragile looking railing around the balcony. She begins talking to me before I can lock my car. Soon she is at the top of the stairs, steering me to her third floor apartment.

Penney is a 74-year-old Hispanic woman, with 6 children and 16 grandchildren who all live in the same city as Penney. In fact, most live in one section of the city several miles away in what is considered a higher poverty area. As we climb the steep stairs, she appears to have difficulty, limping and winded as we walk into a sunny room filled with moving boxes, a lone couch, chair and end table with lamp. Yet many

pictures still hang on the walls. In response to a query about her physical condition at the moment, Penney shares she has a serious heart condition that she has neglected far too long. She informs me that she is moving this coming weekend and that she is moving to a distant area of the city where most of her children and grandchildren live to be closer to them. She offers a beverage and apologizes for the clutter as she moves around the room pushing boxes against the wall. On this day, while a mild one for the month of August, Penney offers an apology for the somewhat stuffy temperature inside. Even as the rooms in view are in various stages of dissembling and packing, everything - the floors, walls and furniture - look amazingly clean.

Sitting across from each other, Penney is dressed in loose fitting shorts and a brightly patterned sleeveless blouse revealing lower legs swollen and heavily veined. Her hands looked to be gnarled by advancing arthritis while her arms are tanned and muscular. Her health, which she graded as "pretty good" when she first left JLT four years ago, has grown progressively worse largely due to her non-compliance with her doctor's regimen. She is in the process of trying to stop smoking after years of heavy usage. Some days are better than others. Her once active lifestyle of walking long distances to her favorite stores to "window shop" or traversing the city to just be out has been severely curtailed by increasing health problems.

It is painful when I walk, so then I can't walk very far. I mean I can walk like from here to that dumpster over there [pointing out her front picture window overlooking the parking lot] *and feel fine. If I walk any further, it starts hurting me right here in the back and hip. That's why I carry that little cane, you know. But I still*

want to push it as much as I can. I push myself as much as I can even though I am in pain. I say good Lord just give me more steps, more steps. I may not make it. And sometimes I feel good when I walk. That's what I need to do, walk so I can get the blood circulating.

Today she is barefooted and her hair is held back with various brightly colored hair clips such that a young girl might wear. Her raspy voice has a lilt to it: at times in whispering pitch, then again in forceful tones. It is her eyes that capture one's attention. They in fact light up her face, even as Penney appears to be missing several teeth located throughout her mouth. As with those who have dental problems, she has mastered the ability to talk without revealing her teeth. When she smiles and laughs – which she does throughout the interview in spontaneous outbursts – she rarely shows her teeth.

Sitting with her legs resting comfortably on a foot stop rubbing her left upper thigh, Penney will tell you that she has had her share of "bad luck in this life" but that somehow she has always managed to survive even thrive. Talking with her even for a short while one gets a sense of a resiliency, an enthusiasm for life even as she laments her mounting medical problems as she approaches her birthday in a couple of weeks. *I am known by my family and friends they know me this way. I just think of life as positive, that nothing's gonna get me down. All my life, I have asked questions if I don't know something. I'm always going and I'm always talking. No matter how down I am, I've always got something cheerful to say. I really think the more cheerful you are, the more healthier it makes you feel. You don't see life like - how can I explain - to me I*

live one day at a time. I live for today, I'm going to be as happy as I can today because tomorrow's another day. I've always been a determinated person you know. I mean I always had determination.

5.5.1 The Pathway of Childhood and Family

Penney, fourth oldest among her nine siblings, was born into a poor family of Mexican-born immigrants who had come to the U.S. at the turn of the century to find work.   She and her growing family crisscrossed the country working in the fields as migrant workers for as far back as she can remember. As she rather tersely ticks off with her weathered hands there had been no time for school, no time for friends, no time for any of the things that children look forward to. There is poignancy to Penney's rendition of a childhood lost.

We never ever had what you might call a neighborhood where you go outside to play and have friends. When you are a migrant worker you don't have time to think about anything. You don't have time to make friends with anybody, especially for the children. The friends that you have is what comes together to do the work. And then in the fields that's all you do, work in the fields. So you really don't have the time to mingle with kids outside the camp or in town or stuff like that. But I don't think I never even noticed it. It never even went through my head. No, we just followed all kinds of crops. We followed cotton. We followed fruit, you know. We went everywhere. We went wherever the fruit, the crops and everything was.

Even in the midst of relating what today sounds something akin to bereavement, Penney manages to smile, even laugh, at the memories of some childhood times. *My*

father had a big ole truck. You know they were truckers and they'd put all the kids of all the families in one truck. And then everybody would follow everybody, just like a train. Just like you see on TV. Sometimes in the movies. That's just like it was. My father would find work in the fields and the guy who would hire him might have an old house or something. Like a house with three or four rooms and everybody's family would live in one room. We had a home. It was always there when we got back. We'd come and stay a month or two at home. Then it was, okay, it's time to go. Wherever.

5.5.2 The Pathway to School

Understandably with a life largely spent traveling the country offering little constancy save the backbreaking work of picking and hauling the harvest, Penney says there were many things, like going to school, celebrating birthdays and holidays or just being carefree that she did not know existed. She says she never had any idea about what going to school meant, because she nor any of the other migrant children she knew had ever gone. *When I found out what school was all about was when my children started going to school. Me, I didn't go to school. Believe it or not I never went to school. No, I never even went to first grade. Everything I learned, I taught it* [to] *myself.*

And we didn't even know what a Christmas tree was about. We never had Christmas. We never had TV. We didn't have the pleasure of going out to the park and enjoying ourselves as kids. We didn't know what it was like to go out and have hamburgers and all this. Nothing like that. Being a migrant worker, actually I never really had time to think about anything cause we was moving around a lot. We were

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kids and not educated enough to even think about what we were leaving behind. We were just so used to saying, okay, we're packing up, time to go!

In many ways, Penney's early life became the template for how she says she would *not* raise her own children, making conscious decisions early on to provide stability, be demonstrative in her affection and delay their need to grow up too fast by doing adult work and having adult worries. Recognizing the value of school in ways of learning, socializing and belonging that she had missed out on, she also vowed she would instill importance in education in her household. Penney soaked up her ability to read, write and speak English and Spanish largely of her own volition. Now she says she uses such tenacity to inspire her grandchildren to persevere at school.

Remembering a mother she hardly knew and a father she had feared most of her life, as a young mother Penney proudly shared she has always talked with her children about anything. *I've always left my book open for my children. My life* [is] *like a book. That's what my son said, mom you need to write a book about your life cause, I leave it open. I tell my children, look, I'm not hiding nothing from you. I made these mistakes, this one, this one, this one* [using her fingers to tick off her words]. *I'm leaving it open so you can know what happened to me. So when I tell you don't do this it's because I already went there and I'm back and I'm gonna explain to you why. So sometimes they look at me like... but they listened.*

To be the kind of mother she wanted to be, Penney knew early that she would have to be a mother unlike her own who had been "ruled" by a father who was clearly the authoritative head of household. *My dad didn't believe in girls going to school*

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because for him it was just they grow up, get married and have babies. Why did they

need education for that? My poor mother, bless her soul, she never raised a finger for

anything. My father ruled and what my father said, went. And so she never raised her

voice, never disagreed. They were married for 59 years and never once did she leave

him or anything. She'd get up in the morning. My father would get his coffee first and

eat breakfast first before anybody else. You know, for lunch and supper too.

5.5.3 Pathway to Teen Motherhood

Penney and her siblings had started working in the fields so far back she can't

say at what age she started, but she does remember vividly when she quit. She had just

turned 14 and feeling the pressure of her strictly controlling father Penney had set her

sights on something outside of physical labor. She had begun to sneak off with another

sister to attend "a carnival", worried the whole time that they would be discovered and

punished. *My dad was very strict and everything. The first man that came along, I saw*

him and you know, ran away with him. He was a good-looking man. He was older and

God, he's an old man putting attention to me. I was 14! I was just a baby. I was a 14-

year-old girl with a 27-year-old man! Now, I want to go back there and slap her silly.

He talked me into running away, but back then they didn't have laws like they do now. I

mean you ran out with a 27-year-old man you disgraced the name of the family. You

get married whether you liked it or not.

Thus, Penney's experience with teen mothering came at the tender age of 15 as

a result of a forced marriage to the man of 27. This was a man that she had initially been

attracted to she says because he had plied her with starved-for attention. Soon her

father, to maintain "honor" in the family, had thrust a marriage upon her. As Penney terms it today, *back in the 40's, 50's, if you disgrace your family, especially Mexican families, you have disgraced everybody. Now you are nothing.* It seems that Penney had been coerced by this new admirer to run away, if for only a day or two, but upon her return she was forced by her father to go through with marriage.

Marriage under such conditions, while not what had she wanted for herself, nonetheless allowed her to escape her father's dominance and a fear of *growing old in the fields.* And besides she says she never took that talk of family disgrace to heart. Able to discern that a hasty marriage to save face was her parent's decision nonetheless she endured it for almost four years; long enough to produce three children and warrant a few trips to the hospital due to escalating spousal abuse. Then as now, Penney is not one to linger long with talk of pain, problems or sorrow, although one could say she's had her fair share of all. She says she recognized her need to get out and she left.

The day she left was the first day she "stood up" to her father, a bold move that still reverberates today in her re-telling. When she reluctantly returned home as the only refuge she knew, the headstrong daughter (as she called herself) quietly began proceedings to divorce her abusive husband. Penney had defied her father's order to return immediately to him, relating *I had to stand up to my father and tell him no. It was very hard. It was very hard because like I said I didn't know how to speak up to him for anything. But from that day on, when he wanted to send me back to my first husband, I said no! I'm gonna teach myself and I'm gonna do it on my own.*

Being self-taught to speak, read and write in English and Spanish, Penney knows firsthand the value of learning. She learned to speak English initially by watching television and sounding out the words. Later she would pull out her trusty dictionary to *read about the word and it would explain to me what it meant.* Perhaps her most favorite way of learning the language was in "hanging around" with people who spoke it. She laughs heartily as she recalls when *white people would talk to me I had no idea what they were saying.* Most often over many cups of coffee in a local diner, Penney and a bilingual friend would sit listening to the chatter around them.

Years later she recounts she was scheduled to take her GED after weeks of classes but was involved in car accident the night before that landed her in the hospital for a while. Bowing her head and appearing to look sheepishly, Penney laments, *I didn't go get it and I never did try it again. You won't believe this, but when I was taking these GED classes they had me as an interpreter for a lot of Mexican people speaking Spanish. I was taking the school but they had me like as the interpreter and I was showing them how to write the letters in English and Spanish and everything. And I was more or less teaching these people. Like I was a teacher you know. And the teachers were proud.   They couldn't believe that I was doing this.*

Today, Penney remains adamant that all of her grandchildren, 16 and counting, will finish school, as she had promised even before her own children were born that they too would go to school and get an education first. Today three sons are *officers in the military and all my daughters have their husbands and kid to take care of.* Her pride is obvious and most conversations with her lead back to the importance of recognizing

children in ways different from the ways of her own parents. *I have explained to my children how I was raised. And I tell them don't make that mistake that my parents did. If you don't look at your children and do not listen to your children, first thing you're gonna do is listen to your children and look at them at the same time. Look at their expression, their feelings, the voice you know. I mean, look and check everything on your child's face. I said cause that's what tells you what's wrong with your child.*

She vividly recalls the invisibility of being destitute and a worker among many in a family she now says was just trying to do the best they could. Yet she says she wants to remember all these feelings so that she won't make the same mistakes. *We all have the capacity that we have already went through it. It's our experiences, right? We already have the capacity to get it into our heads to be like a 5 year old, like a 15 year old, like a 21 year old. We remember ourselves, what we went through, what we did, how we learned from that. We are not ones to judge.*

5.5.4 Pathway to Jane Long Terrace

Penney moved to Jane Long Terrace over eight years ago after the sudden death of her eldest son with whom she had lived all his life. Of all of her children, this son had never married and had continued to live with his mother into his 40's. He had provided an income and had become a surrogate father to her younger sons, offering fatherly advice and helping them get on their feet one by one. *He was taking care of me and my baby son. We all lived together. He was a plumber, making good money. He paid the rent and everything else. But when he died, I was left stranded.*

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I was struggling so this friend of mine told me about housing help. I went and just filled out the application and in about three months they called me. And at first they gave me one over there [at a public housing complex known for trouble]. *Then I said I don't want to move to there, so I turned it down. So then when they called me again, they said okay we got one available over here downtown. Do you want to move in here? So I went to look at it and I said, well, this is closer and my youngest son could still go to his same school. So that's how we moved in.*

Life at Jane Long Terrace had been one of satisfaction, largely because moving there had stabilized an uncertain future for her and her youngest child. But when news broke that the downtown complex would indeed be demolished and that everyone would have to leave, Penney initially was wary of the change. Similar to other women interviewed for this study, Penney had heard the rumors for years the buildings would be torn down. She adds a new twist. She reports that she had also heard the housing authority was *just going to throw us out. I couldn't imagine.*

She slowly warmed to the news of leaving. When she started receiving official letters and talk was aflutter among residents to organize for a better relocation deal, Penney says, like usual, she had a lot of questions. *I went to the meetings and asked a lot of questions. What and where was my opportunities? What was going on? What was the reasons they were selling? What was the reason they were relocating us? If we moved, did we have a chance to move to a better place, you know. I mean if we get relocated, if we decided to move to another place, how could we do it? All that stuff. I'm nosey like that. Well, not nosey but, you know, I like to keep up, to see what's going*

on. Keep in touch and see if… I'm not one of those persons who like to wait to the last minute to hear what's going on. I want to hear it up front. Be first you know. And I don't mind questions. It might embarrass you, it might embarrass me, but I'm gonna ask. It's better to ask than not know about it.

As she talked about the reactions of many of her downtown neighbors to the pending dispersal, Penney says she was affected by what she saw as the distress of others. *Not that I wasn't satisfied there but I told them, whatever happened, it was going to be okay. For me, I had decided it was going to be a great move out here because these apartments are a lot more better for me. Even though I have to get up and down stairs, back then when I moved in I was in whole lot better health. And like I said recently you know my health just went down and that's the reason I'm moving closer to my family. But you know my move to here was for better living than at Jane Long. Not that I wasn't happy there, but I moved over here where it was cleaner, it was nicer and, you know, just better.*

Just as Debra shared earlier, one of Penney's biggest regrets about having to leave JLT was that she had grown fond of on-site personnel and had cordial relationships with many Housing Authority staff. *The ladies at Jane Long was nice. My relationship with the housing authority was good cause I've always made sure I talked to "Frida" the Hispanic social worker the most. I've always made sure I pay my bills on time and I'm one of the worrywarts. I gotta have my rent and my bills paid on the first or second of the month. No later than that cause it drives me crazy. And I always make sure the housing authority has a record that it's there, always on time.*

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Then as now, Penney has struck up a friendship with the complex manager and laments soon she will have to stay goodbye again. She hopes she can forge yet another such friendship at her new complex. *I've known "Sandy" since we've moved in here. I see her all the time. We stop to talk and everything. I went over there and told her I was leaving and she said, no, you're gonna move? We're gonna miss you. I told her, don't worry I'll come back and see you. My sister's staying you know.*

Her sister, who had followed Penney to JLT, had scouted and found an apartment that both she and Penney would like after dispersal. Penney had taken the bus out to view it, giving her approval, especially when she saw how close it was to everything she liked. She maintains the dispersal brought her *a lot better choices*, while the relocation had opened *more opportunities and more to see and more to enjoy.* Her excitement over leaving downtown for something she considered "the more perfect place" still spills out as Penney relates how she envisioned her new life.

When they told us about moving out, I finally got excited about it. I wanted the move. I wanted something better. Even though I had liked it over there and it was nice, I wanted something newer. It was convenient for me downtown because I could catch the bus and go to all the malls and stuff like that. But for the new apartment, I wanted something more. Something better, somewhere I could have walls and put my pictures up. I was over there where you couldn't hang nothing on the walls.

And I wanted something that had windows like this, as she motions toward the large picture window that dominates the outer wall of the living room. *I wanted carpet and everything. I wanted something better for my family to come and sit down and*

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enjoy themselves. But I didn't really feel I needed to be that close to my family then, you know I just wanted to be in a nice place, a better place. So I decided on that, I took that chance, that decision. I moved in. I'm taking it, I told my sister.

5.5.5 Pathway to Work

For Penney, taking public housing assistance was her first sustained experience with a subsidy of any kind. In the past, when she had hit patches of unemployment, she had used food stamps to hold her over a month or two. When she had traveled to another state to live briefly with a brother, she had eschewed his urging to "go on welfare." Her work ethic, deeply ingrained, she says prevented her from accepting such assistance, particularly outside the family. She somewhat reluctantly did so only for those dire times in her life when doing without would have harmed her children.

She proudly points out, she had always worked regularly, so she was always happy to *get off it* [assistance] *and just take care of my children.* She says she's never been one for taking handouts. As the matriarch of her family, Penney's most important task had been holding the family together with little outside interference. *I never got any public assistance through none of two divorces. I raised my children on my own. First of all I worked more than I stayed at home. And most of all, I loved working nights, the night shift. That was my favorite cause I could stay home with my kids and do everything for my kids. I worked a lot in factories, which is what I know how to do, factory work. I learned to run a lot of kinds of tools. I used to make little tables like that* [points to a small end table, at the end of her couch]. *I also made cabinets. My last*

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job I worked for a factory that made Easter basket grass. But it's been quite a while

since I did that kind of thing.

Today, with her workdays behind her, Penney continues to "work" toward her future.   She is set to undergo a new set of housing changes but remains optimistic in that way that some choose to see any kind of change. She does not appear to avoid looking at losses (that often come with change) but instead seems to integrate the losses with the gains. Although the move she will make in a couple of days is less than fifteen miles away, in many ways it will change much of Penney's and her sister's daily routine. Early morning coffee and - up until recently - their first cigarette of the day has been a daily ritual they've shared over the last twenty years or so. In many ways, Penney continues to feel like the parent she grew to be for her younger sibling.

In her ability to turn what before had been a contemplative moment, she laughs at what they had discussed just that morning. *In a way like I told her, I'm gonna miss being close but we both are real excited cause she says we both now can visit each other. She tells me, like on the weekend when we don't have nothing to do I can go visit you over there or I can pick you up and you can visit me over here. That's not bad. We could love each other better this way. You know what they say. Distance makes the heart grow fonder.*

As much as Penney has valued her freedom to walk, shop, visit, and play bingo at a nearby church, it has become evident to her and to her doctor that she must change her third floor climb to home each day. Needing a first floor available unit plus the need to be closer to her children has helped her to reconcile the change. As she says, *I have a*

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few friends, not very many close, but a lot of acquaintances so she says moving won't upset her social life there too much. Three of her friends with whom she enjoys sharing a meal in fact live closer to where she will be moving. Penney says, *I'm looking forward to going out, walking cause none of us has cars.* As she ticks off the names of all her favorite chain restaurants and grocery stores in the area she is moving to, she laments there will be no close-by mall. The mall, a short walk from her present apartment, had become a place she had enjoyed going to, not to shop per se, but to sit with her friends and watch all the people bustling by.

Growing up, with few dependable friends outside her family, Penney treasures and nurtures the friendships she has. *A friend is someone that you can trust and count on. Depend on. Like I have one particular lady that I go stay with. To me that's my friend, she trusts me in her house. She leaves me the key to her house. She's younger but she takes care of me when I'm sick. We talk about our problems. She has problems of her own and I have a few. We talk about it. I listen and all this stuff. We cry, laugh and we just do things together.*

As our interview time winds down and Penney faces the prospects of filling some of the empty boxes that line the wall, she again is enthusiastic for what yet another move into a new home will hold for her. *I am moving off of public housing to section 8, but my rent will stay the same. And I'm gonna be paying my own electricity which I wasn't doing that here. It's one more responsibility that I took on for myself. I believe I can handle it and I believe it's time for me to take on that responsibility instead of just depending on housing for the rest of my life. I know I can handle an*

electric bill. I know I can handle my rent, which is my disability money. I know how to budget it real good and I know how to take care of my bills. If I had $20-30 left out of it, why that's mine to splurge on whatever I want after that.

Penney has decided "it's time" to take on increased financial responsibilities, be in a first floor apartment and, perhaps most significantly, be closer to her children and grandchildren. Her eldest daughter will live only three blocks away from Penney in her new home. She admits moving closer to her children has given her pause. Over the years a physical distance has provided a sense of boundaried privacy that Penney has clearly enjoyed. *I've thought about it. About what's the really best thing for me to do. I've decided the best thing for me to do, I'm gonna move. Because one thing, there's better options over there. Everything is closer. I have the bus right in front of my apartment. I have the laundromat right in the back of my door. I'm in a downstairs apartment. I have all kinds of convenience stores and stuff like that there within walking distance, so that I don't have to wait for my children to come pick me up and take me to do it. As it is, you know, I'll be doing it myself.*

Figure 5.3 is a summary of what we have learned regarding Penney and her adaptive abilities in making relocation decisions she deems best for herself and family; abilities that might bring her closer to resettlement. Table 5.3 is a tabulated assessment of these abilities.

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NAME	AGE	RACE	Children / G-children	Higher/Lower Agency	Status of Neighborhood
Penney	74	H	6/16	L	LP-Mixed

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	**Dispositional optimism – in terms of self, children / grandchildren** **Internal locus of control** **Flexibility in matters of change** **Problem focused coping** **Good social skills / etiquette** **Personal achievement despite severe childhood poverty** **Positive self image as matriarch of family**	**Supportive children/grandchildren: financial, emotional, physical resources** **Interacts well with Hispanic housing personnel** **Recent relocation – closer proximity to family, friends, doctor, favorite restaurants**	**Strict housing compliance: prompt payments & prompt response to PHA requests, letters, deadlines** **Maintains personal relationship with Hispanic social worker assigned to JLT Relocation Office & onsite apartment manager** **Takes individual responsibility in making relocation adjustments** **Access to running automobile via family**
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	Health noncompliance Often unable to ask for help – fierce independence; might do without Diminished self-reliance as result of increased personal care needs	Household instability; making new move, losing friends, losing sister as neighbor, losing walking route Conflicted about relocating near children; privacy, boundary, dependence concerns	Penney is moving from lower poverty into higher poverty to be closer to children Housing quality is diminished, higher crime rate & less pedestrian friendly walking routes

<u>What Worked for Penney</u>

Agency: Native ingenuity, flexibility amid personal housing changes & problem focused coping have all contributed to Penney's skills of resilience. Her matriarchal position in the family will probably increase as she relocates near her family. Her personable alliance with representatives of PH have also benefited Penney in increased personal attention.

Figure 5.3 Summary of study findings: Penney.

Table 5.3 Tabulated Assessment of Penney

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	+ + +	+ + +	+ + +
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+	+ +	+ +

5.5.6 The Summation of Penney

The chronic exposure to risk due to the deep poverty of childhood that Penney describes, the lack of school as a viable outlet for supportive nurturance along with the shield of invisibility she wore as protection seemingly have been no match for what must be her native ingenuity to get things done despite. Threaded throughout her stories is a clear indicator for Penney's ability to handle a host of stressors. In larger scope, the significance of the dispersal and now two relocations she says she views as opportunities. In the way one might wave off a fly, Penney dismisses anything but good that has come from the processes of deconcentration. Her optimism seems genuine, her perseverance authentic even as she battles what is life-threatening debility. Her coping style appears to reflect these attributes and she gives the impression that one has to be in Penney's "inner-circle" to get a glimpse of her pain or her fears, if then.

