Would They Stay or Would They Go? Relationships, Community, and Housing Preferences in Linden

THESIS

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Abstract

Over the past five decades a host of housing policies have been implemented with the aim of redressing racial segregation and breaking up areas of concentrated poverty. Many of these efforts, known as dispersal policies, attempt to relocate residents from areas of high poverty to higher income areas. However, many of these programs have met with dubious success. Some studies suggest that housing location choice and successful relocation is strongly dependent on social ties to the relocatees’ home communities, and little is known about how prevalent the desire to relocate is in low income communities or what motivates people to participate in relocation programs.

This thesis uses mixed methods to examine the housing situations, neighborhood attitudes, and social networks of residents of the Linden neighborhood in Columbus, Ohio. The results suggest that many residents feel attached to their community, even if they struggle with housing instability or would like to have higher quality housing. This is due in part to social ties within the community and in part to a general sense of comfort and familiarity with the neighborhood. To the extent that people are motivated to relocate, that motivation has more to do with a desire to find better housing than a desire to live in a different neighborhood. Implications for policy and future research are discussed.
Dedication

Dedicated to my family, without whom none of this would be possible
Acknowledgments

This thesis would not have been possible without the help and support of many people. I would like to thank my advisors, Rachel Kleit and Ola Ahlqvist, for their guidance, as well as Glennon Sweeney and many other colleagues at the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity for their help in data collection. I am endlessly grateful to the staff and leadership of the St. Stephen’s Community House for their assistance and patience.
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Preface

This research project has been a collaborative effort from the start. It began when the staff and leadership of the St. Stephen’s Community House invited a colleague and me, as graduate research assistants at The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State, to assist them with their annual community canvass in May of 2013. In total, over 30 staff members volunteered their time and energy to administering the survey. In previous years the survey used in St. Stephen’s Community Canvass had been a short questionnaire consisting of a few items specifically relevant to the agency’s services. However, in the 2013 survey I was permitted to insert additional questions that pertain to my research questions, making the survey nearly twice as long as usual. In addition, the St. Stephen’s staff graciously underwent training on human subjects’ research protocol before implementing the survey used this study. For this additional time and effort alone I am grateful. But St. Stephen’s role in this project does not end there.

In the year following the 2013 survey I have spent many hours volunteering with St. Stephen’s in different capacities, mainly assisting the development department in organizing events, writing newsletters, and performing the types of administrative tasks suited to my background. Throughout the past year I have also attended meetings of the Greater Linden Advisory Council and the North Linden Area Commission. In the process of volunteering and attending these local meetings I got to know many people who live and work in Linden, and these experiences certainly inform some of the research. Though
they may not know it, these individuals have been instrumental to this project. Representatives of all three of these organizations also assisted in recruitment of interview participants. However, I purposefully did not interview the people in Linden with whom I am closest so as to minimize bias in selection and interpretation. With only one exception, I had not met the people I interviewed prior to asking them to participate.

This thesis is written almost entirely in the third person, but a few notes about the author and my position relative to the subjects of the research are necessary to place it in proper context. I am a white woman from a large university researching and writing about a mostly black, low-income neighborhood. I have never lived in Linden and have been involved in the neighborhood for only one year. As such, my ability to read meaning beyond the actual words my interviewees is limited. For the most part, I do not attempt to do so, and I have used quotations liberally so that those interviewed may speak for themselves to the extent possible.

In the past few decades a strong tradition of scholars writing themselves into their research has grown in the social sciences and humanities. While I respect this tradition and feel it is appropriate in many cases, I have chosen not to do so in this thesis because I do not feel a detailed discussion of my positionality adds to the scholarship or alters the conclusions. My absence from the narrative is not meant to imply objectivity. Rather, I have left myself out of the narrative to place the emphasis of the research on the people I interviewed, not my relationship to them. Representing the lives and thoughts of others is a difficult task, and it is never done perfectly. This thesis is no exception. I welcome
responses to the interpretations and conclusions presented in the following chapters, as this type of research is a continual work in progress, and we are far from finished.
Chapter 1: Introduction

“Place matters” has become the battle cry of many planners and social justice advocates. The idea that a person’s neighborhood or zip code can predict his or her life outcomes has motivated a host of housing policies aimed at redressing racial segregation and breaking up areas of concentrated poverty.