Penney has a tendency to make most of her points using her children as example, further demonstrating her maternal feelings as well as her place in the family. Echoing 82-year-old Nell's earlier colorful visualization as the center of a maypole and the intertwining nature of the familial relationship, Penney's family appears emotionally close and soon will be so in a physical way. She is quick to point out she has

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maintained clear boundaries with her children and grandchildren so as not to encroach or become too involved in their often-demanding lives. *We have an understanding, my children and I. I don't go to their house unless I call to make sure they are there, not busy and I'm not gonna be in the way. They don't come to my house less they call, to make sure I'm here and I'm not busy. No, they will not pop in because I've told them, look you don't ever do that to people because that's the most rudest thing you can do.*

In the case of many senior adults who have, for years, enjoyed independent living, Penney faces the realization her independence has limits. She sounds optimistic as she transitions her fierce autonomy. Her eldest daughter most likely will become Penney's caretaker in a much more involved way. Perhaps to exert her self-reliance, Penney looks forward to taking on more financial responsibility in her new relocation. One of the more significant changes brought about by deconcentration has been the task of paying the utility bills separately from the rent bill. In the ways she has maintained boundaries in her role as matriarch, Penney appears reluctant to "give up" even in declining health, but instead is using the same tenacity evidenced in her life review.

Such is the way that some gerontological researchers theorize a critical aspect of successful aging is the ability to separate from the aging process the effects of debilitating disease (Rowe & Kahn, 1987, 1997). Perhaps the resilience that Penney narrates in her stories is her ability to remain "flexible" to the demands of change, indicative of adaptive processes, particularly in the face of chronic illness (Strawbridge & Wallhagen, 2003) and the styles of coping used (Poon, Basford, Dowzer, & Booth, 2003) to get her age and life stage needs, wants and hopes met.

We have heard the detailed life course analyses of three mothers across age and lifestage expectations of the women and their varied routes of relocation destinations. Offered are some conclusions for each of these women as well as a brief summation of relocation outcomes across the entire sample by age.

5.6 Conclusions

In this chapter we have more closely examined background of relocation decisions reflective of age/life stage of the mother as head of household. Understanding the task of matching familial/cultural need with appropriate relocation destination forms a basis of resettlement. In the following table we see each woman's assessed adaptive (mobility) behavior. Later in Table 7.1, these results are assessed in terms of likelihood of resettlement. For now, this chapter's findings are condensed for review.

Table 5.4 Tabulated Summary of Meg, Debra & Penney

		Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Meg	Successful Adaptation	+ + +	+ + +	+ + +
Meg	Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+	+ +	+
Debra	Successful Adaptation	+ + +	+ + +	+ + +
Debra	Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+ +	+ +	+ +
Penney	Successful Adaptation	+ + +	+ + +	+ + +
Penney	Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+	+ +	+ +

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While two of the three women of this chapter with dependent children in the home would tell you they did not consider themselves "head" of their families, they, in fact, hold most of the decision-making power regarding the needs/wants of their children. That they must also balance the needs/wants of a traditional partner, for both, have been challenging. In both cases Meg and Debra continue to attempt to assert themselves in new ways. This serves to remind that these women do not make household decisions in a vacuum but instead gather and survey across need and by degree housing that best fits an evolving array of ever-changing familial need.

Earlier, we recognized the impact of structural barriers on relocation decisions of low-income families. Here we have also contemplated factors such as personal agency - indicative of effective decision-making - in matters of housing selection as well. The idea of using skills of agency to meet familial needs is indicative of making decisions that more closely and accurately match such needs. We also speculated the affects of poverty status of neighborhood and how that might also impact the ability to meet such needs and wants. In all of these ways, we also have kept the future-focus of maternal aspirations in view. We surmise that the number and motivation for subsequent moves since leaving JLT reflect the mother's identification of changing personal and familial needs.

Pinpointing the second phase of deconcentration, we have theorized relocation by the push and pull of familial/cultural needs, wants, hopes and aspirations. Women, particularly those who are partnered in the same household, understandably balance need and want with another adult, yet do so with family in mind. The intention has

been to lend understanding to relocation outcomes in a variety of ways. Parenthetically, we might also consider the ability (or inability) to meet this array of needs/wants as early indicators of resettlement. How ability plays into the incidence of proximal reconcentration and lowered housing satisfaction in mixed income settings is an important aspect of this study. That is, if households relocate into settings that fail to meet need and want, we can expect lowered satisfaction and subsequent move-outs regardless of neighborhood status. We might also speculate that these move-outs come not only by reflexive means but also through exerting agency through careful decision-making. When Meg and her children left public housing, without knowing her needs, wants, and hopes for the family's future we might have considered her "lost" and speculated something worse.

In other cases not studied here, we might also speculate that mother as head of household perhaps incorrectly identified her family's needs and thus has made decisions into situations more inappropriate. Lacking necessary resources, feeling disempowered to exert agency she might believe herself 'stuck" in such situations. This is where the value of relocation counseling to best fit the needs of the decision maker might benefit the household in a longer-ranged perspective than just finding a house after dispersal.

From these previewed stories, we cannot say that relocating back into high poverty alone spells failure for households. All three women now live in a "higher" level of poverty than they would have had they taken advantaged of mixed income public housing. That they all state coherent reasons otherwise supports the point of matched lifestage and need of household. Yet on first glance and following the

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literature, we might say they have followed "problematic" relocation destinations. Often when the scholarly tally of reconcentration and "lost" households is drawn, the first indication is to search for remedies to such destinations. Focus is pointed to accurately identifying structural mechanisms that might "pull" *appropriately suited* households (back) into advantaged neighborhoods. Building better homes, offering more bus stops and spatially linking employment and educational opportunity are all extremely valuable and necessary components in mobilizing public housing residents out of traditionally concentrated poverty. Here we offer another way to consider what else might be at work when these families continually eschew the more opportunity-identified neighborhoods for seemingly "problematic" ones.

The point of *appropriately suited* households warrants further comment. We recognize that not every dispersed family from traditional public housing will make it into a middle class setting. Even though the literature tends to conflate "equal-accessed" mobility efforts, we recognize the relocation variation across households. The problem emerges in that we continue to discern the outcome decisions of all households by defaulted limitations. Those who made the leap must have been able to overcome obstacles, while those otherwise could not. The issue of choice is overlooked.

That we have categorized households by demographic descriptors of difficulty (i.e. family size, level of skill, gender) are important reminders as mobility barriers continue to thwart intentioned families to move where they desire. However, in another sense, identifying relocation difficulty through deficits of family members also sets up the notion that we are assigning anticipated outcomes without recognizing wants, needs

and preferences. A more important question arises: how does policy cover those "hard-to-house" families if they clearly cannot make the leap yet want something better than higher poverty? Alternately, how might we assess Debra who moved straight back into a higher poverty situation (and more isolated than downtown JLT) yet terms herself and her family as "resettled", despite what we might think of her neighborhood?

In the case of the women of this study who left housing assistance all together and are now buying houses, their first destination has been into a higher level of poverty because that was the only setting in which they could afford to look. In Penney's case she is voluntarily leaving a lower poverty setting with an array of amenities to relocate back into a more isolated and clearly higher poverty neighborhood. Yet many of her family will be within walking distance of her new home. At the time of the interview, Penney still struggles with the loss of living near her sister and giving up her treasured independence. Without knowing the plans and goals for the future of these women, we would miss however how such steps, seemingly backward, have been necessary to propel them forward.

Thus the second experiential phase theorized here is the deliberation of *relocation* decisions after dispersal, evidenced by the ability to meet household needs, wants and hopes by age/life stage of the mother. How did such deliberation unfold here? Can we draw any conclusions about housing satisfaction/dissatisfaction and the match/mismatch of met needs and wants of relocating families? Recognizing from the literature that structural place-effects can and do impede mobility, what other factors might play into unmet needs and wants of these households?

For young mothers, such as Meg, who decided to leave the rolls of housing assistance, the decision to get married necessitated her leaving. She is in an influential stage of motherhood where her future seems spread out in front of her. The necessity of (a forced) relocation has spurred her toward the goals she had vaguely set in her mind but had been unable to put into action. She acknowledged feeling confused and afraid for what the changes of deconcentration relocation would mean for her family. Today she expresses no regrets for taking the plunge to leave saying her impetus was the future of her children living in a fatherless household if she had stayed in public housing. Today they are purchasing a home in a working class neighborhood in a higher poverty area of the city. The dissatisfaction of lower housing quality she says is balanced by being off of any form of governmental assistance.

Her pre-more agency score was in the lower range of overall psychosocial assessment. That her seemingly assertive actions and growth in more effective coping, feeling in control of her situation and making what for her represent important decisions in many ways counters the previous agency score. She says she is relinquishing her familial role as mediator, a position she often assumed requiring her to remain "neutral" and objective. Now that she is more vocal and demonstrative in her assertions we might expect her behavioral display of agency to change. We also know many variables come into play when filling out surveys and we could speculate, without basis, on all the ways of scoring inconsistency. We do note that this pre-move assessment was over four years and by her accounts much has happened in positive ways for Meg since that time.

Debra, in the middle years of motherhood, no less underwent significant changes at relocation. She moved straight from JLT into the home she lives today. She saw that move as "best for my family" combining household income, running her own household with no governmental oversight and demonstrating to her children another way of life. She is quick to point out the deficits of continued living in poverty but she more enthusiastically lists a number of positive aspects of the neighborhood in which she and her household live today. She battles the adolescent pull of her daughters and potential dangers, trying to rectify the life she escaped at JLT. When queried about associated dangers across all high poverty, she intellectualizes she hasn't "seen it yet" in her immediate neighborhood. She works to improve communication with her girls so that they might talk with Debra about potential problems before they erupt.

Middle-aged mothers, such as Debra, have their own set of familial needs and are often more vigorously "pushed" and "pulled" by children – usually adolescents – who are exerting their own needs and wants. In Debra's case, she and her household are no longer receiving public housing assistance. We've heard that her current housing/neighborhood satisfaction is largely based on escaping what she had come to see as potential for her children's gang affiliation at JLT, describing the downtown neighborhood as a magnet for trouble-making youth. In that way she echoed Lucille, the grandmother raising her grandson, in prioritizing family safety over all.

She acknowledged that where she lives today, her children still go to school where such affiliation proliferates. Yet she remains hopeful that it will not invade her new neighborhood. She says she saw the dispersal as "a sign that it was time to go."

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Her contingency plans are sketchy, even as she vaguely recounts ongoing battles with her common-law husband over situations involving her teenage daughters. She offers little commentary when queried about where she might have moved if she had not moved in with her partner. She dismissively suggests *I woulda probably moved back in with my mother*, a woman she rarely sees these days.

She is vocal about "right" choices and "decent" living, particularly when talking about the life course direction of her eldest daughter and continued associations with the father of her child. She frequently lectures her daughters and their visiting friends on the dangers and virtues of "clean living." Yet she says she has no intention to marry the man she's been involved with for ten years and living with for the last four. She ticks off the benefits however if she was married, all tied to legal status of state's rights, but declares her future does not include marriage. Recognizing that agreement to marriage is a two-way street might explain some of Debra's decision.

Debra's agency score, assessed before she left JLT, was also in the lower range. She does share how, in the last few years, she has taken more initiative in household matters, giving input to financial decisions and perhaps most of all putting her foot down about her grandson living in the household. On face however such agency score would contradict the fact that Debra has emerged as a more assertive person. She is obviously proud she has been able to build and maintain a home and hopeful life even in higher poverty. Four years later she remains optimism for maintaining that focus.

Penney and all the other older mothers with adult children and grandchildren have remained in public housing. Their initial destination decisions ranged from higher

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to lower poverty neighborhoods.   Penney heard from in this chapter and Lucille from Chapter 4 initially moved into moderate-income private apartment complexes but had to make subsequent health related moves. Lucille moved into a lower-poverty setting largely because it was the one that could meet her immediate health demands. Penney is moving back into what will be a higher-poverty area to be closer to her family now that her health has declined. That these moves are made from different family positions (Lucille following her own path and Penney following that of her children) gives clues to the strong familial connections in older age. Here we see Penney making a move back into higher poverty because that is where her children live even as she laments the loss of more upscale amenities such as malls and restaurants within walking distance.

Penney's agency score was also in the lower range of assessment. When we had been talking for a while in the interview, Penney offered she had seen me before but couldn't remember where. I recalled for her the visits I had made to JLT before the move-out and then, snapping her fingers, she recollected. Misidentifying research personnel for local housing authority personnel (a common occurrence), she remembered she had been reluctant to be a part of the initial waves of studies. She mentioned fear of losing housing benefits as one reason she had first declined to participate. She also remembered rather reluctantly agreeing to follow through. For these (and other unknown) reasons, the motivation for filling out the survey - from which I rather arbitrarily gleaned "agency score" - might be one indicator of a (skewed) lower score. After spending time talking with Penney, I would assess her agency score as higher, overriding any pre-move assessment.

Turning brief attention to an overview of relocation decisions across the sample we discuss findings by age groups. In the case of some of the younger mothers with young children who remained in public housing, destination was into the recently constructed public housing owned mixed income complexes. Citing improved housing, reputable schools and access to what they saw as a plethora of entry-level jobs were given as initial reasons for their decisions. Some offered they had felt pressured by housing staffers to move into these apartments, thus negating the fight to stay in their temporary locations or challenge what they saw as narrowed choices.

Now living albeit in nicer apartments in more accessible neighborhoods than JLT afforded, nonetheless these mothers offered complaint as they assessed their quality of life. While the lives of children had improved in terms of quality of school, tension in the neighborhood often affected them as well. Lacking social ties with neighbors, unreliable transportation, feeling singled out as "former JLT" residents as well as frustration with seemingly affluent surroundings that yielded little in the way of employment opportunities as promised all served as the bases of maternal dissatisfaction.

The middle-aged mothers who chose to relocate into authority-owned mixed income complexes came from two sites; one with a heavy concentration of former JLT residents, the other with less than eight former JLT families total. While they generally related positive gains for their children and improved living conditions, they also voiced complaints. The problems aired appeared to be different however. At the site with more former JLT residents, the issue was what these women saw as the reconcentration

of former JLT residents into one complex. Being "lumped together" as a group they complained had often served to remind that the "opportunity" to move on had been diminished. Further, they criticized that the problems of *some* former tenants had become the problems of *all* former tenants.

At the complex with fewer former JLT residents, complaints most often raised were about what they perceived as neglectful maintenance of units and grounds. What had once been a quiet and family oriented development had, over the last year or so, become reminiscent of downtown life at JLT. They were particularly vocal as a group regarding what they saw as problematic in-migrating neighbors from other cities, resulting in lax management and diminished visible authority to control.

An interesting finding among the senior women studied was that when questioned about what their "dream" housing preference might look like, all gave the same answer. That is, they each described what for them would be ideal living among other seniors, having shared interests and perspectives, being in a place that was quiet, where they could plant flowers and not worry about children "tearing stuff up."

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CHAPTER 6

LIFE AFTER RELOCATION: RESILIENCE IN RESETTLEMENT

We need not only understand the ways in which contexts, and changes in context, shape individuals' lives, but also the ways in which individuals select, are selected into, and themselves shape those contexts.

Settersten, 1999, pg. 25

I could put up with this place and my problems with the Housing Authority if I had to, long as my girls have a good education. It may not be the best for me right now, but it's good for them.

Georgia, 38 year old
Authority-Owned Mixed Income Complex

In Chapter 1, *resiliency* was introduced as a psychosocial concept applied to descriptive life course exposure to risk- including those associated aspects of poverty - demonstrating individual ability to adapt, postpone, persevere, even thrive despite. We glean that "individual ability" here is associated across all phases of deconcentration and helps to explain how mothers coped, recognized family needs and now contemplate resettlement. In the lived-through experience of deconcentration across three distinct phases, moving first from dispersal preparation to follow-through of relocation demands, we have come to understand resilience as a set of tools gathered and honed

across the life course. Here we have explored such skill in the form of the ability to cope, recognize need and adjust by negotiating institutional opportunity structures for the household. In a way, mother as head represents her household in the push to indeed improve opportunity for the family. As Settersten noted above, there are recognized dilemmas in life course policies attempting to balance revered individuality as the backbone of North American life with necessary structural restrictions imposed. Such complexity demands a view of "agency-within-structure" (Settersten, 1999, p. 253) that respects how individuals are both imbedded within institutions, yet agents of change that seek to chart a life course by opportunity.

In a sense, the distinction of agency as life course construction through the dictates of institutions and the subjective construction of converging biographical pathways expresses the extent to which we have studied the duality of agency and structure.   In this way, the focus is on the alliance between resident and institution, as the implication of improved lives by dispersal becomes a synergy of relocational behavior and social action motivated by one's perception of available opportunity. That the execution of deconcentration seemingly affords a household with opportunities heretofore unattainable is only part of the mobility equation. That the resident must recognize and act upon such opportunity here is theorized through the skill of resilience.

Adding to scholarly understanding of deconcentration, here narrowed on the prospects of resettlement by the skill of resilience, we again focus on how an individual's life course, carved by the risk of hardship, has been charted by diverging pathways of family, school, motherhood and work to Jane Long Terrace. Such a

perspective lends an external perception for how life-long coping and adjusting to the change events they now face might impact the quality of resettlement long after the dust of relocation has settled. As described earlier, the experience of deconcentration is much like a rolling tumbleweed. It is first in the bonding of one's psychosocial traits that govern functioning and wellbeing that a resident contemplates the changes at hand. Quickly she must assess and mobilize the household by the degree to which age/lifestage familial and cultural needs and wants might be met. To follow, the individual approaches, in time, resettlement in ways that mutually impacts the transactional synergy of constraint and opportunity between the household and the institution of public housing.

Having long ago experienced what dispersal might have meant as well as managed the demands that "temporary" and "permanent" relocation required, resettlement for these women holds the greatest potential for the future of these households. In this way it may be the most important phase of deconcentration. Whether one "recognizes" let alone "reaches" resettlement remains a fairly subjective notion. It is, however, linked to the life-long mobility implications for *perceiving* a better life in a better neighborhood. In these ways the household may have improved access, associations and amenities for generations to come. That is the implied premise of the policy of deconcentration of poverty.

6.1 Chapter Organization: Resilience in Resettlement

This chapter is devoted to the study of resilience of resettlement through the pathways of housing decisions and actions of three women to explore whether they

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perceive they were able to increase household opportunity. Resettlement does not happen in a vacuum, but becomes the summation of household experiences. In these ways, we explore the notion of matching housing satisfaction with the economic status of the neighborhood, as each mother featured now lives under a different set of neighborhood circumstances. These women include one who continues to live in public housing; one who chose to voluntarily leave public housing and one who was evicted. We expand on what we have discovered in previous chapters regarding coping style and fulfilling relocation needs and wants to now explore how residents perceive access to structural opportunity. The cumulative effects of micro wellbeing, meso influence and macro transaction come to define resettlement. Here we are interested in how they assess status of setting down roots, regardless of destination.

Georgia, a 38-year-old black mother with three children, continues to live in public housing. She moved into an authority-owned mixed income complex where, at varying levels, all tenants pay rent below market. Suzette, a 30-year-old Hispanic mother with four children, left the rolls of housing assistance voluntarily after dispersal and is now receiving family help to buy a house located in working class neighborhood. Anna, a 36-year-old Hispanic mother of four, had initially moved into an authority-owned mixed income setting in an upscale middle class neighborhood only to be evicted two years later. Today she is married and is also buying a house, in a higher poverty area of the city. The story of each of these women is interspersed in this chapter to bolster the established body of public housing mobility literature as one way to explore their personal resettlement experience. In these ways, the women studied

become the "experts" of their own behavior and decisions, as we understand the motivation of each mother to provide what she deems best for the family.

In this chapter, as discussion turned to how they termed their resettlement status, the words and stories of the women reveal consistent themes of social trust, alliance with the local public housing authority and the future familial implications of life after traditional subsidy through the promise of opportunity. These dimensions are explored in life course fashion in this final phase of deconcentration over four years later, when we explore their prospects of resettlement as spatial and social rootedness.

The questions posed in this chapter hinge on aspects of a grounded perspective that defines resettlement not only through familial satisfaction and neighborly associations but also through a perceived institutional alliance to bargain opportunity structures offered with the deconcentration of poverty. First and foremost those who study, write and administrate policy must recognize resettlement as an aspect of outcome that could expand how we usually regard relocation. To do so, we listen for the ways that residents perceive they have captured opportunities of deconcentration that have, in the residents' estimation, improved personal, familial and cultural life chances through structural means.

Of particular importance is how residents *perceive* their options. For if they do not even consider they have such chances, how can such opportunity be captured? If residents perceive unequal access to opportunity is insurmountable, whether through their macro-alliances and degree of social trust or through institutionally in-grained barriers of structure and class, how will such perception impact resettlement? What is

the hope of opportunity for these residents?

6.2 The Perception of Opportunity

The notion of "opportunity", in the context of deconcentration, is a multi-faceted construct often identified as two dimensions at work: process and prospects (Galster & Killen, 1995). These scholars assigned "metropolitan opportunity structure" to process and "perceived opportunity set" to prospects. In this way the *process* of opportunity refers to the way that markets, institutions and systems attempt to modify the characteristics of individuals. Here we find the impact of labor and housing markets, educational, social welfare and criminal justice systems. In much the same way, the State plays a significant role in structuring the life course through macro elements of institutionalization, exerting limits yet also offering, among other benefits, continuity to those who are in greatest need of social assistance (Mayer & Muller, 1986). Here, the structure of opportunity describes the processes by which these markets, institutions and systems attempt to convert personal characteristics into social advancements, thus setting up important social networks and mechanisms that shape future behavior and social action.

The *prospects* of opportunity refer to the futuristic advancement individuals believe will occur as a result of decisions made today. One such example is projecting future income based upon choices made about education or work. Another example, applicable to this study, is the one described earlier by Georgia in the opening of this chapter. When she identifies the futuristic perspective of resettlement across converging life course pathways for her children, she identifies the prospects of

opportunity. Galster and Killen (1995) further theorized it follows that one's ascribed features (i.e. race and gender) along with achieved status (education, marital) will influence such outcomes, recognizing how such features impact equal access.

This means that it is the *perception* of prospects, albeit constrained by structure, of each participant that defines one's opportunity set according to these theorists. In matters of resettlement, it is the intended processes of opportunity structures melded by the quality of perceived futuristic beliefs of prospects that gives meaning to hopes for something better. The residential focus of this futuristic belief is an important one that can put the individual and her family on the path to resettlement.

In this broader context of developing a linkage to the world community at large to realize advancement, we take liberty to align Briggs's (1998) "getting by" versus "getting ahead" to explore how individuals, identified by association, are able to extend beyond their own intra-networks (important if not somewhat confining). This more external linkage is theorized to reach out in ways to insure age/lifestage needs, wants of householders are met, and thus more readily line themselves up for future prospects. Here the notion of "getting by" explores the nature of social support among those we more readily identify with and generally trust. Alternately, "getting ahead" captures the social leverage which may mean taking risks and going beyond one's comfort zone to forge institutional alliance, butting up against the structural discriminatory barriers of race, class and gender in order to maximize the process of opportunity.

It is important to see the significance of "getting ahead" that leveraged alliances may bring about can also be supported by the more proximal notion of familiarity,

capturing an important aspect of mobility abilities of the household. Both aspects are important and needed in the relocation process. And while psychosocial aspects of personality and risk taking may matter, reaching resettlement is much more than that.

Lest we think the onus of "forging alliance" rests solely with the resident, we must also look at ways that institutions have responsibility. The literature spends time in detailing the number of ways public housing residents, particularly women, face severe challenges in network building (Kleit, 2000). While remedying such deficit remains a goal of mobility, we cannot overlook the value of "networking" with the public housing authority to improve advantage. True, as attempts to remedy the structural barriers of place, access, and racism continue to be the focal points in public housing mobility, the question remains: how do policymakers and administrators influence residents' perception of barriers as a principle of policy initiative?

As we come to hear the stories of these three women, the question becomes what can we learn about the mechanisms of resettlement through the lived-through assessment of residents. Understanding the place-effects of resettlement, we also must stay curious about those who choose environments other than the more advantageous lower-poverty. This line of inquiry leads down a little-explored path to ask, how should policy integrate the residential vantage to discern resettlement at least matching, if not at times exceeding, the vantage of those who manage, study and write policy about it?

In the model of exploratory mobility behavior that identifies micro, meso and macro influences, resilience is considered the intersecting factor by which residents cope, adjust and demonstrate ability to get household meets met. It is the synergy of

such influence that gives important information about the likelihood of the final phase of deconcentration: resettlement after relocation. As Georgia noted above, she has identified issues related to what Leisering (2003, p. 210) referred to as the necessity of "inter-institutional linkages" between the individual and institutions. Yet she is just beginning to reconcile her issues of relocation by recognizing the long-arm of opportunity structures of deconcentration: if not for her immediately, then for the future of her children.

Here an applicable aspect of resilience is in understanding the subtle yet important differences in 'getting by" versus "getting ahead" for the entire household. In this way, the implication of resettlement is futuristic, again calling to mind the terminology of pioneer, capturing the action if not spirit of those who forge a path for others to follow. The term "pioneer" was previously used to describe how another group of low-income mothers, under the edict of Gautreaux vs. the Chicago Public Housing Authority, ventured into the white suburbs in search of better housing (Rosenbaum, 1991). As the term envisions, a pioneer is someone who charts new territory and confronts new problems, often for reasons not easily or readily discerned. Georgia and other women like her see their job as not only attempting to seize immediate opportunity but to also understand that, in the long run, there will be gains afforded to her children otherwise inaccessible. This notion of mother expressing housing satisfaction beyond the present day situation in order to consider the prospects of her children's and grandchildren's futures was a theme heard repeatedly among mothers of all ages in this study.

In these ways, we could say that the mother's experience of deconcentration, pivotal to the mobility of the household, is implicated by the preparation of dispersal as a coping reaction and thus fairly *micro*-specific. Moving into *meso*-influenced decisions of relocation based on needs and wants by family/culture sets the tone and goals for the migrating household. Reaching toward the likelihood of resettlement, referred here as *macro* transactions, means residents *perceive* opportunity structures with local institutions as the result of effective preparation, matched-needs relocation as well as general perception of a better life in a better place.

Transaction conveys negotiating something or carrying out a prearranged plan that can influence and affect all involved. This is an important difference in how we generally consider such alliance, as residents are rarely considered negotiators. Here the term, *negotiate*, signifies attempts on the part of the resident to actively bargain thus alleviate impediment to a desired outcome in order to meet preferences in one's housing destination. Residents who more actively pursue relocation assistance in ways to meet particular needs, for example, are attempting to solicit outside the more standardized parameters of institutional help. In the ways a householder believes she has done the best job she can throughout the processes of deconcentration, perceived resettlement begins to take hold.

In the ways thus described such negotiation is rarely scrutinized in mobility efforts of low-income households. That is we tend to minimize personal decisions over the effects of place. When Briggs (1998) identified the overestimation of "community affects" in relocation strategies, he pointed out that personal characteristics and

relationships can and often do outweigh the impact of the neighborhood. Again, these converging aspects of "getting by" (tweaking social support *within* community) combined with "getting ahead" (leveraged social, economic and educational access *outsid*e community) also comprise an important distinction in our understanding of how low-income families fare in higher-income neighborhoods once they make their decisions of relocation.

Further, when we consider the elements of personal agency necessary in decision making of those who live in urban poverty consideration of residents as agents is stereotypically if not conveniently dichotomized in tropes of adaptation and resistance (Gotham, 2003). Hechter (1986) explained how structural constraints, embedded in institutionalized discrimination, often condition the preferences of minority low-income households. Galster and Killen (1995) identified that the "geography of opportunity" is not a level playing field for all. Rather there are subjective elements related to individual characteristics, perceptions and preferences that will impact the ability to link up with improved markets, institutions and systems in ways different from that which deconcentration efforts might otherwise imply.

Theorized here, *resettlement* encompasses not only a sense of spatial and social "rootedness" based on a combination of amenity, access and acceptance but also a belief that every-day life has, indeed, improved as a result of the process. Increased sense of safety and better quality housing structure, for example, matter to most. But there are other elements at work in the business of resettlement that point to the belief that, as head of household, the mother has done the best job she can throughout the

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processes of deconcentration. This implies that the resident, as decision-maker, has discerned needs, wants and hopes unique to the household that must be met to achieve resettlement. This becomes clearer in the general concession that resettlement is also tied to how the household has realized improvement in the areas the household *perceives as important*.

This distinction is important in that not every household will have the same needs or wants. Therefore some will assess improved structures as more important than others. For example, some rate short distance to public transportation stops at the top of their list while others make no mention. Younger mothers are especially concerned with school bus pickup and safety in new neighborhoods, while older mothers may worry about the adolescent peer influence in new neighborhoods and the prospects of dropping out of school prematurely. There are also psychosocial needs that some will assess as more important than others. Being in a neighborhood and living in a house where one can make one's own decisions might be more important to one over another. It is in this constellation of household needs, wants and dreams recognized and met that we find important elements of decision-making pertaining to housing satisfaction; thus, a step toward resettlement.

6.3 Residential Decision-Making

In processes of decision-making, one's skill strongly affects the quality of life and success of outcome for individuals and families. Here skill implies a life course of appropriate exposure and modeling in matters related to discern a variety of choices. Yet the notion that "objective" decision-making is learned, based upon principles of

rationality evidenced by "skill", must also consider the role and influence of emotions, attitudes and values in decision-making. Thus the duality of personal choice and discerned judgment form this most important human skill (Dawes, 1988; Hastie & Dawes, 2001).

While more heuristic approaches spotlight micro-psychological aspects of decision-making and particularly the associated errors in judgment, decision-making is also working out what we value (Arnaud, 2002). Though many factors are evaluated in arriving at any particular decision - such as a tally of personal gains and losses - what we value for ourselves and our families in larger context must also be weighed. It is in this process of weighing alternatives that we identify a departure from rationality, considering the limits of information processing. Instead we often turn to "satisficing" a good enough choice, characterizing a common decision-making strategy (Simon, 1955).

Particularly under stressful situations, we are often called upon to make quick decisions. Here individuals are confronted with unexpected crises, some perceived as threatening to valued stability and must be dealt with in a relatively short period of time (Janis & Mann, 1977). Some respondents termed receiving the news and preparing for dispersal and relocation as stressful. They also expressed how quickly it had all happened. As we saw in Figure 4.1, making decisions under stress also calls upon our coping strategies as well, recognizing the significance in beginning the processes by effective means. Acknowledging the malleability of preferences, conflicting values, informational complexity, future outcome uncertainty and time constraints gives us a better view of the contingent decision-making context (Payne, Bettman, & Johnson,

1992). Such might describe the relocating public housing resident as decision-maker.

General theories of decision-making point to conventional ways choice has been conceptualized. For some, we negate the use of the term "choice" when we force households to relocate. Others have argued that mobility efforts to relocate low-income families into opportunity neighborhoods are predicated upon *rational choice,* emphasizing the motivation for utility maximizers (movers) to weigh-up the cost-benefit calculus of exogenous preference within the realm of self-interest. In these ways, individuals arrive at a decision that explains (predicts) individual behavior (Zafirovski, 1999). That is, the greatest benefit expended at the lowest cost to the individual characterizes "rational" behavior, perceiving a balance of low enough cost and high enough gain (Oliker, 1995).

Putting the sociological spin on what is basically an economic model of decision-making has produced vast debate among sociologists. On one hand, the notion of using atomistic rationality as a basis for conceptualizing social theory and explaining social processes and institutions provides a viable way to consider the ways individuals seek to maximize all manner of life chances, including norms, trust, and social action (Coleman, 1986, 1990). Alternately, attempts to reason the actions of individuals through strict mechanisms of rationality as utility seekers have been questioned, particularly related to issues of social norms and emotions (Elster, 1999).

Nonetheless, as we are introduced to the women of this chapter we listen in context to matters of personal decisions that influence the likelihood of resettlement, filtered through identified themes taken from the data: social trust, institutional alliance

and the promise of opportunity. Next, we hear the story of Georgia, a 38-year-old black mother of three children who conveys not only her ways of coping with change brought about by deconcentration but also how she has managed her relocation needs to balance those of her growing family. By life course review we get important insight into current functioning through her previous pathway experiences. Lest we come to see that resettlement is only tied to the satisfaction of structural incentives of place-based opportunity, we recognize that housing satisfaction encompasses more than "a nice house in a nice neighborhood", a point repeatedly made by Georgia.

In the ways that point to the unique aspects of human life, the notion of resettlement can be a complicated one. The premise of life course study gives us a framework for studying change in a march across time and thus lends understanding to resettlement as a constantly evolving process. It is fluid, personal, and bounded by how, in this case, public housing residents negotiate ever-present constraints and limitations. Looking at the ways and means we have of studying the life course we recognize that how we construct our life chances (i.e. make decisions) within a socio-cultural setting (e.g. neighborhood) is constantly balanced by dynamic opportunities and resources as well as structural impediments and constraints occurring across the various life stages of life (Elder, 1998).

6.4 Resettlement: Georgia's Story

NAME	AGE	RACE	Children / G-children	Higher/Lower Agency	Status of Neighborhood
Georgia	38	B	3	H	LP-PH Mixed

Sitting around her kitchen table on a summer day with the drapes drawn tight to stave off the unrelenting July sun, Georgia, a 38-year-old African American mother of two children ages 13 and 9 who live with her and a 22 year old son who has never lived with her seems pressed to talk. Her house is neatly appointed with seemingly nothing out of place as she ushers me straight to the table. She is dressed in a flowing skirt with matching floral T-shirt. Her hair is stylishly coiffed; she will often run her hands over it throughout the interview. Her two daughters have a cousin over and they are playing upstairs. Georgia goes to the landing and calls up with a stern reminder to stay quiet because "mama's got a visitor."

Offering chilled bottled water, Georgia says she wants to discuss the problems she has encountered since moving into the authority-owned mixed income complex over two years ago. In fact, most of what we talk about she will continually connect to what she sees as "a nice area for my kids" but at the same time serves as a constant reminder of her past mistakes and misdeeds that she says has prevented her from finding work in the advantaged location. As she falls into sharing what she thinks is the reason she remains unemployed, Georgia's frustration is apparent.

Out here, it's a good place, the area is good and I love my apartment. The only thing is that my past is bothersome and I feel it's an excuse sometimes, with all the

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places out here to work. With the management out here it's always something. If they would only give us a chance. I've been here two years without work. I've applied at all places within distance that I can walk cause I don't have a vehicle. It's ridiculous about the misdemeanor that I have. I don't know. The nature of the misdemeanor shouldn't even be on my record. It's been almost ten years and I haven't been in any other trouble. I was young and dumb. A whole lot I do know. I should not be just sitting in this house babysitting for $50 a week. Now that gets on my nerves, just sitting in this house not going anywhere. I should have a vehicle. It's summer time my kids should be traveling like others do. But we just sit here.

As the single mother of two impressionable children ages 13 and 9 in the household and a 22-year son who has never legally lived with her, Georgia maintains how difficult it has been to "keep up" with other people who "are making good money." She believes it is affecting the way her girls are perceived as well as her own parenting abilities. *I'm on TANF and I'm tired. It will run out soon and what am I going to do? My kids will be affected. I love the schools. The only thing is it's in an area where people are making good money. It is humiliating to my kids because other kids have all this stuff and my kids don't have that. They ask for a lot every day. A donation for something I can't afford it. The teachers send letters every day stating what they need but we don't have.*

Appearance is very important to Georgia and through the stories she shares of earlier days, the need to "fit in" seems strong. Meanwhile she says she has mixed feelings about "fitting in" where she currently lives. She stops short of criticizing the

large number of previous Jane Long Terrace residents now living in her complex, but she does consider the dispersal and subsequent relocation as nothing more than *moving us from one place to another. We're stereotyped out here.* She is without access to a running car or money coming in, contributing to her feeling trapped between what she describes as the largesse of opportunity and the inability to take advantage of living in mixed income. While where she lives is a mixed-income development, residents pay below market rent, assessed on a sliding scale based upon their income. In many ways, this supports Georgia's feeling that she's back in public housing. Located in the far northeast corner of the city, the area does however boast thriving commerce and reputable schools, yet Georgia feels neither she nor her girls can take advantage.

True, many of the displaced residents from Jane Long Terrace have made their way there. For Georgia, who never felt comfortable downtown, it is a daily reminder of her past, which for her is something she tends to turn from. In a manner reflective of her presenting problems, Georgia reports depression and anxiety retaining a somewhat flat affect even as her speech often erupts in rapid waves. Briefly, there are flashes of anger, never lingering for long, giving insight into what often comes across as a "quiet simmer." She self-describes an unstable home life, raised with a clinically diagnosed mother, "clingy" sister and a series of "stepfathers." Confounding her childhood home life, she also reported an unusual fear of her mother dying prematurely. This fear she says is from as far back as she can remember. She remains steadfast that for her own children she is trying to do things differently.

Georgia's account of her early childhood is one surrounded by an extended family of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Her father, a man she barely remembers save his smell, was killed in a train accident when Georgia was six. She says she often wonders how life might have turned out if he had stayed in her life, as things grew increasingly unstable with each succeeding year. Much of what she remembers about those initial years is the tightly knit neighborhood that seemed to have enveloped them after her father's passing. *We had some mix, but majority was black. We were just like a family. My mom's best friend was a Hispanic lady. I was good friends with her daughters. Mom worked with a white lady. She didn't live there but she was always at our house visiting. She didn't have any kids at the time and she was so nice to us. All the ladies in the community had church things going on. My mom put us in gymnastics, summer camps. It was a good time. The YMCA bus would come pick us up in the neighborhood. I loved my childhood, I really did.*

Yet that stability and camaraderie soon melted as her mother moved in and out of a litany of relationships with men, some whom Georgia regarded as "scary" if not seemingly dangerous. The pain and anger of that time is still evident as Georgia marks one man's arrival as *the bringing down of my mama. All the way down. My mom always had a job and had one up until the time she got into that relationship. I learned from that. I will never let a man tell me not to work. That he'll take care of me. Not since I seen that. My mom stopped working and he did take care of her for a while, but then he started controlling cause he was taking care of her basically. He got to the*

point that he would beat her up. She wasn't sick until he bashed her head in one night. She had a seizure that night and on after that.

When asked for a self-assessment Georgia refers often to being "hot headed" and defiant toward authority of any kind, yet from her early stories as the eldest daughter she also appeared accommodating and even docile. *I was always the good girl, trying to help my mom. By being a single mother and dad passing, I'd come in and say, do you want me to wash the dishes? I'd always check on her. I'm the oldest and I felt responsible. To this day it bothers me that I'm not being more responsible.* Laughing, Georgia recalls a frequent comeback from her mother, especially when Georgia tried to exert her independence. *She would always call me bull-headed or strong-headed. I'm like that to a certain extent. I didn't like for her to tell me what to do. If I had my mind set I would do it no matter what. And I'm like that still now. I used to tell her I was going to get a job and I did. But she didn't want us to work. She wanted us around her. You're too young for that she'd tell us. That's after she got sick and he wasn't around.*

As she surveys her life today, she finds it hard to believe *it's just me and my sister now, really.* Her sister and her three children live just three doors down from Georgia and her family. They have maintained an on-and-off-again relationship that seems to fluctuate regularly if not weekly. Today they are on speaking terms. *Me and my sister didn't get along good even when my mom was living. We've been at it. We disagree on a lot of things, cause we're different.*

After my mom passed we got closer though. I felt like I had to mother her a little while. I could hardly do anything without her there. She had felt safe with my

mom and me. After that, we worked together. We had a car together. We stayed by or with each other. I was an influence on her, I think. She ended up doing the same thing I did, having a baby, having to come and live in the projects. I always thought she was different though from me. She was always timid. I had to fight her battles in school. She didn't want to get out there. She was always following me. I felt like the leader. I'm still the leader and she looks up to me.

While living at Jane Long Terrace, Georgia, her sister and her uncle had lived on the same block. When the official news came about dispersal Georgia says she took it upon herself to find a relocation home for her extended family all in the same area. Looking back today, she notes that the way the dispersal *went down shoulda told me how it was gonna be. We had a short amount of time to find anything. They sent out letters about the sale and it went fast after that. We were moving out before I knew it. We had to have a place and the housing authority said it had to be on their list. But where we moved to it wasn't on the list. Those on the list everybody said was trash and nobody wanted to go there. I said, I'm gonna go out on my own. I represented all of us. We were allowed to move in there and we all really liked it. None of wanted to leave, but we no choice.*

Georgia had lived at Jane Long Terrace for over eight years and throughout that time rumors of demolition and having to move out had come up from time to time. She says she had largely ignored them. She had longed for a place to live that she could really put down roots and raise her girls the way she had not been able to do as a child.

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Throughout the tumultuous relationship between her mother and the man Georgia calls "my abusive stepfather", the family had been uprooted several times over.

The night he had awakened Georgia and her sister, loaded their meager belongings into a rented truck and drove to a large city over 300 miles away, Georgia recalls something broke in her causing her to rebel in ways that she had never done before. Much like Vernita's childhood experience described in Chapter 4, being involuntarily "relocated" to a strange environment with little notice and lack of understanding, Georgia eventually escaped on her own volition back to live with a beloved grandmother. For both Georgia and Vernita there have been lifelong reverberations.

I really just wanted to get back to my school. He just come and took us away from everybody and everything. I wanted to go back where my friends were in school living normal lives. My sister and me were like grown people. We weren't even going to school. Sitting up in there, mom didn't know nothing about the city. My sister was out for a whole year and got held back. But I refused to stay there. I mean I wanted to go where my grandmother was. I'd go to a pay phone and call her. One day she says - she had a lot of people living with her at the time - I'll make room for you. If you get a way back here, I'll send you to school every day. There was a school right around the corner from her house. I caught the bus and went back home and my grandmother took me shopping, took me home and she got me back in school.

Life with her grandmother was a safe haven for Georgia who tears up as she recalls the day her grandmother met her bus. She also recalls not being able to sleep for

fear of what was happening to her sister who she had left behind. Eventually Georgia and her sister would be united but the loss of daily contact took its toll. For all the effort that Georgia demonstrated in returning home, resuming life and recommencing with school her one big regret is that she failed to graduate from high school. She identifies it as the pivotal point in her life as she now struggles with unemployment and single parenthood. *When I first stopped going to school it was cause I was pregnant. Then I had my baby and my grandmother was still living. I was going for my GED but I was called for a job so I went cause I had a baby. I had to rush. I needed the money at the time. Now I have to wait till after I get it before I can put out my resume. But I have to wait to start my resume until I get the test done. I get a paper and they always say GED required. I know that I need to do it.*

In many ways Georgia says she has never resigned herself to living in public housing, quick to point to a series of "if only" that she refers to often. *I seen a difference after my mom passed in a lot of my family. Basically it boiled down to just me and my sister. We were teenagers and some people were skeptical, you know. And basically me and my sister had to get out there and try to make our own living cause family members didn't want… I mean it changed after she* [mother] *passed.*

Sticking together, nonetheless Georgia and her sister fell in with a group of friends that today Georgia says neither their mother nor grandmother would have approved. *A lot of my friends that I hung out with, they would down them who lived in public housing. I'd say, those people just need a place like we do but I never saw myself living in them. When I did have to move there, all my friends stopped coming around.*

Just cut us off. Even now when they see you we speak but it's not like it used to be. I guess since I went to the projects all my friends stopped talking. The main ones, at least.

My main friend was supposed to help me, but she never did. Downtown with all of us lumped together as a group wasn't good. I wanted to be out of that, in a place to raise my kids and not in the projects. A lot of stuff was in our house. Rodents and roaches was infested there. Now, not all was bad. There were some decent people with bad breaks. They just needed a decent place to live. But I've seen the drug dealers, the gangs, the prostituting. I didn't want my kids to see all that. But there are some good residents – I'm one of them – a lot of decent folk.

Living in her mixed-income apartment has proven to be a source of hope as well as dismay. Such dilemma captures Georgia's self-description of feeling "stuck." For example, she reports she is not able to "move on" without the proper credentials of a GED, yet not able to get the proper credentials without moving on. She had not fought the downtown dispersal as many of her neighbors had. In fact she had welcomed it and went up against some of the more vocal residents who had opposed the move. *The move was going to be a good thing. When I heard people was fighting I said why? We're going somewhere better, why are we fighting that? "Miss Steffie"* (JLT resident activist) *was trying to tell me what was wrong and a lot of what she said made sense. Like once we leave there's no telling what they'll do to us. They just want us off this property. But I didn't care. I wanted to leave. We could do better. Eventually I would have left there anyway and gotten on with my life. I know that. If they had never tore it*

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down, I would have gotten on my own feet eventually. When I thought of coming here, well, I thought I was in heaven. It was beautiful.

Georgia sketches a tenuous relationship with the staff of the housing authority. She is especially vocal in what she has seen as a failure to help women like her, unemployed yet seemingly surrounded by a wealth of job opportunities. *I've had caseworkers with the housing authority that was supposed to help me with my job search but nothing came through.* [A caseworker] *was helping me with a resumé but she never got back in touch with me. They would send packets about work way out in* [an area far away from where she lives]. *I don't have a vehicle. Ya'll bringing us these papers. How can I get out there? It's a no-win situation. Are you going to come out here and pick me up to take me? Fine, or give me a cab. I'm on my way.*

We were misled because it is a good area if you're making money and you make a good living. If you choose to live out here cause of that. We didn't have time to get up on our feet. As soon as we moved in they hit us with the light bill. We're people on TANF. Right now ya'll moving us from another place and nobody has had a chance to get a job because we're thinking about this move where we'll be permanent. Everything was just so fast. It's been going on for the whole 2 years. Now they tell us we're stuck here and we can't move. We can't transfer to no place, but to [another traditional housing complex.] *Now why would I want to go backwards?*

Somewhat like Lucille in Chapter 4 who had strategized her decision upon hearing the news of dispersal to allow the housing authority to bear the brunt of what moving might have cost otherwise, Georgia says she saw the relocation assistance as

her way to leave downtown as well as secure better housing for her young children. She had planned that her next move would be with a voucher into Section 8 and eventually, with a job, she could go off of housing assistance altogether. This is the chain of plans developed to cope with the forced move even as she recalls today that the actual timing of dispersal had not been convenient and that the assurances of housing personnel had not materialized. She remains unemployed with no plans to forego assistance.

Short of calling herself duped, today Georgia sits in a development she believes is overpopulated with relocated former JLT residents. She has come to term the entire process of deconcentration as *nothing more than just moving us off in groups. I started thinking about if I could of stayed there at JLT and then when I got ready to move I could make my own decisions. I would of sign up for section 8. Then I would have made my own decision where to move. That was why we fought it. Because back then I believed the housing authority. That's the truth. I'm not going to say they lied to us, but I do feel like it was forced. They didn't give us the whole picture. They kept stuff out to make us… yeah I guess it is like lying. They lead us to believe something else when we were moving here.*

Now I see what's happened. I think it would have been a better decision to stay downtown and get our section 8 and everybody just went their separate ways instead of coming in groups. I don't think we should be categorized together. Speak to me individually, but so many of us are here. I thought it was supposed to be mixed. They moved too many Jane Long families into this one complex. A few families nobody would have knowed but it has followed us. As it is now we're judged as a group of people

instead of individuals. There's the Jane Long group right there, ya know. They're thinking she's from downtown but is she smart? That's the thing I don't like. There are too many in a group and we're all labeled the same way in this apartment complex.

In the ways that her dreams of living in mixed income have not materialized, Georgia remains caught between what she perceives is her opportunity set and the mechanisms needed to operationalize it. She has difficulty talking about the steps necessary to achieve her goals of education, employment and economic sufficiency. She just knows she wants to get her GED, find stable employment and leave the rolls of housing assistance. She says her main goal is to provide a better life for her kids, a life more stable and loving than her own childhood. As her own mother's anxiety and worry drove Georgia to rebel, at times, she fears she is doing the same to her children. For example, while she says she wants her children to have the same kind of neighborhood friends that she had growing up, Georgia is restrictive of whom and how often they play with others, even the former playmates at Jane Long Terrace.

She has been medically diagnosed with an affective disorder that she "treats" with affirmations and occasional alcohol. She wonders aloud if her fears about her children are normal. *I find myself doing the same thing with my little girls. I think my mom was overprotective but should have been more supportive. I constantly worry about my girls, especially my youngest little girl. She has a heart condition. That worries me. It's got to where when she goes to school and the phone rings I'm nervous. I'll be thinking the school is calling or something. That's how much I worry about her.*

As we focus on what she describes as incongruence between what she wants to provide for her children and what she actually does, the talk turns to her personal feelings about parenting. She waxes philosophically when she talks about her responsibility of not only bringing them into the world but also giving them the best she can. She says she drives the point home to them; do not grow up to be like me. In that spirit of blazing new if not difficult paths, Georgia says her children's progress in school is a daily reminder that she is where she needs to be. *I want them to see my situation. They know I'm not happy. If you get an education you won't have to worry about doing that. You'll be making good money. You'll have a good living for yourself. Don't follow in my path. I don't want them ever to have to go on assistance. I want them to be proud of me but I also want them to learn from the situation I'm in. I tell them about having babies early. It's best to go to school. When you have a kid early you limit yourself from everything. I do know they're getting a good education at the school. Some things I'm getting okay about when I think about the schooling.*

She says she's been afraid to express her hope to escape her present life for fear that she will hurt her family. *I didn't want to live by my sister. I want to take my kids and move where nobody knows us. I could start over. No family, just my kids. They'd look at me individually rather than as a community. This community over here. I don't want a lot of people to think I've got to move all the time. I'd like to be where the busses are better, a lot of stores I could afford. If I got section 8 that would be happiest day of my life. I would leave my kids in this school district. Eventually I would like to leave public housing. That's why I want to get my GED to have a good paying job so I won't*

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have to worry. I think we will have a comfortable life. They're already talking about college so there's a lot of stuff that I'll have to do.

Georgia has chosen to live in a mixed-income apartment owned by the local housing authority and managed by privately contracted company. It is in a lower-poverty neighborhood than JLT and, on first glance, a haven for service-oriented employment that she has done in the past. Where in the past she insists her misdemeanor record was never an issue with employment in higher poverty districts here she sees it as her ever-present obstacle. No matter that her dismal outcomes of finding work might be tied to factors unrelated to her record, for her, she perceives herself singled out.

This is one example for how we as researchers might temper "unsuccessful" and "successful" destination decisions by expanding how resettlement, from the resident's perspective, is considered. That "destination" is most often considered in terms of reaching an ending point, there is an implied finality to the notion of resettlement satisfaction. Scholars, policymakers and housing administrators understand that barrier thwarts satisfaction but we may not clearly understand how and why until we understand resettlement from householders' viewpoint.

That destination may take a nonlinear if not discontinuous path to fulfill psychosocial needs and wants of the family thus delay or thwart resettled satisfaction is rarely examined as mobility behavior of low-income households. In the ways that destination tends to be labeled "failure" when families do not relocate into nor remain in advantaged neighborhoods, assigning blame most often falls to the limitations and

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barriers of macro-structures vis-à-vis mobility programs. In the ways that destination tends to be labeled "success" when families do relocate into advantaged neighborhoods but fail to achieve satisfaction can lead back to re-assigning failure to the residents themselves.

Somewhere in the middle there is possibility that resettlement, as evidenced by a rootedness sense of wellbeing despite expected setback, might reflect something other than institutional failure or dichotomies of residential compliance/non-compliance. Mediating external judgment of what resettlement may mean to the resident, this mid-range perspective might lend understanding to how important, in relational context, the interaction is between public housing resident and the institution of housing subsidy. Even among families who leave the rolls all together, the bridge of assistance could be vital to most subsequent relocation efforts. The implications of resettlement are also evident. Herein lies the nuance that gives richness to the qualitative study of biographically meaningful experience. In this way, this dissertation acknowledges that not only do structural effects of opportunity and constraint impact individuals, but also individuals, through psychosocial mechanisms of agency and culture, impact institutions, both directly and indirectly.

That resettlement is not a "fixed" state of being is evidenced when we think that among all of us, on any given day, we can shift the perception of housing satisfaction/dissatisfaction per a set of demands. Therefore, we term resettlement as a mind-set, characterized by a general sense of wellbeing despite inevitable setbacks. In these ways we might say that resettlement mirrors resilience. That is, whatever the

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familial costs incurred by dispersal and the demands of imposed relocation one can conclude, on balance, that the improved quality of home life today has been worth it, persevering across obstacles and limits to achieve such a mind-set.

In this way, resettlement is indicative of reconciling the fact that while contemporary institutions of housing opportunity are generally couched in talk of equality, there continues to be hurdles to overcome to reach such a state of spatial and social rootedness. In the historical past, we know that such housing relocation under governmental edict of renewal generally overlooked any notion of opportunity or equality in terms of geographic or ascriptive dimensions of race and gender, making equality a moot point. Yet it appears the contemporary aim of deconcentration of poverty is to address this oversight by ameliorating nonequivalent access to resources and other opportunity structures, recognizing that the prolonged exposure to deprivation has resulted in subjective variation in preferences and experiences in one's perceived opportunity set (Galster, 2002; Galster & Killen, 1995).

Again, the emphasis of *perception* is important because we rarely consider how residents take in structures of opportunity beyond nonequivalent access to such structures. That is, we chart behavioral outcome largely by how a household is able to transcend the counterpart of structural constraint. We are not overtly surprised when households repeatedly fail to surmount such obstacle. Expanding the dimensions of the resident as proposed here brings up a host of challenges to this view.

For example, the issue of social trust came up repeatedly in this study. We understand the proclivity for trusting may be colored by one's psychosocial disposition,

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neighborhood affiliation as well as cultivated by the reciprocity of institutional pathways. Nonetheless, it is a critical element for how low-income residents perceive quality of life (Greenberg, 1999). In pivotal ways such confidence and assurance signify the importance of how mutual relationships can affect the prospects of resettlement. Social trust pivots not only on a neighbor-to-neighbor axis, but also extends to the institutional support that most of these households require. That is, social trust, including trust in authority, holds critical implications for all phases of deconcentration, particularly important to moving toward resettlement. Likewise, how the individual *perceives* the role of authority is an important aspect of this study, as such attitudes will influence a myriad of personal decisions including resettlement.

For example, during the interviews when talk turned to housing satisfaction, these residents naturally filtered their experiences through their alliance with the housing authority. Here the term alliance signals a sense of working together to achieve rather than friendship per se. Even among those women who had left voluntarily and particularly with the householder who had been evicted, this association factored into how they termed their potential resettlement. Whether assessed as positive or negative, hopeful or guarded, each woman, including Georgia who we hear from next, brought her prospects of a life beyond the traditions of place-based subsidy to this more personalized level.

Figure 6.1 is a summary of findings related to Georgia including her alliance with the housing authority as prospects of resettlement. Table 6.1 is a tabulated assessment.

NAME	AGE	RACE	Children / G-children	Higher/Lower Agency	Status of Neighborhood
Georgia	38	B	3	H	LP-PH Mixed

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	Strong sense of role of mother Maintains clean house / children Impeccable detail to personal appearance	Children express housing/neighborhood satisfaction: excelling in new school Knows her neighbors Sister as neighbor – on/off relationship Average teacher/school contact	Viewed relocation of JLT as a positive move for self & children Current stable home environment
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	**Self-described as "stuck"** **Expresses growing personal / housing dissatisfaction** **Diagnosed with affective disorder / medication noncompliance** **Diminished dispositional optimism** **External locus of control** **Emotion focused coping** **Difficulty in follow through of plans**	**Does not identify with neighbors** **Does not allow children to play with many neighborhood children** **Few friends as support** **Weak alliance with housing personnel / onsite management** **Poor social trust** **"Reconcentration" of former JLT residents prevents "new start"**	**Troubled view of "reconcentration" of former JLT into new mixed income setting** **Unable to identify with current neighbors, denies sense of community; stifled by strict rules of housing assistance** **Prior misdemeanor conviction – constraint to employment in lower poverty** **No access to running automobile**

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<u>What Worked for Georgia</u>

Agency: Georgia presents as an attractive, articulate & able black woman. Her stories are steeped in her heritage of providing for her family, often at times seemingly at her own expense. She is proud of the scholastic accomplishments of her children. Her primary support is tied to her sister, with whom she has an on/off relationship.

Figure 6.1 Summary of study findings: Georgia.

Table 6.1 Tabulated Assessment of Georgia

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	+	+ +	+
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+ + +	+ + +	+ + +

6.4.1 Summation of Georgia

In ways Georgia described about how she felt about living in public housing when she first came to Jane Long Terrace as a new mother in need of shelter she continues to feel she doesn't "belong", particularly in a complex heavily populated by previous JLT neighbors. She is often at-odds with on-site management and she insists she is targeted for her complaints. She claims providing a stable home is her top priority but she routinely shares with her children her dissatisfaction and worries. She is concerned she is setting up the same mother/child dynamic in her own household that she saw modeled in her childhood.

In her self-description of early life, she sketches a girl who was burdened by a variety of risk factors including the chronic instability of her mother and in-home safety issues with a number of adults. As a result, early on she took on the consequential feelings of responsibility falling outside her age-appropriateness and setting up a conflictual life course where she continues to test the boundaries of trust and safety. In the ways we have of testing others Georgia seems to have "proven" herself right many times over as she has often, by her accounts, sabotaged her own good intentions.

Many of the stories she tells are ones of conflict, particularly internal ones, detailing how she once struggled to meet her own needs even as those of her mother and sister often overwhelmed her. Today she describes her struggles to balance her own needs with those of her children and feeling unable to do anything. In many ways it appears Georgia is comfortable with the absolutes of black and white and demonstrates difficulty and discomfort when issues continue to fall into shades of gray. She will tell you she is living in this authority-owned apartment, surrounded by "too many" JLT families, only because of her children who are thriving in their new school. Seemingly her children are devoted to teachers, classmates and neighborhood friends. She routinely tells them they live where they do in order to take advantage of the opportunity to attend school in that community. She says it is important to remind them (and herself) as a way to balance their futures and her present day difficulties.

She often refers to other neighborhoods of friends who live in houses, albeit in high poverty pockets around the city, as her ideal place to raise her children. The idea of space and freedom to have friends over without fear of curfew violations are a priority for her. She draws her problems to the physicality of the area of the city where she now lives. She says she would be encouraged that if she could just leave, to return to higher poverty, she would be happier. She sees the barriers in lower poverty as much more stringent than in higher poverty settings. She appears to personalize that to mean something deficient in her. She recalls her misdemeanor record was never a deterrent when she lived downtown and worked at jobs less visible than those she might be interested in where she now lives.

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While her children appear to be thriving, Georgia, saddled with her inabilities to complete her GED, find work, and recharge her life, terms herself "stuck" with no viable plan otherwise. Yet Georgia's responses to the pre-move agency scoring for sample selection indicated a higher level in overall wellbeing. From all accounts, her coping style appears to be one that is more emotion-focused, predominately emotion-driven that keeps her angry, mistrustful, and, at times, feeling hopeless. She appears bright, she is attractive and her social skills appear above average. She articulates potential plans and future hopes with remarkable precision, but when queried about "next steps" she reverts to identifying obstacles.

From her accounts, her "next steps" dilemma would benefit from more individualized assistance than she now receives. Georgia is a woman who would benefit from even short-term individual assistance that could help her strategize a one step at a time action plan so as to minimize the overwhelmed feelings she reports. Attempting to determine if her relocation decision adequately matches the needs of her family is a bit difficult. True, schools are better and her children appear to be thriving although Georgia filters much of that in comparative terms. Stopping short of terming her relocation decision problematic, what does appear problematic is Georgia's perception of her prospects that too often become conflated with her problems so that she is unable to see solutions that might be lurking. Georgia's agency score was rated in the higher category. In the ways she perceives she'd like things to be it isn't surprising that perhaps she projects herself in these functional ways. Again to go further would be purely speculation and of no purpose to this study.

When briefly queried about her medical condition, she confides she has refused to take prescribed medication and has resorted to "self-medicating" and "crying a lot." Ignoring her condition could be masking her abilities to get motivated in the ways she can aptly define. Her most recent complaint with housing authority staffers is with the repercussions of not following through on HUD's required number of community service hours she must meet in order to continue to receive housing assistance. Her prospects of resettlement remain guarded, even as she is able to verbalize that she may have to put her own sense of satisfaction behind those of her children.

The relational aspect of receiving social assistance is apparent when talking with these women. The presence and oversight of governmental institutions weigh heavily in the day to day of life of low-income households: none more so than the institution of public housing. That some women here related positive institutional encounters with personnel summing household gains while others expressed problems of communication and follow-through illustrates the subjective nature of forging and maintaining an alliance. There are many factors that impact what we call the "institutional alliance" and much is beyond the scope of this study. After all, we only focus on "one side" in this discussion. Identified, is that no matter whether these women stayed, left voluntarily or were evicted from housing, each tied their prospects of resettlement to the subjective nature of that alliance without prompting.

This is particularly evident in Suzette's story for how she came to decide to leave the rolls of housing assistance voluntarily yet continues to assess much of her present day housing situation in context to the local housing authority. Of all the

women interviewed for this study, she remained the most affected by the initial impact of dispersal. That by her actions and plans she appears to have at least been able to move on, her emotions remain fresh in regard to the experience of a forced move. Here the reader, being privy to a life course review, can perhaps make connections about present day behavior and social action through the insight of prior experiences and styles of adaptive resilience. We turn to Suzette's story.

6.5 Resettlement: Suzette's Story

NAME	AGE	RACE	Children / G-children	Higher/Lower Agency	Status of Neighborhood
Suzette	30	H	4	H	Working Class (left PH)*

Suzette is a petite woman with dark, flashing eyes and auburn hair. She is of a sturdy build and looks years younger than her 30 years. She has four children; the father of two of them has recently re-entered their lives after a lengthy absence. Suzette was born in the U.S. to a Puerto Rican mother and an unknown father. She was given up for adoption at birth and taken home by the only parents she's ever known at age two weeks. She vaguely knows the whereabouts of her birth mother but has only recently become interested in finding her father, primarily for medical curiosity. Her adoptive mother is Hispanic and her adoptive father Caucasian. For several years Suzette was an only child until her parents decided to adopt Suzette's biological sister. This sibling, born of the same birth mother as Suzette, had been abandoned at the hospital and languished in foster care until she was nearly four years old. When Suzette's adoptive parents brought her to live in their family, Suzette was a little more than seven years

old. Today she says she just remembers her baby sister as always "sickly." Their relationship is estranged.

On the day of the interview her house had been difficult to find even with a good map. Her modestly framed house is tucked far off the street abutted against a row of aging houses converted into businesses, down the street from a pedestrian collection of discount stores and pawn shops. On the north side of Suzette's house and farther down the street, the neighborhood turns upward with generally well-kept frame and older brick homes with established lawns. She will later tell me that she's the only Hispanic on the street, but that generally everybody treats her well if not a bit distant.

Perhaps of all study subjects, Suzette had been the most difficult to find and secure. When she had relinquished housing assistance immediately after dispersal she had failed to respond to subsequent attempts to contact her. Today she alludes to the need to leave all that "behind me" in making the break to leave the rolls of the local housing authority, which may explain her initial reluctance to be a part of this study.

The house I visit today is one that she is buying after her father offered assistance to do so although his financial situation appears tenuous. Her house is, as she terms it, a "fixer-upper." Modestly small and in need of a paint job, it overlooks an oversized unkempt yard of sprawling mature shrubs that, from the street, give the house something of an abandoned look. Several cars fill her driveway. Some appear drivable, others do not. Snaking from the street to the house is a winding broken concrete path that leads to a front door covered in a fading wreath of flowers, birds and vines.

Approaching the house, Suzette throws open the door, calling me by name as I climb the steps. On her small front stoop lays a white cat that she scoops up and playfully scolds as she drops him inside. She has an outdoor tomcat she explains that would "eat this one alive." During our interview when an animal control truck stops outside her house, Suzette jumps up and excitedly rushes to see if her "outside" cat is in the back yard. Not finding him there, she rushes to peer out the dining area window and then begins to laugh. It seems the driver of the truck has stopped at a yard sale in full swing across the street from her house. Relieved her cat is safe from harm, she complains the yard sale goes on most every day.

Before arriving, she says she has been exercising. She now apologizes for her sweaty condition as she has just completed a run on her treadmill sitting in the middle of her small living room. Making small talk she folds it, leaning it against a large screen TV under a bank of spacious windows covered by billowy floral curtains she confides are bed linens. *I tried to store it in my bedroom, but I never used it when it was back there* she relates, perhaps as a way to explain why it sits in a prominent place in her front room. The TV is playing at a high volume. She mutes the sound but the picture remains throughout the interview. As she searches for her thoughts throughout our talk, she will often turn her attention to that screen.

She steers me toward the large sectional sofa covered in stray toys, picture books and dominating one wall of the living room. I spot a small 4-chair table sitting in an area that is only big enough for the table with minimal chair clearance. Asking if we could sit there, Suzette begins to clear the tabletop of papers and folded clothes.

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Hearing a series of deep coughs coming from the back, I ask who else is home. She relates her daughter is home sick with a chronic condition and, in fact, during the interview the doctor's office calls to inquire about her daughter's condition.

Suzette is initially guarded. Straight away she announces *I'm not a very open person. I was raised to keep everything, a lot of things inside. And now I'm learning I need to let it out because it just carries with you. And you get so resentful and bitter and all that kinda stuff.* The vestiges of anger swell as she says she's got something to say about the way *we were kicked out of JLT. I went to every little rally they had there but it didn't make any difference. It was rallying people up to get 'em more upset. They said they wanted to hear our opinions but when it came down to it we had to go, number one. And number two was we had only the choices they had for us. And that's why I did not go with them because I had to go where they wanted to put me. They offered me a house, but it was in the east part of town, a bad neighborhood. And I was already in the middle of downtown, which was bad. I didn't want to get put in a worse place.*

Living at Jane Long Terrace, she says, she was one of the luckier ones. Her apartment was situated in a short, separate row of three bedroom apartments that sat perched on the highest point of the property. Overlooking the river with towering live oak trees that shaded her house nearly year round, Suzette says she and her family were "hopping mad" to learn they would have to leave their home. They had all enjoyed the amenities of living downtown. The short walk to the public library, nearby parks, and convenient bus hops around the city she remembered with fondness. The neighborhood

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basketball court had been right outside their door and because it was higher up than other apartments, many times Suzette's children had it all to themselves. Perhaps the greatest advantage Suzette says was that the majority of other apartments was separated by the community center and that hill climb.

Initially and for some time, Suzette says she was incensed that she was being relocated in a manner against her will, disrupting her personal plans of going back to school for a degree. Going back to school and keeping a part time job had been the reason she says she had taken public housing assistance in the first place. *I would have finished nursing school. I had just finished with medical assistant training.* [It was] *the only way that I could still work and make good money. I wasn't like just making minimum wage. I could still make a little bit of money, have benefits and go to school. I had started to take my prerequisites for nursing. And my rent. Nothing would have been raised and I wouldn't have all these responsibilities of payments to pay that I do now. There they just all put it into one. Here you pay for everything separate and the electric bills kills you here. Over there it was helping me so much, you know.*

Communal life at JLT had been difficult for Suzette. She admits today she had little patience with neighborhood children or their parents. She relates the story of her father's car windows being smashed out on one particular visit now over five years ago. She irritatingly recalls her attempts to accost the identified children and the subsequent rows she had with the mother and onsite management. It is a memory not forgotten for when her father calls during this interview she laughingly says in her response to why

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she can't chat at the moment, *no, dad, she's not with housing. I don't need to tell her about your windows.*

Suzette visibly warms when discussion turns to her father. He remains a daily source of support, currently in charge of taking her children to and from different schools. When her baby sister had come to live with Suzette and her parents she says *life was never the same after that. My dad and my mother got her but then a year later her and my dad decided to divorce. He couldn't make my mother happy. She took my sister. I took my dad.* Suzette was barely nine at the time. Yet, she declares it was her decision alone, at that tender age, to live with her father instead of her mother. *Growing up I knew where I was safe, even back when I was nine.*

She openly admits that, without her father, she would have very little of what she has today. He had insured she had a house after dispersal, *not another apartment in the projects,* by taking out a loan in his name. He has kept her cars insured and served as a backup babysitter on many occasions and often with little advance notice. The bond between them is strong as Suzette recounts conversations she has routinely with her dad. She says he is as big a dreamer as she is so they spend time talking about the future and the need to get through the hard times. *We're all just making sacrifices now and my dad knows that. In the end, he will be happy and I'll get to do this* [go back to school]. *He'll be seeing me graduate and make good money. I'll be doing what I love and supporting my children. Not asking for a man* to *come take care of me, which I never have. The only man that takes care of me is my dad.*

Living together after her parents divorced, Suzette remains fiercely protective of her father, even as we venture into some painful aspects of her childhood and her mistakes as a confused teenager. Calling herself a 'textbook example" of someone who didn't always know when she's "got it good", Suzette, somewhat surprisingly, is open even blunt about her past. With precision she rattles off her list, her voice continuing to rise culminating in a somewhat triumphant posture. She seems to convey that her interdependence means she doesn't have to ask for help, which is not necessarily the same as not accepting it when offered. *I was raised to believe that a man can do everything. My father could do most everything and I did everything. As far as a little girl, I did more tomboy things. I'd get out there and mow the grass. I know how to change a tire. I know how to change my oil.   I'm not alone. I don't feel helpless without a man. Me and my dad were just teamwork. We rely on each other.*

Suzette's life, from age nine, seemingly was idyllic. She expresses no regret or sadness of the fact her mother moved out then relocating only a few miles away but rarely invited back. By age 14 however, she had began to run with the wrong crowd. It came to an end with a deadly encounter on the street that killed her best friend and sent Suzette into court to identify the perpetrators. She charts her problems from around age 11 years old. Due to her father's prolonged work schedule, she was placed in the care of babysitter who turned out to be abusive. Increasingly feeling unsafe, Suzette simply stopped going to the babysitters without alerting her dad. *I didn't tell him when I was little cause I didn't know I could. You're so scared. And my poor dad didn't know. All he was doing was just trying to do his work so he could support me. I didn't feel safe*

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going there so I took care of myself. But I've always had a mature mind even when I was five, six years old. My dad would let me walk everywhere. I mean I was very mature. Instead of going to the babysitters, I stayed home. I cooked me eggs in the morning, ate corn and cereal all day long. He'd get home and I'd be just fine.

It was this independent if not scheming streak that Suzette says prompted her at age 14 to go live with her mother, a woman she had hardly spent any time with since age nine. Today, rationalizing all the reasons why, Suzette says even then she had an inkling things were not going to turn out well. While in her father's house Suzette says there had clear if not always fair rules and requirements, which made for a very stable environment. *I always knew where I stood.* From her earliest pangs of rebellion against such stability, Suzette considered her mother's household a place without rules and requirements.

When her mother told Suzette that since she would be a woman soon it was time she come live with her, she had left her father's house. *Well, not a year later I just turned into another bad kid. Around the wrong crowd and you know here I was a sweet girl and had no idea what everybody else was doing. Experimenting with all kinds of stuff. I didn't know what it was, but I did it, you know, like an idiot. My mother had no control over me. I had no respect for her because she did not raise me so I did as I pleased. My father had been like, you can't pull that with me. I 'd just say to my mom, I'm gonna stay with my friend. Okay, she'd say, so when you gettin' home? I'd just say I don't know.*

Today her mother, who lives in a neighboring state closer to Suzette's sister, is making attempts to foster a closer relationship with Suzette's children but Suzette remains cautious. *I don't ever go up there to visit my mom. She comes down here and she's making up with my children that she didn't do with me. She came two weeks ago and she stayed here five days. She did a garage sale for me. She wants my girls to go live with her but, no, we're not gonna go through that: no!*

One of Suzette's greatest regrets and the one she presses relentlessly upon her children is that she never graduated high school. *School was not a positive experience for me, no.* While she anticipates entering school to pursue her life long ambition within a few months, she regrets missing out on the experience of being young with school chums, carefree and unencumbered. In her adult mind, Suzette believes her pregnancy, discovered soon after her 16th birthday and a few months before she left school, was her attempt to find *something that was mine.* While she terms this first pregnancy as a *let down to my dad, I was kinda happy because I was gonna have a baby. And you know, I didn't have any dreams then. I didn't know what to dream. I just knew that I was pregnant. I had to take care of what I had got myself into.*

Suzette currently is employed at a major university hospital working three days a week on a typical 12-hour shift. Her face brightens when she relates *I do a lot of things for my patients. I always get good opinions anywhere I work. Anywhere I work I get good evaluations.* Citing her preference for on-the-job training where she is not afraid to take on new tasks, her plans for her future are detailed down to the week as she explains each step that will bring her closer to beginning school in two months. *I do*

have a plan worked out. So I don't worry so much about that because I know that I'm gonna do it and I don't feel stressed out about it. Taking advantage of her employer's generous tuition reimbursement and full-time pay even while in school, she now has a wide array of benefits for her and her children. She repeatedly calls herself "blessed."

As she describes herself today, Suzette is a survivor because she has refused to settle down with either of her children's fathers. Suzette will tell you, *I relate more to Caucasian people because my dad - he's white - he raised me.* Furthermore, the more traditional demands of her children's fathers, both Hispanic, she says have served as a deterrent to a lasting relationship. Declaring herself unavailable to be a cook and housewife, Suzette says she has had to draw her boundaries. *Both are really old-fashioned and that's one of the reasons why we didn't make it. Cause you know I believe I don't need to be sitting in the kitchen cooking for you 24 hours a day and cleaning the house. I am gonna work. Hey, you want a woman that way. Go find it. I take care of my children. My house sometimes is kinda messy. Sometimes it's not. Laundry gets done, sometimes it doesn't. We don't die here, you know.*

While she proclaims both of her children's fathers have recently tried to reconnect, she remains guarded about their intentions. *They both want to get back into my life cause they know I'm a good woman. I'm very independent. They know that I got a good dad that's gonna help take care of them, so why not? But I'm saying, no, because I gave you a chance and you hurt me and you hurt my kids. My daughters' father tells people he still wants to be with me. Am I stupid? No, I'm not that young 16 year-old anymore. If you're not gonna pay your child support you sure cannot support*

me. Even if he doesn't pay child support or give nothing to them, I do not express my opinion because that is their father. I cannot do that to them. But they will learn as they're older. They'll decide what they need to do.

The relationship with her sons' father seems to have been improving lately. Suzette recalls *he was a total jerk with me all the time. It was either his way or the highway. I was doing things that wasn't making me happy. He was first all the time. His family mistreated me you know and we were arguing every day. Why would I wanna do that? I can be miserable by myself. I can cry by myself. I don't need a man to make me do that. I can struggle and do it by myself. I don't need another kid there to support. But now he's working and he helps me with all of the kids. He's here all the time. If I need groceries he brings it. So he's making an effort. Because I gave him a little taste of his own medicine, he needed to learn how to be a man.*

When talk turns to resettlement Suzette makes her point by referring back to regrets, tinged with lingering anger, for having to leave JLT at the time she did. *I do wish I could have stayed a little longer so I could have already finished school. Right now I would have been out of JLT anyway with a bigger house for my kids. I mean this one's too small and I would be making more money and I wouldn't have to work all these hours. I'd be spending more time with my kids. But I can say that I've been there, done that. Once I move forward in my life I can say that I've been unfortunate before and I can see both sides of the fence. What it feels like to have and not have. I just know that I was fortunate growing up. I had everything I wanted. Then all of a sudden I'm living in the housing authority. I'm like, hey! What did I do wrong?*

She goes on to talk about how life might have turned out if she had finished school, waited to have her children, and gone to college as her father had desired. *I would have done things the right way probably, but I didn't.* Today providing a stable home, in a neighborhood *where they can be proud to say they live in,* she says is her first priority so that they do not make the same mistakes that she made. She says for her resettlement means *making sure my kids know they are loved,* and she believes it can only be accomplished when the mother is happy. A lifetime of having an "unhappy" mother, she knows how it feels to be responsible for trying to make things different. *When I had my kids the mothering instinct kicked in. I knew that my kids needed to be fed and I was gonna take care of 'em. I knew that what kind of life I had before I didn't want them to have that life. I want them to always feel loved even if it's just me. I don't want them to feel they have to do without. My kids to this day don't think that they are poor. We are poor it's just that they don't know that. They think that hey, you don't have money, okay. They don't think that's bad. If they want something they earn it.*

She routinely tells her children there will be sacrifices on her road to school. That is, while she enthusiastically shares her hopes and dreams she also talks to them about what it will take to realize them. She allows them to see her when she is sad but she also relates her exuberance in doing some of the simple things in life together. *I am happy now. Going to school is really gonna happen, you know. This is really gonna happen for me and I just know that I have to stay focused. I can't get distracted and I have to talk to the kids. We have to sacrifice till I'm done. My dad wants me to do this. He's says, before I die I wanna know that you're stable and that you're okay.*

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She says now she thinks of the future in more ways than she's ever done before. Not quite willing to say the dispersal was a good thing, she does allow that *you know, everything happens for a reason. I think that. Maybe it wasn't the right time for me to go to school anyway. Maybe something happened for a reason why I couldn't go to school. What if I went in, dropped out after five months, got a grant, and couldn't pay it off? One decision you make today can affect the rest of your life and the decision I made to move here was the best one I think I've made. We're gonna make it. I want my kids to have a future as well. I want them to have a chance and not feel they have to go this way, you know. Make your choices. Sometimes people don't know that they have choices and then some people have choices but don't know how to use them properly.*

Figure 6.2 is a summary of what we have learned about Suzette including her alliance with the housing authority as prospects of resettlement. Table 6.2 is a tabulated assessment.

NAME	AGE	RACE	Children / G-children	Higher/Lower Agency	Status of Neighborhood
Suzette	30	H	4	H	Working Class (left PH)

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	**Problem focused coping** **Academic achievement despite dropping out of high school** **Planfulness – has 5 year written plan** **Dispositional optimism for self or family** **Self-efficacy**	**Supportive father: financial & emotional resource** **Supportive father of children: childcare, errands, maintenance** **Childhood friends, fellow coworkers, emotional resource** **School friends visit in the home** **Close contact with teachers / schools**	**Gainfully employed** **Enrolled in RN nursing school** **Maintains stable home environment; co-parenting with children's father** **Growing sense of community in her high poverty neighborhood** **Access to running automobile**
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	Reconciling traditional / cultural expectations of partner with her fierce independence as head of household Estranged from mother & sister	Does not identify with neighbors: "only Hispanics here" Few neighborhood appropriate aged children One child has had behavioral problems in school, prescribed medication Poor interaction with housing personnel; fought relocation effort	Does not feel connected to neighbors Remains bitter about methods of household dispersal & limitations of relocation options Did not use housing authority to help her buy her house Current house in need of major repairs

<u>What Worked for Suzette</u>
Agency: Her ability to ask & receive help continues to benefit Suzette & her household. Her planfulness keeps projects on track. Family/Culture (supportive networks): Suzette has cultivated a close, somewhat interdependent relationship with her father since early childhood. He continues to provide financial, emotional and parenting support to her. Her children's father has reentered the house also providing physical and parenting support.

Figure 6.2 Summary of study findings: Suzette.

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Table 6.2 Tabulated Assessment of Suzette

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	+ + +	+ + +	+ + +
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+	+ +	+ +

6.5.1 The Summation of Suzette

Of all respondents, Suzette has remained the most bitter about the issues of dispersal. Although she was among the few who could articulate and seemingly had started with a plan for her future. Curious if the subject - thus anger - was fresh only because of the manner in which it came up in the interview, she reports she and her father frequently rehash her days at JLT. He had wanted her to move out long before she had been forced. It would seem that the amount of financial, moral and parenting support she has in her life - primarily from her father, her children's father and a childhood girlfriend she's known "forever" - has perhaps made all the difference in accomplishing her goals of returning to school to realize her goal to become a nurse.

Suzette describes an early home life fragmented by the arrival of an adopted sister followed quickly by the bitter divorce of her parents. Yet she thinks she had a privileged childhood, living alone with her father and expressing no loss in moving away from her mother. She endured many of the risk factors expressed by other women in this study. She reported instability and feeling invisible at school, involved in truant and delinquent activity, making her own decision, largely unchallenged, to drop out of school by 10th grade. Having her first baby soon after her 16th birthday, Suzette's

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adult life she says has always been as somebody's mother. While mothers interviewed here expressed wanting to do the best for their children as their first priority, Suzette carries the notion that being adopted herself has meant that she has to try harder than most with her own children.

Soon after leaving JLT, her father had pushed for her to pursue the moving assistance that the local housing authority had promised but only if residents had stayed on the rolls of assistance. She had fought hard, writing letters, scheduling a meeting, but to no avail. When that didn't happen, Suzette's father had secured a loan for the house and had helped her and her children move in. While she calls herself "lucky" to have such a generous father, she acknowledges *he will help me with anything I need but I don't want him to. It's not his responsibility.* While she acknowledges there is much about her present neighborhood that is not particularly kid-friendly, the fact that they are living in a house they can call their own, with a big back yard and plenty of space to roam, makes it a good choice for her family.

Suzette describes her coping style as *thinking about my problems and figuring out which way is better.* A written school plan is evidence she tends to attack things in specific ways. Her demeanor conveyed a tendency toward seriousness yet her sense of humor, slightly dry, can take one by surprise. Her agency scoring was categorized as "higher" and her tendency to spotlight her accomplishments support her sense of wellbeing. The notion of resettlement as a mindset is echoed in Suzette's insistence that it's not so much the place you live but the attitude of the mother that dictates that feeling of spatial and social rootedness of the whole family. When asked whether

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strong feelings that she had shared about the issue of dispersal affected her today, she allows *only when I think about it.* When asked how often she thought about it, she admitted not often. In the ways that it has postponed her plans, Suzette still feels resentful yet she also rationalizes *that things happen for a reason.*

While she says resettlement is an attitude, she also laments she would feel "more resettled" if she were able to do more to "decorate" her house in the ways she had hoped to by now. When talk arises about poverty status of neighborhood, Suzette dismisses the importance. Being in her own home – while it would be nice to be in lower poverty she admits – means she has to be in a higher poverty neighborhood because of her circumstances. As she rattles off her list of everything she thinks is wrong with her house, seemingly in need of several major repairs, she nonetheless says she is happier now than she may have ever been in her life. Being a homeowner has opened her eyes she says in ways *that makes me realize how I want to raise my children. Now I know that I'm fine and my kids are fine. I have what I need and they have what they need. I think I will make it.*

In Suzette's story we hear that she never really felt connected to the neighborhood of JLT, largely because she saw her situation to be there in the first place as different from others. Geographically, she had been also somewhat isolated but she termed that separation as positive. That her emotions of *having* to leave often seemed to run counterintuitive to her otherwise dislike for being there demonstrates the conflictual aspects of household dispersal that each resident can experience. Many other women in this study however, tended to gauge their satisfaction with life at JLT through their

positive neighborly associations. In this way, it is important to not lose sight that, for many, "individual" perception of housing opportunity, thus resettlement, carries communal overtones of support, connection and shared meaning that impact how the household perceives satisfaction.

As the scholarly debate demonstrates, there is much we do not know about how and why structural effects of place factor into individual mobility behaviors and collective action (Briggs, 1997; Gans, 1990; Jencks, 1992; S. J. Newman & Schnare, 1994a). This brings attention to the psychosocial aspects of decision-making and the long-term implications of resettlement. We know the reasoning of Wilson's (1996) economic isolation and Massey & Denton's (1993) racial segregation as to how concentrated living arrangements contribute to the discussion of diminished access to opportunity. Yet Tienda (1991) cautioned that studies that lack longitudinal depth to assess influential pathways, including family, school and neighborhood might misrepresent outcomes as aggregated characteristics of structural effects, thus masking individual factors of decision-making. In these ways, the notion of spatial concentration becomes confused and conflated with the importance of social interaction (Briggs, 1997) as indicators of personal decisions in relocation matters and perceived opportunity prospects.

The cultivation of social trust among neighbors in communities was an important topic in matters related to meeting relocation needs discussed in Chapter 5. There we understood the importance in matching relocation and familial/cultural housing needs based on a notion of social trust through the channels of social capital.

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Popular designation of social capital takes on associations of trust, solidarity and reciprocity whereby the community, serves as the "glue" that holds together and benefits from shared values and referential interests (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995, 2000). That was also an aspect of JLT living mentioned by several women here. We saw in matters of relocation, trust *enhances* housing decisions perhaps indicating more closely how met familial/cultural needs and wants are realized. Recognizing that social trust, as a mutual aspect of social living, must be developed over time also becomes important in matters of resettlement. In these ways, the quality of institutional alliance, particularly couched in degrees of social trust holds significance. Here we identify that importance in ways of negotiating opportunity among subsidized households regardless of poverty status of neighborhood.

Considering the aspects of trust that hold collectives together, we examine such associations in ways that help the mother, through her notions of social trust as shared values and referential interest, to also leverage access to institutional support. The levels of mutual trust are apparent in this study. The mother, as head of household and a member of a community, must trust in proximal ways. She must also trust in a more distal context if she is to realize and take advantage of opportunity. There is, of course, an implied reciprocity that the resident must also *be* trusted in order to close the loop. Such angles capture the complexity and the scope of further study. In this way, talk of resettlement acknowledges social interaction of community that too often is damaged during the processes of deconcentration but possibly restored among neighbors who feel connected to the larger landscape of institutional opportunity.

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We acknowledge through Bourdieu's (1990) stylized view of the micro-elemental connections gained by participating in social life of neighborhoods and networks there is the constant inequality of reproduced power differentials. That is, in a stratified society households are able to deploy different forms of "capital" to define particular standings: social, economic and cultural. This means that the disadvantaged will continue to have access to a smaller and less connected pool from which to pull social capital and thus realize improvement. While the premise of deconcentration pivots on access to opportunity, we know that *equal* access is not the uniform case (Galster & Killen, 1995). This makes institutional support in relational context of the local housing authority of even more importance in the nurturance of social trust.

For example, in a 1999 study of low-income housing mobility, residents rated quality of life beyond measures of physical conditions, expressing mistrust of authority as foremost among the variables associated with unfavorable ratings. Along with more psychosocial implications of housing satisfaction, findings also included a lowered sense of personal control of the environment, continued crime-related fears because of mistrust and general pessimism for the future (Greenberg, 1999). In Rainwater's study of high-rise public housing life, findings revealed that the quality of social trust was directly influenced by the quality of social ties. This led many residents to report feelings of mistrust and isolation as the social and physical environment deteriorated (Rainwater, 1970).

Thus, as mobility policy directives reconfigure living space for low-income families the ideas of improving neighborhood quality must also tackle the psychosocial

dynamics of trust. Coleman's (1990) treatment on the subject is applicable here through two of his points. One, trust (more than just a feeling) is necessary to activate and motivate and two, there is a time lag between extending trust and achieving trusting behavior. In the ways that mutual trust is often threatened or thwarted in institutional relationships involving public housing residents, it is also important to address, in particular, mistrust of authority (PEW Research Center for the People and the Press, 1998; Slovic, 1993). Research has also demonstrated there are important ways that trust, confidence and reliance must operate between people (as opposed to those feelings directed to inanimate objects) that have more to do with perceived motivations and intentions rather than outcomes of action (Becker, 1996; Seligman, 1997).

In interviewing the women for this study the topic of trust was raised consistently, largely unprompted by the interviewer regarding issues, demands and complaints they currently face in their new homes and new neighborhoods. The undercurrent of trust/distrust also ran throughout their life course reviews, many expressing the lesson early on to be wary of trusting others. Such can describe a life marred early by the daily remainders of risk. Some related their need to adopt resultant mistrust they believed saved their lives or, at the very least, helped them to survive. Most respondents initially expressed overall regret often tinged with frustration, as a way to (finally) access a discussion of what trust meant for them. This could have been an indication of the trust of the respondent toward the interviewer.

As they told stories of early damage to the fragile nature of childhood trust, they intuitively linked those feelings with what they perceived as mistrust in ever realizing

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their hopes of opportunity, given the realities of life as they now saw it. All believed there was more opportunity awaiting them and their families, if for no other reason than it is to hold fast to hopes and dreams. That older mothers, as opposed to other age groups, tended to voice how they may have contributed to their present opportunity situation gives insight into the ways that psychosocial aging tempers life experiences.

With little exception the external assignation of blame by younger mothers often fell to the housing authority. They tended to couch such as a perception of failure to realize personal opportunity based on lack of follow-through on institutional promise. Some, although voicing such sentiment, nonetheless classified themselves as "resettled" because they believed they had realized their hope of opportunity on their own terms, thus pointing to the subjective nature of the inquiry.

In the case of Anna who we hear from next, she has come to see her eviction and subsequent events as having both positive and negative consequences. She acknowledges the pain and embarrassment that the strain of eviction brought to her and her family yet she also knows she is now fulfilling her dream of homeownership, albeit through channels not previously considered. All of these life course stories become stories of coping style, met versus unmet age/lifestage needs, along with self-described resettlement in terms of whether they believe they have maximized, to their ability, the promise of improved personal, social and residential mobility.

That some, such as Suzette, will refer back to the involuntary nature of leaving while others will minimize, if mention at all, gives important clues to how these women dissimilarly experience thus negotiate the phases of deconcentration. That some, such

as Georgia, can eloquently express her needs and wants, yet perceive herself unsupported in a difficult endeavor to find employment in the land of opportunity illustrates both the complexity and the singularity of the experience of deconcentration.

6.6 Resettlement: Anna's Story

NAME	AGE	RACE	Children / G-children	Higher/Lower Agency	Status of Neighborhood
Anna	36	H	4	H	HP-Private (evicted PH)

When Anna, a 36-year-old Hispanic woman, enthusiastically greets me at the opened front door wearing a tailored skirt and white collared blouse, first thoughts are she's on the way out the door for work. She wears stylish glasses with her hair pulled back in a loose cascade of dark curls. On her tanned feet are colorful sandals. She laughingly opens the door widely, apologizing for the "tricky" front gate handle that I had momentarily struggled to unfasten. A ceiling fan whirls and a floor fan oscillates over the small area. She announces straightaway that this house is one that she and her husband of two years are buying. The sting of eviction from public housing is not yet two years past.

After a couple attempts to meet, with Anna calling well in advance to cancel each time due to a shifting work schedule, I arrive at her house situated snugly among other houses of similar vintage in a working class neighborhood on the near north side of downtown. At midday the street is largely deserted with little activity, yet it sits only a block from a very busy thoroughfare that cuts through the heart of the city. Running the length of the front property line, approximately 40 feet, is a brightly painted white

wrought iron fence embellished with elaborate finials standing, at its highest point, over 7 feet tall. It literally dominates the small front yard. Behind the fence and only a few yards away sits the house with a small front porch where a large potted fern sits and dangling wind chimes ring in the breeze.

Stepping into a small living room, with hardly an uncovered space, there are pictures of what looks to be family as well as framed art prints hanging high on the walls. The couch and matching chair sit juxtaposed against the wall covered with a rainbow of throw pillows. The room at once has a lived-in personalized feel to it, even as lamps and chair cushions appear to be covered in plastic. The whiff of cleaning products lingers in the air. Moving away from the front door, Anna offers that the new entertainment center that takes up space along one entire wall she recently found at a garage sale. *See these*, she says pointing to silk ficus trees in faux marble urns that frame the recently acquired find, *I found these in the garbage,* emphasizing, with amazement the word, garbage. *My husband and I were out in the truck not the mini van, thank goodness, and we just saw these in a trash pile. I was so happy. You know they are very expensive in the stores,*

She refers to her children as "my little munchkins" and proudly takes time to introduce, via photos, her children, ages 14, 12, 7, and her youngest who recently celebrated his first birthday. Various sizes and shapes of "knick-knacks" sit scattered among the pictures. A large flat screen TV sits squarely in the middle of the entertainment unit. Making a path to the kitchen table that sits as an overflow of the living room, she chides her absent eldest for leaving an opened loaf of bread and plastic

containers after having made lunch at the table. She explains she had wanted privacy for our talk so she has sent her children to a nearby relative with their lunches in tow. She rushes apologetically to clear the space, putting away the items, wiping the table, yet never losing the thread of her conversation about the value of riding around and looking at other people's trash piles.

She offers a beverage by asking, *would you like orange juice or iced water?* While normally declining beverage offers out of habit, the way she asks this makes me say "iced water" without really thinking. It will be the first inkling of the way Anna has used her skill of communication over her life time to persuade and to assert. She pours two tall glasses of water, soon frosted from the chill, wrapping them in napkins, carefully laying out coasters. She folds her legs underneath settling across from me at the now cleared table. I do not have to ask if we could sit at the table. When I come into the house she has steered me there as she explains *let's go to the table so we can have room to lay out our papers.*

Anna has come prepared to talk and among all women interviewed for this study brings her own set of questions and carefully labeled files of paperwork. She brings to the table folders brimming with papers of various size and color. Some look like fliers, others like letters, still others look like copies of forms. She pats it and holds it against her chest as a schoolgirl might hold a book as we begin our interview. Straight away there is a change in demeanor. Mentally noting her assertiveness and somewhat gregarious nature in her initial take-charge of offering beverage and pre-

arranging seating arrangements, Anna's body language becomes somewhat closed. As she begins to talk it is in a quiet, child-like voice.

Laying out the parameters of this study I was keen to talk with women who had left the rolls of housing assistance, voluntarily and involuntarily, in the quest to better understand the experience of deconcentration and the likelihood of resettlement among them. I was curious to know how, if at all, in the incidence of eviction how the "micro" of personal coping and the "meso" of cultural/familial relocation influence had ameliorated the breakdown in the "macro" structural sphere of institutional assistance.

One noteworthy occurrence over the years since the downtown dispersal from JLT had been a significant number of householders who had left the rolls involuntarily. As best determined, the majority of residents who had left had done so over money matters. All, save a couple, had disappeared before going through the proceedings of formal eviction. Evicted householders are understandably harder to find in follow-up but can yield important information about a consequence of deconcentration of poverty rarely examined in detail. It begs the question, does deconcentration bring about consequences such as eviction for those who may have otherwise remained housed? The fact that I was able to locate Anna as easily as I did might also implicate the findings offered here. Her willingness to discuss eviction from her mixed income apartment nearly two years ago offers a glimpse into that consequence.

Established, Anna and her family survived eviction and, by some accounts, may have exceeded how we think of households forced to give up assistance all together. We get an idea of survival as Anna reveals much of herself in her stories of childhood and

adolescence. She recounts often with gusto. Then, at other times, her stories take on the touches of the dramatic that then give way to pulling back. As the one who elicits and encourages exchange in the role of interviewer I remain mindful – more so than usual – that we will not venture into certain areas, even though at times she seems eager to go there. There is also the sense that what she relates, no matter how painful it may sound, is information that she has already processed. She mentions she had attended counseling after her eviction. All of this seemingly makes the retelling here a bit easier and maybe even cathartic.

Reflecting and restating become useful as a way to move her forward, mindful that she has had great difficulty and disappointment with her dealings with the local housing authority. She properly displays her anger in her recount, briefly tears up and often rifles through her portfolio to search for a piece of paper that will confirm her account of the unfolding events, from her early days at JLT leading to eventual eviction. I come to learn the folder contains all of the correspondence between her and the housing authority over those years. Such attention to detail threads throughout the stories she tells of her parents' divorce, her turbulent relationship with her mother and her perseverance to fight eviction despite the odds against her.

Anna's parents were divorced when she was 10. It is a marker that she refers to often as we explore her earlier life of self-descriptions, relationships and conflicts. Although a picture of instability and confusion pervade Anna's accounts of growing up with a "jealous" mother and a "missing" father, there are also underlying traits generally downplayed that demonstrate how she has managed to not only survive but to thrive.

Bounced from one parent to another early on, Anna's recalls the odyssey to escape her mother's household, especially after her mother took up with a man who was *harassing me all the time.* Complaining to her mother about this she says got her kicked out of the house. At age 11 she went to live with her father who had moved only two blocks away. *I usually was out in the streets a lot. Staying at a friend's house, a neighbor lady, living with my father, and then they sent me to my grandmother's for a year. And then my father went away to prison and I had to go live back with my mother. And then my stepfather started harassing my sister, right, and then my sister told my mother. This time she just kicked him out of the house but took him back again.*

Today Anna's mother lives close but there is minimal contact. She has lost all contact with her father. Evidenced by her mother's action when her sister complained of harassment but not when Anna did, their relationship has remained strained if not contrived for *the sake of my own children.* In recent weeks it seems that her mother has asked for forgiveness for all that "stuff" of long ago. Anna remains guarded as she calls herself unforgiving. *Today we live so close but I hardly ever go visit her. That man still lives there, so we don't go over there. He don't come to my house. Only my mother sometimes she comes. Being thrown out of my house was very very bad cause there's so many things that happened along the way. So now she is saying, forgive me, but I'm grown now already. She waited too long. It doesn't make any difference to me whether she asks me for forgiveness or not because I don't think ... I know that she's a mother and mothers are supposed to love you, you know. But she's still with that man, so how*

can you forgive somebody that's still with that man? Maybe I'll forgive her anyway cause she's my mother.

In a real sense Anna says she raised herself not relying upon anyone to get her up and off to school, to prepare meals, or even to allow her to spend the night in her own bed. As the eldest child with three younger sisters, Anna says she has always been torn between taking care of herself and doing her sisterly duties of protecting her siblings. She left home so many times she is unable to recall a single incident. Her life seems to be indexed by the times adults outside her family intervened on her behalf. Escaping to a neighbor's household with her siblings when, early on, her parents' fights would escalate was her first remembrance of soliciting outside help. Before her father moved out and later was incarcerated is the basis of her most vivid memories.

Before the divorce, it was nice. We would travel a lot to my grandmother's and there was this river we crossed. Sometimes it's flooded but there's like some Indian houses there that are still rocks. We would stop and take pictures of us. My dad would always pull over and we would go swimming in the river. And I remember my dad. You know he was swinging me on his arm in the river. And we would always do that. And every time I'd go back to my grandmother's I'd passed that river. I'd always remember we used to go swimming in that river. Me and my dad.

These are the last memories of her intact family. Soon after for reasons not explored Anna's dad was sent to prison. Before Anna's birth, her parents had been migrant workers in the citrus fields and she alludes to something of his past had finally caught up with him. Her parents had not yet divorced, but there were signs of things to

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come. While he was away, Anna identifies, was when things began to deteriorate in her relationship with her mother. As young children exposed to marital conflict often do, Anna says she searched what she might do differently to change the situation. She recalls often laying down with her mother, searching her face for clues, as her mother was prone to periods of "bed rest" that often lasted for days at a time.

After my father got out of prison the marriage was over. When my father got out, I think we still stayed for a little time in the little house where we had all lived. Then I remember my father found out about my mother seeing someone else. My mother was laying down on the bed with me and my sister was like, pulling her leg telling her, go, get away. Like my father had found that she was seeing somebody else. In a while they divorced. We went to go live with my mother and my father stayed at his house.

Initially skirting the reasons she was sent to live with her grandmother in a rural area of the state at age 14, Anna nonetheless remembers that period vaguely as a time with *lots of people living in one house*. Seemingly with a revolving roster of visiting relatives, Anna says she was pretty much invisible the entire year she lived and went to school in her grandmother's house. Later she offers she says her father had instigated the move to remove her from the attention of a man, many years her senior, who had began to approach her on her walks to school. Anna's persistence in talking with this man had lead to one of her mother's many household banishments.

Today, laughingly she reports, *it didn't work. He is the father of my oldest child. When I came back from my grandmother's I had to stay with my mother. I was probably 14 when I started seeing the guy that my father had forbade me to see. He was still*

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there and I'd still go out with him. But my father wasn't there any more. He had left.
My mother didn't like me seeing this guy and so she kicked me out of the house. She
would say, you're not taking nothing. Nothing. You're leaving but you're going with
what you have on. And she threw me out. I barely had a chance cause I was changing
into my nightgown to go to sleep. I barely had enough time to grab my shirt to put it on.

In a way to set herself apart, Anna makes it clear she did not get pregnant till age 19. The interim time between age 16 and her first child is a time that she understandably glosses over as a time when she took lots of chances and survived on her wits. Recalling a dark night when she had been walking alone she had decided to accept a ride from a stranger, something she says she had done routinely all her life. This time it had turned dangerous. *This man was gonna give me a ride and then he tried to force himself on me. I guess like I was very rebellious or something and I wasn't gonna put up with nobody's crap. And I started beating him so bad and kicking him and everything. And he was scared of me. I'm not lying, for real. And I got out the car and he yelled, "You are crazy."* Anna breaks into a giggle that becomes a full-bodied laugh, sustained, shifting in her seat to sit a little taller. *I think I surprised myself but maybe because of what I went through and everything. And I guess I really wasn't afraid if he killed me or anything because I didn't like the sense of living. I felt like it wasn't worth living for. You know so I wasn't afraid, I wasn't scared. I kept saying, I'm not gonna put up with this. Nobody's gonna do this to me.*

In describing Anna's skills of resiliency over a life course of encountered risk, common themes of interdependency become evident as she recounts her ability to

solicit appropriate support for herself throughout her life.   This was true whether from a childhood neighbor for a place to spend the night, her 10th grade math teacher who recognized her potential, or select housing authority staffers who had encouraged her to take parenting classes and pursue homeownership assistance.   Early on, she seems to have understood that as independent as she needed to be to survive, she also needed the help of a select group of adults.

For instance, when the rows with her mother became unbearable Anna would show up on a neighbor's doorstep asking for shelter. *There was this lady across the street. I had asked if I could stay with her for a while. I guess she could see that I just didn't have a place to go so I'd just go to her house and I'd stay there for a while.* When her average schoolwork had begun to suffer, her truancy had escalated and her home life had come to the notice of one teacher in particular Anna had been sent to a private school for at-risk youth. There she had lived in a dormitory, attending classes that essentially took her out of the environment that posed those risks. While at the time she was encouraged to buckle down and apply herself, which she did, today she questions why she was sent in the first place.

It was a school for bad girls, but I didn't think I was bad. The girls' dorm was on this side and the boys' dorm was on that side. And then there was a little room back there where there was a school. We would all go to school. And they would take us to the movies on Tuesday when it was 50 cents night. And they had horses and we would go swimming at the lake. But I felt like I didn't belong there. I felt like I'm not like these girls because, yes, maybe I was running away from my house or skipping school or

something. But I didn't feel like I belonged there. Because it's just like, oh my God! I don't act like this. I was a positive role model to everybody there cause everybody started to change after a while. But I got along with everybody. I was friends with everybody, even the guys over there on the other side. You know everybody was nice. Everybody you know respected me and everything.

School, especially in the days of childhood, had been a refuge, a place Anna could go to escape her home life. She had had few neighborhood friends, as her mother required she stick close to indoors doing chores or watching her siblings several years younger than she. Early on, when her parents lived together, she remembers games of hide and seek and walking the four blocks with a playmate to enjoy the flavored ices that would melt and run down her arm. As Anna had matured into adolescence, school became increasingly problematic. Soon she had raised the attention of her teachers.

Things began to look up for Anna when, at age 18, she got her GED, enrolling immediately in classes in a medical-related field. She began to model herself after others she calls influential. She ticks off a manager, a caseworker, a teacher, all who Anna says had guided her to make decisions about work, child rearing, and "working the system" that she says has gotten her throughout the painful as well as the joyous times in her life. She says she found work even before she completed the medical course and finally moved into her own place. Soon the high rent, sporadic work schedules and pending motherhood steered her into looking for housing assistance. She moved into Jane Long with a toddler in the fall of that year, receiving some moving

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help from her child's father but little more. He soon moved to another city and has largely been absent from her child's life since.

I worked off and on before and after I was living at Jane Long. I took some classes at the community college. Struggling with the details, she digs into her folder. *It was something about ... well we learned data entry, medical terminology, some basic math and front office skills. And after the 6-month program I got a certificate for that. But I didn't have a very good car. My car would break down and I was afraid I would lose my job. Sometimes I would call the manager cause where I worked it wasn't that far. I would call her and I'd say, hey, I need a ride to work. Can you pick me up? She'd say, okay I'm on my way.*

While talk of the housing authority is broached gingerly, Anna, through her momentary anger that she admits has lessened over the last year or so, is able to separate out those staffers who helped her, some who later *betrayed me* and those in which she had never held much confidence. She knows all by first and last name, position, ticking off her grievances, all the while acknowledging that without them she might not be sitting in her own home today. Talking with Anna even for a short time, one gets the sense she discerns the advantages of proffered public services and programs to the fullest and she has used every opportunity to pursue them. As she sums it, *that's what they're there for.*

She is the first public housing resident in the city to have qualified, enrolled and completed a publicly offered course toward affordable homeownership, for example. While the subsequent eviction regrettably postponed her anticipated purchase,

obviously it did not deter it all together. She speaks eloquently about the need for such continued programming, particularly for single mothers living in subsidized housing. *Well, I just wish they had given me some time in order to be able to move out properly. I had to work really hard. I had saved up a lot of money to buy my house. Most of that money now had to go to the new house, deposits, rent, turning on my new electricity bill. I lost a lot of money for a down payment to buy a house.*

Cause I had that money from the Family Self-Sufficiency Program that I was saving for my house. If I wouldn't had that money, I don't know what I would do. I was going to get a house through Habitat for Humanity. Well, that day that I had to move out, it had been a Friday. The next day, Saturday I had my appointment with Habitat for Humanity. Guess what? I didn't qualify now because the new house I was going to have to live in I would have only lived in there for one day. And in order to qualify for Habitat for Humanity you have to be living in your apartment for one year.

Anna's face brightens however when she talks about the day, before the downtown dispersal, she and her oldest daughter had previewed the apartment from where she would later be evicted. In fact, it will be the topic that elicits the strongest demonstrative affect from her throughout the interview. *Oh my God! It was wonderful there. Yes, I remember we were cleaning the apartment at JLT and we were taking things over to the new place. Well, the first time we went it was me and my older daughter. We saw it and it had two bedrooms and two bathrooms.* Her voice is gleeful and becomes childlike in a singsong cadence as she remembers, *my oldest was going to have her own bathroom and she had her big walk-in closet.* Her voice now grows

louder to an almost shout. *It was like over-whelming! Me and my daughter went into the closet and we started to cry. And you know it was like, so wonderful for us.* Her voice grows pensive, taking a moment or two to silently contemplate that remembrance, *oh my God, I still remember when we moved in there.*

It seemd area residents and homeowners around the complex had been in an uproar on the front pages of the local newspaper since it was announced that relocating public housing residents would be moving there. While that had served to deter some residents who might have otherwise relocated there, Anna was steadfast in moving there straightaway once she had reconciled herself to the inevitable dispersal. She had initially worried that no longer having the convenience of being downtown with services provided onsite would be a problem for her and the scattering residents. She said her first thoughts were that the dispersal would be *bad because it's kinda like these people were being taken out of their place and moved into different areas. They don't know where to go or what to do. They don't have nobody there on site to go to, like they did over there.*

Experiencing the feeling of walking into *the nicest apartment I've ever lived in,* what her youngest had called *the purdy house,* had softened the blow of force but as eviction loomed and the need to find alternate housing had temporarily fractured her steadfast dreams, Anna again considered dispersal as the first step in *getting rid of us. Out here everybody's not together. They don't have somewhere like an office where they can go and say, I need food, I need clothing, or I need this, where do I go, what do I do? And they're struggling. It's gonna be harder for them, the ones that's left.*

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During the course of the interview Anna explains how, despite all of her hardship, she believes she has largely overcome much that stood in her way. Enumerating aloud her accomplishments becomes one way to get a sense of her self-assessment as both a child and adult. *Like I thought I wasn't gonna finish getting my certificate for medical office assistant. I was so close to finishing and I'm like, I have always tried to educate myself. I've tried to do better, you know, tried to learn as much as I can. Tried to get involved in everything I can to educate myself so that I can do for my kids. They were always my strength to try to get ahead in life.*

That's why I've always worked because I'm not gonna depend on a man. I'm not gonna say oh, well I have no other kind of support. I have to be with him. Absolutely not. Even if I didn't have any other kind of support. Even if I didn't have a job or anything or I didn't work. I wouldn't be holding on to that. Her voice softening, she makes full eye contact. *You know what I mean. I guess I'm strong, but also very sensitive,* she says with hooting laughter. *I have this thing about me. I'm so sensitive. I think maybe I need to be more firm. I need to be more aggressive.*

It is Anna who brings the discussion to the topic of eviction. It's a subject of immediate if not somewhat subdued emotion. It will soon be two years since the proceedings. Anna and her family have made three moves since then. Anna's plan had been to live at the mixed income apartment from where she and her family had been evicted until they were ready to purchase a home through the Family Self-Sufficiency Program. Those plans were preempted by the family's eviction. Today the expressed

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anger and the disappointment in the handling of the proceedings remain fresh and as she begins to talk, tentatively at first, her emotion builds.

Getting the notice, oh, it felt very very awful, very bad. After all the hard work I had done and I was fixing to get out of everything. You know saving up money for a house, working hard towards my house. I was so mad to be put in this situation. We wanted to stay there. I was in the process of working with the housing authority to get my house. I had already taken the housing classes. I had already fixed my credit problems and everything. But we've gone past that now. We've gone past that. But I still feel like a knot in my throat when I talk about that. I don't know why.

After receiving the notice Anna set about to muster support and research her options. In ways, this was reminiscent of her tenacity leading to her stepfather's eventual arrest when, as a teenager, she had made a call to Child Protective Services to complain about his harassment. She strategized a number of solutions to stop the proceedings. Told at the first appeal officiated by a lower ranking housing authority staffer that indeed she and her family were "good tenants" who had "never given us any problems" Anna called upon the employee to help her delay the proceedings. Unable to stop the inevitable, Anna, along with Miss Steffie her JLT friend and neighbor, faced a city housing official on the second round of appeals. *The second hearing was with an officer upstairs in that building downtown. And* [the authority employee from the first appeal] *went and you know, Miss Steffie went. But no, nobody was there from the housing authority. No* [executive director]*, no* [relocation manager]*, no nobody. And I emailed them all and nobody ever responded to me. I said I'm willing to do anything*

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you ask me to. Later they all tried to tell me I didn't know that this had happened. Nobody even tried to do a thing about it cause they really don't care, I guess. They act like they care but they don't really care.

Today she recalls the fall-out of having to leave what she had considered her "choice" after dispersal and the embarrassment of eviction as only slight detours as she realized her dream she's held since a childhood where she longed for "a little place of my own." While throughout the interview Anna has predominately used the first person pronoun to talk about "my children", "my house", "my choice", she has made a conscious decision to work past the problems that the stress and stain of eviction brought to her marriage. She is happy to be "free' of following housing authority rules and often has to *pinch myself to realize this is really my home. Well, it belongs to the mortgage company,* she says laughing heartily. *Sometimes I wish I could win the lottery and finish paying my house. We did have to get an alarm cause someone has tried to break in twice here. But other than that it's all good and it's fenced. I go outside. I water my plants. I close the gate cause my youngest can run into the street. He's playing around all over the yard, everywhere. They have a big yard to run around. We didn't have that at* [the site of eviction]. *You know sometimes I just go outside and I'm like looking around. Is this really my home? Yes, this is really MY home.*

Figure 6.3 is a summary of findings related Anna including her alliance with the housing authority as prospects of resettlement. Table 6.3 is a tabulated assessment.

NAME	AGE	RACE	Children / G-children	Higher/Lower Agency	Status of Neighborhood
Anna	36	H	4	H	HP-Private (evicted PH)

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	**Self-efficacy / mastery** **Good social skills / etiquette** **Internal locus of control** **Clean house / children** **Expressed personal / housing satisfaction** **Planfulness: routinely maps out weekly family activities** **Problem focused coping**	**Younger children doing well in school** **Identifies with other Hispanic neighbors** **Neighbor playmates for children** **Close teacher/school contact** **Visitors: friends, coworkers** **Spouse: financial, childcare**	**Participated in housing-based programs: home ownership, job, early parenting** **Gainfully employed** **Buying house in HP neighborhood: security system installed** **Stable home environment, married, jobs,** **Expresses housing resettlement & sense of belonging in neighborhood** **Access to running automobile**
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	Resultant anger & disappointment over circumstances of eviction Diminished confidence in parenting older children Estranged from mother: lives close	Older child experiencing school difficulties; multiple relocations, anger at eviction Marital strain: parenting issues, eviction, Anna's work hours	Housing infraction resulting in public housing eviction Current home in HP: increased safety concerns, crime & major repairs

<u>What Worked for Anna</u>

Agency: Anna's ability to adjust / recover from household eviction, among other events, demonstrates resilience that fosters follow through. Family/Culture: Strong neighbor, friend, and coworker network.
Structure: Forming an institutional alliance with several key housing personnel early in her public housing tenure benefited Anna in several ways. She was the first public housing resident to successfully complete a program to help finance home ownership.

Figure 6.3 Summary of study findings: Anna.

Table 6.3 Tabulated Assessment of Anna

	Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	+ + +	+ + +	+ + +
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+ +	+ +	+ +

6.6.1 The Summation of Anna

The prevalence of risk, particularly in the accumulated experiences over childhood and adolescence, has the potential of disrupting what we might consider more normal developmental trajectories (Rutter, 2001). At many turns, Anna was at a crossroads that could have resulted in her making choices that would have put her on a different path. And while she did indeed make potentially damaging decisions, something or somebody was there to help right most of her mistakes before escalating. It appears that while risk, thus stress, was evident in Anna's home environment, she has demonstrated personal traits and interpersonal skill of control, contingency and support-seeking behavior. All point to a coping style that generally sought to change the direction that such stressful conditions were headed (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). That active coping becomes a way to problem solving, we see Anna's pursuit for remedy to her eviction as one example. As she had fought the fight, it had been hard to give up even in the face of mounting realization. Yet we know that the resources necessary to adaptively cope with stress-related risks are predicated by the quantity and quality available, though we might expect individuals to cope in a fairly generalized way (Watson, Willson, & Sinha, 1998).

When Anna had made the decision to marry soon after dispersal to relocate, she says in doing so she would complete the picture she had carried of her and her intact family living in their own home one day. She had worried that her children would not have the in-home father experience that she had had early on. Today she insists the loss of that has been the source of much of her problems as she grew up, increasingly missing him yet eventually losing total contact. As she has demonstrated, when she has a goal she somewhat methodically sets about, through an organized set of steps, to bring it to fruition or at least try.

Anna's agency score was in the higher range demonstrating tenacity despite hardship. When Anna had had to pull her children out of a school they loved because of eviction she reports there had initially been significant problems. She has had to work with her eldest daughter's resultant anger by becoming more involved with the teachers, counselors and taking parenting classes offered by the school. In these ways, Anna continues to solicit institutional help in much the same way she maximized her abilities with the local public housing authority. She says she looks forward to meeting other Hispanic mothers like her in the neighborhood, maintaining that high poverty does not have to mean something "bad" or "always about money."

When the interview was over, Anna had proudly showed off a spare room in the back of the house she had converted into the "homework room."   Each child had their own corner decorated as they saw fit with banners and charts Anna has devised to motivate them. Her kids, she says, are doing very well in school and she is more involved than ever before. She has paid more attention to the completion of homework,

taking time to check it out, offer praise, or make suggestions. When the subject of resettlement surfaces, Anna points to being in a stable home where she can make her own decisions of change - not an outside agency - as evidence that all of the troubles of the last couple of years have been worth it.

6.7 Resettlement Conclusions

In the ways that these women experienced various emotions and took various action, the likelihood of *resettlement* is theorized not only by general coping style, met age/life stage needs and wants but also the notion that the householder has bargained, to the best of her ability, the opportunity structures offered at dispersal. Table 6.4 is a tabulated summary of the women featured in this chapter.

Table 6.4 Tabulated Summary of Georgia, Suzette & Anna

		Agency (Psychosocial Expectations)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Georgia	Successful Adaptation	+	+ +	+
Georgia	Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+ + +	+ + +	+ + +
Suzette	Successful Adaptation	+ + +	+ + +	+ + +
Suzette	Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+	+ +	+ +
Anna	Successful Adaptation	+ + +	+ + +	+ + +
Anna	Nonsuccessful Adaptation	+ +	+ +	+ +

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In the ways we may feel better when, at least we've had our say, all residents perceived they had at least made some improvement over previous living circumstances. This notion of improvement in opportunity sampling is a subtle yet important slant on Briggs' (1998) "getting by" versus "getting ahead" as a familial yardstick of negotiation. Here we maintain that residents need both ways of realized improved lives. That is, achieving a sense of spatial and social rootedness means whatever the familial costs incurred by dispersal and the demands of imposed relocation, there is a mindset that every-day life has, indeed, improved as a result of the process. We have incorporated the resettlement themes of social trust, alliance with the local housing authority and the future familial implications of life after traditional subsidy as important indicators in the promise of opportunity.

Initially in broaching the subject of resettlement most women had difficulty in assessing whether they indeed felt "rooted" in their homes and neighborhoods. Instead they tended to focus on a problem at hand. Most of these were tallied as issues of trust, housing authority related, or an unknown future without traditional help. Yet it is these very same issues, resolved to residential satisfaction, which can bring about any hope of finally settling in. Resettlement is a complicated issue to hit head on, as we all tend to think in short-range when queried about generalized satisfaction. Also under consideration are the elements of time needed, effort expended and individual motivation required to reach this phase; such cannot be easily gleaned in one interview. Indeed those who feel "rootless" today may eventually achieve a sense of social and spatial connection that has eluded them thus far. As one woman suggested after

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assessing her unsettled feelings, *ask me next year. I may feel different.* Acknowledging the difficulty of assessment, nonetheless resettlement remains an important goal of deconcentration that policy largely overlooks.

In conducting the interviews, it was apparent the task of assessing resettlement was going to be difficult as momentary issues kept popping up, tending to cloud overall judgments. As one woman angrily expressed, by saying she had "resettled" meant the housing authority would have "won." However, listening for the ways that life seemed better than before became one way to mediate past feelings with the future hopes of each family member. Here such attempt meant listening for the balance of *perceived* improvement of opportunity in matters related to housing, neighborhood, school and community for self and family. Such improvement comes in terms of meeting the psychosocial needs, along with personal age/life stage cultural needs and hopes of the mother for self and her children. As head of household (or influential decision-maker), mothers who identify the prospects of an alliance seem to be able to more readily leverage advantage. In all of these ways, we come closer to a better understanding of reaching resettlement in the aftermath of deconcentration of poverty.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

Social policy changes the physical, psychological and social competencies and capacities of individuals. This makes for an immediate micro-macro link.

Leisering, 2003, pg. 210

Given that housing is everywhere and is so basic a human need, it is curiously invisible as a public issue in America.

Briggs, 2005, pg. 323

7.1 Review: The Purpose of the Study

In this concluding chapter we review the purpose and conclusions of this study as one way to identify future policy implications and further areas of mobility research for low-income families. We focus on what this study has identified ostensibly as the goal of deconcentration; that is, reaching resettlement in a new home and new neighborhood. We also consider ways in which the specific needs of these households – related to psychosocial functioning, familial/cultural need and institutional alliance building – might best be identified, operationalized and implemented. Lastly, we look for ways to strengthen the formation and alliance between public housing residents and the local housing authority.

Using the "ideal" model of adaptation to middle class as the literature's

rendition of resettlement has allowed us to consider, in life course perspective, how closely study results have matched the model (See Figure 3.1 below for review). Here we also look for ways that policymakers and housing administrators might recognize discrepancies and thus operationalize outcomes to more closely match the adaptive behavior of these residents.

We also identify two directions this study has taken in exploring the nuanced lives of public housing residents attempting to forge new lives in new neighborhoods. At first glance, we recognize that executing housing policies that involuntarily disperse and relocate individuals will bring the kinds of change as Leisering described above. By the skill and promotion of resilience we also recognize the variation in how each householder will cope with, adapt to and negotiate such change. Perhaps most importantly, we remain focused on the potential for recognizing such resilience in individuals, not to "fix" problems so much as to better identify the varying degree of help relocating families will need by recognizing the balance of strength and deficit.

At second glance, this study has echoed what other mobility studies before have pointed out. That is, what might appear to be beneficial to low-income households most often instead benefits economic interests and political agendas of others (Marcuse, 1986). This study has told the stories of deconcentration exclusively from the residential perspective, allowing these women to tell the researcher what might have helped them to better make the leap. As Briggs reminds above, we still have much work to do conceding decent and affordable housing, as a basic need, is curiously absent from the public agenda. Further, for as long as such interests and agendas

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remain centralized on issues of costs, location, and structural qualifications, we divert the focus away from the fundamental purpose of subsidized housing assistance. That is, finding ways to promote the wellbeing of those individuals and their families who live in public housing (Bratt, 2006). Understanding the likelihood that residents may achieve a "better life" in the aftermath of deconcentration means searching for ways to measure, encourage and reach such state of wellbeing.

This study's residential perspective of deconcentration gives one angle to what is necessarily an expansive policy. That is, residential stories and collected recommendations while important, must also incorporate elements of programmatic policies of assistance, receiving communities and access to opportunity to adequately expand housing choice for low-income families. We can talk and theorize of improved states of personal wellbeing but as we all know tailored comprehensive assistance will be needed. The implications of this kind of help might seem daunting, expensive and unreachable.

But as the life course reviews of just 12 women have revealed, there are resilient people living in public housing. This demonstrates that not all public housing residents need the same level of assistance nor do they expect it. Being able to efficiently determine the extent of relocation assistance needed would better be expended to the neediest of families first. Otherwise, looking at the whole of the population without such ways to identify indeed does appear out of reach. Yet we must continue to look for ways that strengthen future policy proposals in ways that do just that. Here we incorporate the study's findings into such suggestions.

Middle Class Values	
Independence	Ambition
Academic achievement	Individual responsibility
Control of aggression	Planning
Respect for property	Social skills / etiquette
Success	Acceptable conduct
Delayed gratification	Self-reliance

	Agency (Psychosocial Well Being)	Family/Culture (Supportive Networks)	Structure (Institutional Expectations)
Successful Adaptation	Dispositional optimism Internal locus of control / causality Problem focused coping Self efficacy / sense of mastery Planfulness Interdependence	Mother knows / identifies neighbors Mother - contact with teachers/school Children doing well in school Children play with others in neighborhood; friendships Family/friends visit in new home Interacts well with housing personnel / onsite management	Gainful employment. Active job searching Law abiding citizen Housing compliance; rules, regulations Maintains stable home environment; child-rearing, job, education Participates in housing based "self sufficiency" programs
Nonsuccessful Adaptation	Less dispositional optimism External locus of control Emotion-focused coping Diminished sense of mastery Short term viewpoint	Mother does not know/identify with neighbors Mother - no contact with teachers Children having difficulty in school; Children do not play with others in neighborhood Family/friends do not visit new home Does not interact or poorly interacts with housing personnel	Unemployed No active job search initiated Record of arrests & convictions Housing noncompliance – breaks rules Chronic instability in home environment: parenting, work Refuses to participate in housing based "self sufficiency" programs

Review of Figure 3.1

7.2 Study Findings: Agency, Family/Culture and Neighborhood

In chapter 3, an ideal model of adaptation was introduced. Presented again in review, this model illustrates what adaptive resettlement might look like - preferably in lower poverty - taken from middle class and institutional expectations for the in-coming lower income household. The model recognizes middle class-appropriate psychosocial dimensions of personal characteristics and social living as defined by these conventional expectations. While the literature makes no mention of "resettlement" to the extent termed in this study, it does assume that those who relocate and *remain* in lower poverty will have made "successful" relocations. Alternately, the assumption of re-concentration back into higher poverty is generally regarded as a "non-successful" relocation and remedy remains the primary focus of scholarly interest.

This model generally concludes that the household – in order to be successfully resettled - must incorporate these middle class elements: thus, the "ideal." Hence, we might expect that when families make moves back into higher poverty this might be categorized as a "non-successful" adaptation to middle class living: i.e. an "unsuccessful" relocation. By a review of the literature, we have seen that attention is usually given to the structural effects of place as the primary determinant of effective relocation. While some scholars have recognized the individual in the mix, it has largely been to point out difficulties encountered in relocation efforts including large family size and housing search abilities. Continuing to focus near exclusively on what amounts to personal deficit and resultant structural constraint, we lose sight of how these families might make adaptive changes, even outside middle class expectations.

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This means there is still a diminished view about how residential preferences, motivations and needs factor into resettlement beyond this "ideal" model of adaptation. Teasing out potentially understudied factors has been a primary purpose of this study. Table 7.1 illustrates the results of plotting the ideal model of adaptive behavior with the life course results of each study subject. These results have been categorized in the appropriate sphere of influence: agency, family/culture and structure. In each cell, assessed successful/nonsuccessful adaptation was based upon qualitative data analysis, field notes, and researcher impression. Examining these results against the "ideal" model of adaptive mobility behavior and what the literature emphasizes as "successful" relocations into lower poverty, the assessed findings of the researcher are presented.

Table 7.1. Study Results:
Poverty Status of Neighborhood Not a Predictor of Resettlement

Subjects	Spheres of Adaptation			Literature Prediction	Assessed Findings
	Agency	Family/Culture	Structure		
Vernita (LP)	N	N	N^2	S	NR
Lucille (LP)	S	N	S	S	R
Meg (HP)	S^1	S	S^2	N	R
Debra (HP)	S^1	S	S^2	N	R
Penney (LP)	S^1	S	S	S	R
Georgia (LP)	N^1	N	N^2	S	NR
Suzette (HP)	S	S	S^2	N	R
Anna (HP)	S	S	S^2	N	R

Legend: S – successful adaptation, N – non-successful adaptation
R – resettlement, NR – non-resettlement

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[1] Contradicts pre-move agency score
[2] Contradicts literature prediction

7.2.1 Micro Sphere of Influence: Personal Agency Findings

The agency score used to select the study sample was derived from a pre-move assessment used to survey the residents before household dispersal. Items that gauged agency functioning were selected out, weighed and tabulated to give a score. This score seemingly held up in a study of coping capacity between two women. That is, Lucille who had a higher score used more problem-focused coping while Vernita, who had a lower pre-move score, used more emotion-focused coping style. The literature identifies more efficient means of coping as problem-focused that allows one to more actively and directly consider alternatives to problems (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

However, several women who had scored low at pre-move – including Penney and Debra - displayed higher agency attributes and functioning when interviewed four years later. Penney's life course stories of survival and Debra's ability to leverage support across a variety of spheres demonstrate high abilities. However an important distinction must be made. While this rather artificial way of determining agency as a pre-move predictor might prove unreliable across other dimensions of mobility, the mechanism of agency itself was a reliable indicator in which to study the psychosocial dimensions displayed in Figure 1.3 that shows the *micro* influences of behavior.

7.2.2 Meso Sphere of Influence: Matching Familial Need with Neighborhood

The notion of a *meso* sphere of adaptive influence was used to capture the more proximal influences that will guide a head of household to make relocation decisions into settings that more closely match the familial/cultural needs of the family. (See Figure 1.4) Theorized there is varying need across age/lifestage of the mother as

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representative of self and family. Therefore we would expect to find varying reasons for making the relocation decisions these women made based on age and need of children, for example. Findings revealed an important element when we consider the role that choice plays in making decisions. These findings cut across age/lifestage of the mother and showed differences between the women who had remained or left housing assistance. For example, the younger and middle-aged women who lived in mixed income authority owned units readily identified how their present location did not meet certain familial need/wants (i.e. distance from family/friends, lack of close-in transportation, perceived reconcentration). They also complained about what they deemed as "no choice" to change the situation.

The older women who lived in mixed income - not in same complex as the younger and middle aged mothers thus not as heavily populated with former JLT residents - voiced a greater familial and housing match, declaring they had choice in moving to another site if they wanted. And in fact some had moved even after declaring "permanent" choice based upon health needs. Physical proximity to family, friends, doctors as well as safety in the location of their particular unit was cited for matched housing satisfaction. Also these women were living alone – unlike the younger women who headed households with children – therefore the ramifications of making moves that might jeopardize assistance must be noted.

Among the women who had left housing assistance – all who were now buying houses in higher poverty neighborhoods – talk of "choice" and matched familial need seem to dominate the discussion of their decisions to leave housing assistance. Of

course, one could argue the diminished choice to buy *only* in higher poverty but most women eschewed the desire to live in areas in which they were less familiar. In the case of Meg, Suzette and Anna, their new homes were located in the general quadrant of where they had all grown up. They all spent time talking about "being on their own" to make housing decisions – such as planting a garden or having a late night party – as primary areas of satisfaction. Further, these women pointed to specific examples to demonstrate how they made changes in order to more closely meet the needs of their families. Meg's decision to marry her children's father and Debra's decision to relocate in a neighborhood far from what she termed as the "bad influences of downtown gangs" were such examples.

7.2.3 Macro Sphere of Influence: Poverty Status of Neighborhood

The overarching degree of institutional influence on the lives of public housing residents is illustrated in Figure 1.5. None more so than the institution of public housing that lays out qualifications to receive housing assistance and now oversees the dispersal and relocation of low-income families. In this sphere of influence we examine how neighborhood affects the prospects of resettlement. If we are to understand adaptive behavior in middle class settings as evidence of resettlement, then, according to the literature, we would expect to find "unsettled" reports among residents living in higher poverty. In a general sense, we would expect that families living in lower poverty settings would be closer, by degree, to resettlement than higher poverty households.

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Yet this study found that lower poverty status of neighborhood was not a predictor of resettlement of the relocated public housing family. In fact, the difference among those who were living in lower poverty at the time of study was split by age. The older women in lower poverty, Lucille and Penney, reported feelings of resettlement by generally focusing on personal gains realized through their families. Lucille's grandson has a nice neighborhood where he could now bring his friends while Penney's family has enjoyed her proximity to amenities not found in their own neighborhoods. It will be interesting as Penney relocates back into higher poverty to be closer to her children to see how she is able to once again achieve resettlement. These women also enjoyed a civil relationship with particular housing personnel that served as support.

Vernita and Georgia, the younger women living in mixed income, when queried about prospects of resettlement reported deterrents of social and physical isolation living in lower poverty mixed income settings. Both voiced complaints about difficulty in finding work, even as they were seemingly surrounded by potential jobs. They were particularly vocal in their declaration of feeling unsettled, pointing out difficulties with soliciting employment help through the local housing authority.

When assessing how recalled reactions to dispersal and initial relocation might impact resettlement, these findings were also mixed according to age. That is, the older women had generally welcomed the change while the younger ones had been skeptical or resisted. Today, these initial feelings continue to permeate prospects of resettlement for the younger women, but especially true for younger women living in lower poverty.

All householders interviewed who were living in higher poverty at the time of the study termed their households as resettled or nearing resettlement. Most – save Meg as the "only Hispanic" in her neighborhood - tended to focus on culturally identifying with neighbors and wanting more familial leisure contact. All spent time talking about leveraging opportunities in their jobs and children's school. All women in higher poverty of working age were employed at the time of the interview. Two of these three women had not been working while living at JLT at the time of relocation. All were now buying the houses where they now lived, either with spouse, partner or family help.

While all living in higher poverty identified needed change in the physical appearance of their house (new paint, roof, interior changes), this did not seem to affect feelings of resettlement in their new neighborhood. Rather, these women pointed to new found elements of "being on my own" and "making my own decisions" that seemed to ameliorate the physical and economic condition of the neighborhood. Most talked about the trepidation in leaving assistance but feeling the need to set an example for their children. All talked about realizing a dream of having a home with a backyard in order for their children to play safely and have playmates over.

Clearly, poverty status of neighborhood carries implications beyond the more conventional economic factors. As we see, familial and social factors of identity, efficacy and belonging – factors of resettlement – are evident despite living once again in a higher poverty setting. Interesting, all living in higher poverty noted that in retrospect, the forced relocation from JLT had made possible important improvements for the family. Several maintained that in all likelihood they would not have made the

changes they have made were it not for a household dispersal. While the reaction to dispersal and initial relocation was mixed across the women (some had welcomed the change, others had resisted), these issues no longer seemed to matter.

Another interesting finding of this study is that those who were living in lower poverty - seemingly surrounded by a variety of appropriate jobs – reported having had the most difficulty in securing a job. Even as these women said they were willing to look for work outside of lower poverty, issues of reliable transportation and adequate childcare were raised. While all had worked while living at downtown, today only one is employed in a temporary job that requires a long distance commute.

Alternately, those who had not worked at JLT and who now lived in higher poverty neighborhoods (in houses they were buying) were working. The necessity of finding and maintaining a job in order to buy a house is evident and could serve as motivation for the individual to persevere. One important difference between those working aged women living in lower and higher poverty was that women in higher poverty all owned running cars while those in lower poverty merely had access to one. An important policy implication is to better understand the barriers to employment, including reliable transportation, even as families attempt relocation into lower poverty.

It is important to stress again in passing the part that time might play in these findings. That is, each family will most likely be different in terms of time needed to adjust to change, the time needed to indeed feel "resettled" whether by finding friends, making important job connections or recognizing gains made by the entire family. Nonetheless, at the time of this study there were noted differences among women living

in lower versus higher poverty settings. There were also noted differences among the three age/lifestage groups of mothers studied.

7.3 Study Findings: Age/Lifestage, Social Trust and Institutional Alliance

Among all residents regardless of lifestage/age, I found issues related to trust. As I examined how lifestage/age affected relocation and most importantly impacted resettlement I found the ability to trust by age group was not only affected by perception but was also simmered by patience and steeped in experience. That trust impacted mobility decisions at nearly every turn demonstrates the symbiotic nature for these residents. That needs, expectations and hopes were different in many ways for each lifestage (with expected overlap in a generalized way) colored these findings in significant ways. As a group, the younger women tended to express impatience, anger, and often were unable (or unwilling) to see their own hand in their problems. They were necessarily concerned about employment, childcare and single parenting concerns. Some held deep resentment for what they perceived as a lack of institutional help with troubled job searches. In that they were still finding their pathways, principally those related to employment and parenting, they often lacked the perspective or distance necessary to objectively evaluate choices.

The middle-aged women, perhaps less impatient but still holding on to vestiges of frustration across this age group, were no less worried about their children, primarily concerned about their own children not repeating the mistakes they had made. Worries about their growing adolescents' safety, peer pressure and at-risk exposures seemed to be a replay of their own teenage experiences. They recalled the unwise decision to drop

out of school and falling into teen pregnancy as an early mark of a life course of diminished opportunity. While they could not remember anyone attempting to deter them, they claim they want to do things differently for their own children. This group, on balance, was the most comfortable group in looking back on the pathways of troubled families, poor schooling and single parenting naming, in retrospect, the pitfalls, missed turns and lost opportunities.   All expressed regret, by degree, while distancing themselves less than the younger group from the responsibilities they shirked in their younger days.

The older women, with their long-distance perspective, were indeed perhaps the most heterogeneous group studied in terms of experience of deconcentration. Each had a unique combination of reaction to dispersal, met relocation needs and prospects of resettlement. Yet much of their early life course stories rang with similar notes of hardship and poverty, expressing what seemed to be accumulated risks not only at the hands of family and spouse but also living in a time when the rights of the poor were less recognized and standardized.

That one woman never went to school while others dropped out well before today's law would have otherwise investigated puts the older mother's life course in historical context. Perhaps the most surprising was in their response to talk of resettlement. Emotional reactions of dispersal ranged from anger to elation, from apathy to resignation, giving important clues to how these women have negotiated for themselves over their life times. Relocation decisions, save one, were made with children and grandchildren in mind, but initially for different reasons. As a group, they

eschewed the tendency to blame anyone for their life choices and the ways their lives had turned out. Taking on something akin to resolution, they each talked in future tense through the legacy they'll leave for their families.

All age groups had something to say about the local public housing authority. Most in the younger group complained about a lack of respect they felt when dealing directly with the staff, among those women who remained and those who had left the rolls. This group, more than any other, assigned blame to their relocation problems of decentralized services and increased financial responsibility, such utility bills. Middle-aged women, noting their institutional history, nonetheless seemed less angry. Yet with recent relocation difficulties re-surfacing, some had found renewed frustration. These difficulties had to do with fulfilling HUD requirements to perform a certain number of community service hours to maintain assistance status at the same time they said they were trying to find a job.

As a group, the older women were all fairly pragmatic about the parameters of personal responsibility and institutional responsibility. Although all of these women had had a housing tenure of at least ten years in public housing (most with a great deal more) and thus had experienced a more encapsulated living experience, all declared dealing with utility bills and the rising usage/costs of electricity was their responsibility.

Expressing a need to feel empowered by the promise of a better life in a better neighborhood, many – especially in the younger group – related the uneasiness of being exposed and targeted in ways never experienced when they lived downtown. That is, many identified feeling unsupported and discouraged even while continuing to expect

institutional encouragement and support. This finding, at the tip of the larger issue of decentralized service delivery, speaks to the symbiotic relationship that many residents have come to expect from the housing authority. Even as the local authority redefines its role, residents seemingly struggle between the rigidity of rules and the allure of alliance building to realize choice, mobility and opportunity.

We turn to a discussion of potential policy ideas based on these reported findings.

7.4 Policy Initiative: Discerning Need and Meaning

This notion of temporal and personal functioning has important implications for future policy direction as we search for ways to economize housing searches that can aid those households in varying need of assistance. Discerning need becomes one way to focus on the neediest of households first while managing the more functional households in their relocation goals. But the question arises: how best to discern need?

Contemplating the rigors of relocation through the eyes of the affected resident gives those who study and implement policy a perspective not readily considered. This means as policymakers mobilize these households we must recognize there is a spectrum of functioning that has important implications about future prospects. Further, we use the ways and means that individuals go about meeting a variety of interpersonal, familial, cultural and social needs, wants and aspirations in the processes of relocation as pointed out in this study. By doing so, we recognize the degree of capacity, skill and resource as vital elements that not only balance the continuum of personal risk and resilience but helps to identify those households that are at a greater deficit.

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Ideally, understanding and using this more fully developed resident- replete with psychosocial functioning and needs – one could "chart' the subsidized family using determined measurements as one way to quantify the need of each household. That is, information related to head of household psychosocial functioning and recognized familial need could be used to "compute" a score of need to further calculate ways and means of relocation assistance. I envision a personalized schema, displayed in Venn diagram fashion, that could show at a glance areas of strength and areas of deficit per household as related to the three spheres of influence theorized in this study: agency, family/culture, structure. Assessment could be as simple as answering a few questions to discern this balance.

That each household could produce a unique combination of overlap and need demonstrates the unique nature of deconcentration to the individual family. Understanding and recognizing individual needs of the family could carry important implications for future policy. This might mean that policymakers would be forced to acknowledge that if we as a society are serious about improving the life chances of the low-income, it would be best to know what there is to work with *before* families are lost to the system. Having and using such information to chart individualized relocation plans by one-site relocation personnel could likewise strengthen an institutional alliance for the public housing family in important ways.

First, there would be necessary interaction to operationalize and quantify current functioning and categories of need that could aid program personnel in quickly identifying and assessing the level of relocation assistance required, based on tallied

scores of "need." That is, understanding the spheres of influence as both areas of deficit and areas of potential strength, residents could "see" and perhaps give input to this plotted level of assistance. Having a say in one's "treatment plan" has enormous implications of building a relational network. That these levels will be varied is evidenced in this study of 12 women. The level of need was indeed quite different across the sample. But because there was no way to discern need, all were treated the same, when some could have used more and others possibly less.

Second, from a strictly economic standpoint, the costs of individualized counseling could be more accurately budgeted and utilized, pinpointing those families in greatest need for such attention. There already exists, at least in the large-scale relocation effort used as the basis for this study, social workers and relocation personnel. Before dispersal, these workers were housed in an office on-site. After relocation, they were headquartered at a downtown facility and in many ways the residents reported that's where they lost contact. Such office personnel need to circulate among authority owned sites, so as to be more accessible and visible. Periodic "checkups" to ascertain whether the plan devised is working would be ideal.

7.5 Policy Initiative: Building an institutional alliance

Today, housing choice of mobilized public housing families continues to remain severely hampered by racial, economic, social and political barriers that must be rectified in order to expand, protect and facilitate true housing choice. But if we want to understand the full spectrum of choice we must understand first how residents view "choice" in the throes of dispersal. Policies that continue to look past this perhaps

subtle but influential aspect miss the mark and thus make the mobility work at hand more difficult. As outsiders interested, we must also consider how residential needs, wants and aspirations affect mobility outcomes as well. In this way, we invite a mobility discussion rarely broached: the prospects of resettlement after an involuntary relocation that considers characteristics, preferences and perceptions of residents.

This study has addressed an important issue within the macro-challenges of housing choice and that is the topic of public housing resident as decision-maker. Here we have imbued these women with micro, meso and macro preferences, needs, hopes as well as limitations of a life course of risk. How much that plays into relocation destinations or into matters of resettlement remains understudied. Here we have recognized another way to examine relocation. There are encouraging developments. The issues of choice and opportunity among migrating low-income households have enjoyed a renewed infusion of scholarly attention, particularly drawing attention to the oversight of choice within the national social policy dialogue of poverty and race (Briggs, 2005).   In recognizing a disparate geography of opportunity in relocation, we also recognize the challenges of competing fiscal challenges and public political sentiment.

As we review implications and conclusions there are a couple of caveats to consider. In chapter 3, we discussed that outcome of such research is predicated on several timing issues. That families tended to "time" their resettlement across a variation of internal and external factors makes any real standardized means of "measuring" resettlement nearly impossible. But it does give standards and guidelines

to use in operationalizing the notion as a goal of policy. That some residents tended to look backward to a romanticized time at JLT appeared to hamper any efforts to move forward in ways that might incorporate what they wanted but have been unable to replicate in their new lives. That a few of the women studied here termed themselves "stuck" makes this point.

In the next section we develop a policy agenda for future mobility, looking at the prospects of resettlement and three related areas that this qualitative research has exposed: difficulty in rebuilding that which was changed by dispersal; familial/cultural needs by age/lifestage of head of household as a guide to relocation into appropriate settings; and institutional alliance in the quest for opportunity.

Throughout this dissertation, the focus has been to explore what deconcentration of poverty means from the residential perspective. As we turn to suggestions for policy practices, particularly regarding the institutional alliance between householder and local housing authority, the focal interest remains on the individual's perception of that alliance. As we have seen, most residents tended to view on-site management as an institutional extension of the local authority. In this way, institution has come to mean to residents all forms of oversight. Yet in talking with these women - even among those who had left the rolls - all touched on the desire to be in better communication with and have better response from housing personnel. That some of the women interviewed here have been able to forge such a relationship gives important clues for further study. Noted, had the institutional representatives or on-site personnel been interviewed for

this study we might have captured a different set of opinions leading to a different set of policy initiatives from a different perspective.

7.6 The Prospects of Resettlement

This study has taken a look at the change experience of deconcentration from the residential perspective. In this way, efforts were made to determine the processes these women undertook in response to the policy demands of dispersal, relocation and the prospects of resettlement. We now discuss rebuilding from the imposed change.

7.6.1 Rebuilding From Change

We have explored reaction, response and resolution to policy demands. As we consider policy formation to address this more informed view of the resident, the first issue to be settled is whether housing policy should in fact put the necessary attention to recognizing the psychosocial individual. That issue has the potential for debate among housing administrators, policy makers, scholars – perhaps even the residents themselves. When we enlarge the policy circle of identified stakeholders - here including the resident - we invite more scrutiny, more rigor and the likelihood for embattled consensus.

Given the outcome of that debate, we stand greater potential for success if we bear in mind what and how we expect subsidized families to rebuild from change. For most, it is the gradual easing into change that works best. Barring that, the next best thing is to introduce change with something familiar so as not to totally disrupt the continuity of stability and familiarity. When residents believe they have had a say in relocation, whether through individualized counseling sessions or group workshops

devoted to dissemination of accurate information and allay of concerns/questions, outcomes of change tend to go smoother. For example, recognizing that coping is a strategic skill that can be taught, ongoing education in the skill building classes provided to public housing residents, particularly as a lead up to dispersal, should be encouraged. Certainly taking part in an assessment of need – ideally before relocation – would go far in bridging that alliance.

As we contemplate the expense of personnel, services and related needed in order to implement such assessment, suggestions have been made how best to determine the level and degree of assistance each family will need so as to maximize the overhead of costs. These suggestions were made based on the summary findings that demonstrate the varying level of need, skill and motivation among this small sample of relocated women. Developing a rather simple format for discerning the level of need each relocating family would mean such assessment would also alert as to the strengths of each household so as not to duplicate or otherwise unnecessarily spend time on that which the family can already accomplish.

7.6.2 Merging Familial Need and Neighborhood

The "geography of opportunity", theorized outside the social and economic isolation of concentrated poverty, seemingly links families to markets, institutions and systems through the mechanisms of deconcentration. Yet it is filtered through the unique human characteristics, preferences and perceptions of the resident (Galster & Killen, 1995). As this study has pointed out, we simply do not know enough about these "characteristics, preferences and perceptions" to fully understand the mobility behavior

and social action of those who attempt to traverse lower-poverty living and those who do not. As it stands, these personal attributes become conflated with institutional and structural barriers as evidence of outcome.

This, in turn, leaves us unable to study resettlement in ways that attempt to discover characteristics, preferences and perceptions. Here we have theorized in terms of trait capacity, age/lifestage need and want, familial/cultural "pull" and "push" along with institutional bargaining that propels or repels families into particular neighborhoods. That families discern relocation destination based on factors other than accessibility, affluence and amenity points to the need to better understand residential decision making processes. Such a finding is an important launch in the previous suggested needs assessment that could further enlighten housing personnel as to what are the primary familial factors that will become relocation decisions.

Earlier findings indicating subjective housing satisfaction and emotional wellbeing were tied to environmental proximity of family and friends are still true today (Galster & Hesser, 1981; Hourihan, 1984). Many in this study lamented the loss of such connection, even as they related problems they had encountered there. Living downtown at JLT, where years after leaving, some residents continue to express loss of place as community, we must acknowledge the spatialized aspects of personal agency and social life (Gotham, 2003) that many have found difficult to re-create.

Conceptualizing needs and wants across three phases of experience, mothers ostensibly set the tone for the household. In all the ways they prepared for the approaching dispersal, made relocation decisions based upon the familial and cultural

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needs of the family, marshaled institutional help in ways they felt benefiting, they created a mindset. That is, to see the process as a positive one they had to hold that, by degree, their household was "better off" for the experience. This focus is important in that the steps toward resettlement are built on attitude, behavior and social action at each step. Taking into consideration the degree of obstacle each family faces, we can gain further understanding into the gains they are able to make in educational and employment arenas as well.   Likewise, recognizing and understanding the mindset of resettlement as an accumulated effect across the entire experience means the necessity of operationalizing the policy in ways that spotlight thus imbue the psychosocial features of coping, decision-making and negotiation of those affected.

7.6.3 The Value of Institutional Alliance

It would follow that no matter the phase of deconcentration one is presently in, the ability to actively cope with dispersal in ways that expand relocation possibilities is beneficial in long-range implications of resettlement. That is, getting off on the "right foot" reverberates through families and across the process.   On one hand, this accentuates the value of an alliance between the authority and the resident that has been heavily touted in this study. It also speaks to the learned skill of resiliency that helps individuals make appropriate behavioral choices in the presence of multiple factors of stress (Finley, 1994). Along the way, such skill comes from the degree and quality of linked support from family, friends and social services. These are all vital to the adaptive ability to "bounce back' despite continued hardship that keeps a family in public housing.

Here we also find the interaction between resident and local housing authority an important one according to the resident, generally evidenced in the belief that one has maximized the utility of assistance that public housing residency affords. The relational aspects uncovered in this study revealed three areas the residents saw as critical to their housing satisfaction: improved social trust; open communication; and having familial need met in specific ways. One suggestion for future ways to operationalize such goals would be to strengthen on-site help, using skilled and trained residents as helpers. In the relocation effort on which this study was based that suggestion was posed to and vetoed by the local housing authority.

One of the major complaints among residents has been the loss of that "one-stop" source of assistance that used to sit in the center of JLT. There, families could visit rotating community outreach teams, gather for important authority called meetings and generally use the location as a source of help. No such place was set up at any relocation, not even immediately after the initial dispersal. Ideally, each location site could have a small set-aside as "relocation office" so that residents could visit - by appointment only - to receive help.

While the reasons the local authority vetoed such a plan are unknown, there are potential pitfalls with such an arrangement, including subverting oversight of the local housing authority (which holds not only the power but the responsibility). However, the ideal would be a working relationship among trained on-site residents, on-site apartment personnel and representatives from the local housing authority. That would

advance the pursuit of social trust, institutional alliance as well as strengthen the outlets of assistance many families need but cannot access.

Another potential area of improvement between residents and management may pivot on staffing on-site personnel in ways that can address necessary communication and commonality within the development. Perhaps building a cadre of staffers that recognize and identify with mixed income populations would go far to insure such success. These and other suggestions made to shore up the relational alliance between resident and staff are based on the idea of mutual trust. It is useful to remember that building such trust takes time and is based on a simple definition: the mutual willingness to keep small agreements over time. As a management tool working with low-income populations, there is much work to be done in building and sustaining trust in authority. That residents often do not display trustworthiness in their dealings with management identifies the depth of the problem.

Sharing common goals and understanding common expectations could also strengthen this public housing relationship. That is, too often personnel get caught up in a singular notion of "housing as structure" and pursuit of "self sufficiency" losing sight that, from the resident's perspective, it may represent much more. As this study has revealed, the deconcentration of poverty, as an experience that draws on abilities, emotions and behaviors, is more than having a better house, finding a job or improving self-sufficiency. The literature reveals, for example, that the importance of job income as a singular source of wellbeing pales when considering the life course trajectories of home, family and personal satisfaction (McMurrer & Sawhill, 1998). Wellbeing strikes

at a fundamental notion that many of these mothers are paving the way for a better life, thus derailing the trajectory that poverty follows, particularly for their children. That some residents will require more personal assistance to accomplish is a core tenet of this study. In the ways that providing personal assistance requires a foundation of mutual trust, respect and shared outcome expectation, we have demonstrated that the relationship between resident and local housing authority is actively instrumental in residential reaction, response and resettlement.

Building on an existing body of research that seeks to explore the various nuances of public housing involuntary relocation, the point is made that the more we know about dispersal strategies the better we can retool a best practices approach to exact more efficient and equitable relocation goals for all. That some residents display interpersonal abilities, emotions and behaviors differently from others, reveals not all householders will need the same level of attention. Listening to suggestions from residents, we learn how alternate methods could have helped to mitigate the changes brought about by deconcentration. We learn much that could direct future dispersal efforts. Here we learned that some residents perceived they would have benefited from an environment of active and personal support and encouragement than received, even among those who left the rolls soon after dispersal. Others related how they may have received help that they could have done on their own if encouraged. In these ways we point to the need for more tailored relocation efforts to maximize staff assistance going to the families that need it most.

Even as housing administrators and front line staff might grapple with where that line of assistance is drawn, we do injustice in dispersing householders who clearly and currently lack the ability to negotiate life outside traditional public housing. Because there are no step-wise versions of needs-based assistance, those who do not necessarily need relocation help may be the ones who realize the greatest gains of deconcentration. We also acknowledge that the degree of assistance and flexibility inherent in these requests will require a shift from front line social workers and program managers, signaling ever far-reaching change at the federal level.

The triangulation of housing resident, local authority and HUD has been the subject of much discussion, primarily focusing on issues of oversight, regulation, devolution and autonomy (Abravanel, 2004). Criticism of underfunding persists even as the push to re-tool the system continues to be under a heavily regulated federal bureaucracy and a local authority often tangled in the political life of the city (Stockard, 1998). In all of these ways, the main thrust is to address the notion that public housing remains a central part of housing policy discussion in this country. Fueled by public debate, the scrutiny of mobility behavior of low-income families will continue as long as policy dictates relocation into middle class living. As scholars, we must also remain in the debate particularly if the often-problematic outcomes of reconcentration, mounting dissatisfaction or leaving the rolls under unfavorable circumstances continue.

7.7 Implications for Future Policy Formation

Recent contributions to the transformation of public housing have offered alternate ways to consider income mixing among heterogeneous populations. These

suggestions have come at a time when relocating families are returning to higher poverty and receiving middle class communities fight in-coming subsidized families. Some have suggested ways of redefining the range of incomes, shortening the gap that now gives precedence to "market-rate" for the upper end, "affordable" for middle income tenants on through to "subsidy" for former public housing residents. By lowering the upper end to more realistically include stable but working class families the classical definition of "mixed income" now might address real housing needs (Fuerst, 2003).

Meanwhile the policy debate for the future of public housing assistance continues as housing reform is increasingly discussed along side other issues of reform, notably welfare. The core elements of recent welfare reform are work requirements and time limits. Today the discussion of welfare reform has come to include transportation, childcare and health care as well. As Newman (1999) pointed out, housing reform was not initially part of these secondary considerations. Yet there is now debate whether affordable housing in decent neighborhoods promotes self-sufficiency and, as such, still stands out as a crucial oversight in the on-going debate about welfare reform. To make this point, we find overlap in that the recipients of welfare and housing subsidy are often the same (S. J. Newman & Schnare, 1994b). Yet, some point out dissimilarities by noting important features of housing assistance, such as being an in-kind benefit rather than cash grant thus not an entitlement, make it different from other means-tested programs (Hungerford, 1996).

The social welfare agenda for poor households has undergone massive overhaul as partisan policymakers have grappled with time limits and self-sufficiency demonstration. In these ways the institutional context of welfare has changed, changing recipients in the process. There is continued debate about the efficacy of using such measurement as an overhaul of housing assistance for poor households. In much the same way that some have called for political involvement among welfare recipients as one way to more adequately contribute to the democratic processes and perhaps introduce a new way to "see" poverty in a more interdependent light (Gilliom, 2001), so might such advocacy be needed in the likelihood of housing reform. Still others have eschewed the term "self sufficiency" to more accurate demonstrate the true nature of the struggle – economic security (Bratt, 2006).

Digging deep, this study has attempted to link some of the more salient personal characteristics of displaced women with a number of adaptive relocation outcomes in order to expand the notion of "sufficiency." Currently, that basic model of public assistance generally focuses on paid employment. Here we broaden a definition of self-sufficiency to focus on how women see themselves in a variety of roles. Going about the business of gainful employment along side negotiating familial need and seized opportunity becomes a more accurate portrayal of a self-sufficient woman living in subsidized housing. That is, as we broaden the way we consider the psychosocial dimensions of the individual we also widen the focus to consider the adaptive abilities of residents to move into new and often less than hospitable neighborhoods.

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As the physical, social and economic conditions of public housing have continued to garner attention from all sectors of society, a stream of deconcentration literature has found many residents demonstrate difficulty in making the leap from place-based subsidy to person-based mobility, particularly among the poorest and least educated (Popkin et al., 2000). The personal demographics associated have often fostered a type of dependence endemic to traditional housing tenure, yet now in mobility strategies have drawn attention to accompanying problems such as having no bank accounts, lacking full-time employment and the inexperience of paying utility bills. In turn, these and other limiting behaviors have often meant householders fall out of compliance and must leave, some under the due process of eviction but most before such procedures take place.

The association of such limited experience often made in the U.S. debate over the direction, tenure and qualification of social policy such as public housing is that this type of assistance fosters dependency. At the very least the perception is it stifles personal efficiency, efficacy and autonomy (Leisering, 2003). The notion that public housing spells are long, often inter-generational and resistive to change is inconsistent. While a significant portion of subsidized households stay for five years or longer, the majority have housing spells less than five years (L. Freeman, 1998). Some studies have found no evidence of duration dependence (Hungerford, 1996) while others found methodological problems that can overstate the numbers if the right kinds of data are not used (Freeman, ibid). Further, this study attempted to broach the idea that some residents, if and when they do leave public housing, could take with them the

encouraged skills of resilience. That is, by enhancing competence through deliberate measures hopefully they could help them achieve a sense of belonging and rootedness no matter where they lived.

Another question posed here for further policy discussion is what are we to do, if anything, with the growing numbers of relocated families that are dropped from the rolls of housing assistance involuntarily after deconcentration. Often these families are the most vulnerable and need comprehensive measures to insure their compliance to remain. As it stands now, there are no "degrees" by which families are rated in terms of need. Hence we find many who fall through the cracks in less-protected settings after dispersal.

When Popkin et al. (2000) proposed that mixed income revitalization might render housing's most vulnerable families in worse condition than that of the original concentration, these authors drew attention to the vulnerability of moving away from centralized assistance. That too often these families easily drop from sight draws further attention to the programmatic need to do more than tally numbers as "lost to the system," even as ambitious researchers attempt to track down missing residents. This issue of tracking is a complicated one that calls into question local authority accountability, federal oversight and the often-tenuous relationship between HUD and local public housing authorities (Abravanel, 2004).

While vulnerable residents who leave the rolls of housing assistance, increasingly under involuntary means, generally remain in the community, policymakers must recognize that while they may leave one roster, in likelihood they

will show up on another. True, this speaks to the necessity of on going funding of community services of emergency shelters, homeless facilities, criminal justice and mental health/chemical dependency intervention to meet growing needs in 21st century urban living. However, in most communities there remains no continuity of service as qualifying individuals become "lost" to multiple systems within one community. Such fragmentation overly taxes already taxed social services, disfavors the urban poor and can put communities at risk in ways that might benefit from more fortified cafeteria-styled social service delivery.

7.8 Future Research

The lack of pre-move data and information taken before residents are dispersed from traditional public housing becomes evident when we consider the process of deconcentration begins well before the physical rigors of relocation are undertaken. Needed are more on-site appraisals, interviews and focus groups before relocation in order to better understand, organize, and thus assist in the necessary steps. In these ways, gathered residential attitudes, emotions and opinions are fresh and thus researchers are not so reliant upon retrospective data gathering and the potential for residents' romanticizing/demonizing the past.

The ways scholars traditionally assess residential mobility in the general population (Clark & Onaka, 1983; Rossi, 1955) is rarely applied to study the contemporary decisions of low-income movers. True, involuntary dispersal precludes the conventional steps of evaluation and undertaking a housing search based on that evaluation (Deane, 1990). While conventional models of residential decision-making

assume those who decide to move will do so, some have argued that real-life situations do not match such assumptions (Duncan & Newman, 1976). So how does such findings "translate" to the decision-making processes of displaced public housing families? The short answer is that we do not yet know. Some might argue that when moves are involuntary, there is no good way to capture the inclination, preference or compromise of those individuals affected.

Nonetheless we shortchange the displaced individual when we fail to explore preference, need and compromise through the elements of behavior and social action, here rooted in psychosocial traits, influence, values and goals. Considering that the degree of choice perceived in residential matters can separate mobility benefit from loss (Fischer, 1977), it becomes an important task to scrutinize how tenants deal with dispersal and relocation: specifically looking for aspects of personal agency the person "brings to" the experience. It is in these ways we may be better informed how external influences of opportunity are incorporated *into* these elemental processes. Thus we are providing critical missing information about the unique relationship of person and the structural effects of place, more accurately capturing residential decisions of destination.

7.9 Personal Reflections

As a student encouraged to critique, criticize and create the better "policy", the last chapter of this dissertation has been the one chapter I have looked forward to writing since I chose my topic of research. As I now contemplate how to apply my findings, assumptions and hunches to future public housing policy implications, I am

reminded of my early classroom experiences pursuing this degree. Outside of catastrophic incidents involving national safety and public health, I have let go of the general notion that social science findings are so earth shattering that implementation will come quickly or, when it does comes, will be able to bring immediate change. Rather, I have learned that the slow churn of policy formation often simmers, taking in a number of ingredients in the process. Beginning with the oft-conflictual social problem identification and definition taken from a variety of stakeholder perspectives, any hopes of remedy must consider offered opinions of implementation, requiring the ever-present loop of evaluation.

What I have discovered in this process of writing is that the progress of social science research obviously lays not so much with the speed of implementation perhaps but rather with forward thinking research taking off in new directions. Only by taking the initiative to examine from a different perspective, asking (so far) unasked questions do we truly hope to forge those new directions. In this dissertation I have attempted a new direction by exploring an aspect of mobility study among public housing residents rarely broached: deconcentration of poverty solely from the resident's perspective.

I have made every effort to extract something of the resident's individuality in community that, in my extensive searches, has been seemingly lost to studies largely focused elsewhere. I have probed and asked questions, sitting back to wait on answers, hoping not to overly dramatize a life course of risk or downplay related difficulties along the way. Using the words of these mothers and grandmothers in ways to substantiate or point out deficiencies in the scholarly mobility literature was a balancing

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act. I am still trying to determine if such lack of attention is an oversight or an empirical feature deemed unimportant. We clearly need a variety of scholarship endeavors to tackle the human problems as well as human expectations associated with the deconcentration of poverty. In all of the ways and means offered here, further research is encouraged to focus scholarly and administrative attention on mobilizing low-income families that helps, by degree, those who need help to realize specific residential needs, wants and hopes. By offering a best-practice approach to mobility efforts in the aftermath of deconcentration, we all benefit from the advantages offered and accepted. After all, a neighborhood of [re]settled neighbors is the best kind there is.

APPENDIX A

PRE-MOVE PERSONAL AGENCY QUESTIONNAIRE

Question #	Measured Variable

Your Education/Work

6.   Was your school experience (4 choices)…………………………………………….. — Relatedness; optimism
7.   Did you take computer training class from FWHA? …………………………………… — Planful, trust

9.   In last 12 months, have you taken any of the FWHA training classes?   ……………... — Planful Competence
12. Is there a skill you would like to learn?………………………………………………… — Planful Competence

22. If you could have any job, what would it be…………………………………………….. — Planful, self-efficacy

23c. For me, work is something to do during the day rather than watch TV……………… — Relatedness; coping
    e. Work is a place to meet other people……………………………………………….. — Relatedness;
    f. Work gives me a chance to use my skills…………………………………………….. — Self-efficacy;
    g. For me, work means that I have to follow other people's rules……………………… — Locus of control; trust
    h. Work sets a good example for my children………………………………………………. — Self-efficacy; Relatedness

You and Your Neighborhood

24.e. At Ripley Arnold, how big of a problem was problems with FWHA ………………… — Trust, coping
    f. At Ripley Arnold, how big of a problem was negative image of PH by FW citizens. — Trust, autonomy
    g. At Ripley Arnold, how big of a problem was negative image of PH by RA residents. — Trust, relatedness

25.   If you saw a neighbor's child getting in trouble, would you tell your neighbor about
    it? …………………………………………………………………………………………….. — Relatedness, trust
26.   If you had to go out of town, would you ask your neighbor to watch your apartment?
    ……………………………………………………………………………………..
29.   How often do you talk with your neighbors?(6 choices everyday to doesn't matter) — Trust, Relatedness
31.   When you talk with neighbors, is it usually.. (5 choices friendly to does not matter) — Relatedness, trust
32.   Check all you do with neighbors (10 choices; # of checks) …………………………. — Relatedness
33.   In your neighborhood, do you feel (4 choices, very safe to very unsafe) …………. — Relatedness; trust
34.   If you had a choice, would you move from this neighborhood? …………………….. — Trust; locus of control
35.   If Ripley was changed so that people with medium income could move in and it was no longer — Relatedness
    public housing, would you want to stay? ……………………………..
36.   Do you ever use bus tokens from FWHA? …………………………………………… — Trust, optimism
37.   Do you ever use cab service from FWHA? …………………………………………… — Trust; locus of control
38d.   When you visit family, do you (either visit or don't)…………………………………….. — Trust; locus of control
38e.   When you visit friends, do you (either visit or don't)…………………………………….. — Relatedness; planful
     — Relatedness; planful

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Question #	Measured Variable

39. The Ripley Neighborhood Assoc. is considering setting up a sharing service of computer software. Would you be interested?…………………………………………………………

Relatedness; trust; self-efficacy

In planning your move, how important is the following:

40f. Being close to family (4 choices; very important to not at all important)……………………

40g. Being close to your friends (4 choices; very important to not at all important)……………

40h. Being close to schools (4 choices; very important to not at all important)…………………

Relatedness; planful
Relatedness; planful
Planful, self-efficacy

Working Through a Problem

Think of a big problem (like move planning). How often did you use the following:

41a. Set some goals for yourself to deal with the problem………………………………………

41b. Accept support from those with the same problem…………………………………………

41c. Wished that people would just leave you alone……………………………………………

41d. Looked at all solutions before deciding what to do………………………………………..

41e. Talked with people about the problem because talking about it helps to feel better………

41f. Asked my neighbors how they were handling the problem…………………………………..

41g. Watched television more than usual…………………………………………………………

Planful competence
Autonomy; trust; coping
Coping; relatedness
Planful; autonomy
Coping; relatedness
Relatedness; trust; coping
Coping; optimism

Self-Evaluation

Mark to the degree you agree:

42a. I feel I have a number of good qualities…………………………………………………

42b. I certainly feel useless at times……………………………………………………………

42c. I feel good about myself……………………………………………………………………

42d. I am able to do things as well as most other people………………………………………

42e. I feel I do not have a lot to be proud of……………………………………………………

Self-efficacy; autonomy
Optimism; relatedness
Self-efficacy; optimism
Locus of control; self-efficacy
Locus of control; self-efficacy

Involvement and Participation

How often do you take part in the following?

43a. Get together with friends (5 choices; once or more a week to never)………………………

43b. Get together with family…………………………………………………………………...

43c. Attend religious services or other church related activities………………………………....

43e. Attend school activities with your children………………………………………………

43f. Attend parent-teacher meetings at your child's school……………………………………..

Relatedness; planful
Relatedness; planful
Relatedness; coping
Relatedness; trust; self-efficacy
Trust; autonomy

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Question #	Measured Variable
44. If such a program was available, would you be interested in having a volunteer from the community spend a few hours a week with your children, playing with them, tutoring them or just being a friend to them. …………………………………………………………………………………	Trust; relatedness; autonomy
46. In the past year, did you participate in any programs available at Ripley Arnold? ……………….	Trust; Relatedness; planful
47. In the past year, did you need a service you couldn't get? …………………………………… If yes, what was the service?	Trust
50. If a free legal advice program were available, would you use it?...	Trust; Control
Other Questions of Interest:	
Number of family members & relationship to respondent	
How long have you lived at Ripley Arnold? (years and months)	
Have you lived in public housing before Ripley Arnold? (years and months)	
What is the last grade you completed?	
Have you taken the FWHA GED class?	

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