The current geography of American urban neighborhoods has been formed by decades of policies and practices that forced African Americans into narrow sections of cities and encouraged middle class outmigration to suburbs (Massey & Denton, 1993; Wilson, 1987). The results of these policies are disparities in education, health, and economic status that largely fall along both geographic and racial lines. The tendency for residents of low income African American communities to experience bad outcomes on a variety of measures is attributed to a number of causes, from poor access to education and healthcare to social issues such as violent crime and single motherhood, which are believed to derive from social isolation and deprivation of resources (Jencks & Mayer, 1990; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Diez Roux, 2001; Ellen et al., 2001).

Efforts to combat these “neighborhood effects” (Sampson, 2008) have often taken the form of relocating residents of high poverty areas to higher income neighborhoods. These relocation programs are part of what are known as dispersion policies (Goetz, 2003). These attempts have met with dubious success, and recent studies suggest that the social aspects of community and residents’ social networks may be important in
explaining why many relocatees fail to remain in their new neighborhoods (Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010).

Dispersal policies assume that many people living in high poverty areas would prefer to live in “better” neighborhoods. However, little is known about how prevalent the desire to relocate from these areas is or what motivates people who do want to relocate. This research project, based in the Linden neighborhood of Columbus, Ohio, explores these questions by using a mixed methods approach to examine the housing and social conditions of the neighborhood and the extent of the desire of residents to relocate.

The results suggest that though some people may be willing to move to find better housing, most are not particularly motivated to move to higher income areas. The people who would like to move are the exception, and they would do so to escape crime in their immediate area, not to advance their economic interests or have access to other institutional resources. Most people who express any desire to move from their current home would prefer to find better housing in their existing neighborhood to stay close to the people and places they know.

Traditional measures of neighborhood well-being, such as income, poverty, educational attainment, or crime, may lead to incorrect assumptions about the functioning of a community and the satisfaction and attachment of the people living in it. This study suggests that a better understanding of the social aspects and specific local geographies of low income areas are needed to create housing policies that meet the needs of their residents. If most people who struggle with housing would prefer to remain in their existing neighborhoods, then the strategy underlying housing vouchers should not be one
of mobility or dispersion. Rather, vouchers should be used as a tool to increase access to regulated, high quality affordable units in areas where people need them the most. In addition, policies such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) should be used to increase the stock of high quality housing for all income levels.

Chapter 2 of this thesis contains a review of prior literature that motivates this research project. Included are bodies of work on the nature of community, the history of residential segregation, debates over neighborhood effects, and housing policy. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used to address the research questions. Chapter 4 presents the history the Linden community, its current state according to standard indicators of neighborhood well-being, and the results of primary survey data collected as part of a community canvass with a local social service agency. Chapter 5 discusses the results of 17 interviews conducted with Linden residents regarding their housing, social networks, and attitudes about the community. Finally, Chapter 6 presents conclusions from the research and implications for policy and future investigation.
Chapter 2: Why Does Place Matter?

In the mid-1960s America’s cities were experiencing growing pains. Race riots had broken out across the country, and a middle class retreat to the suburbs called into question the future of urbanism and what people really want from where they live. These events provided fresh motivation for examining the nature of social relations in cities, and several bodies of research have emerged to address the subject from different angles. On one hand, sociologists and network analysts began to look at communities in a different light, considering them as a set of relationships rather than a specific place (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). At the same time, a number of government reports led to academic research on residential segregation by race and class and how it affects the social fabric and individuals’ life outcomes (Kerner, [1968] 1988). In response to this work, the federal government began what would be decades of attempts to address segregation and concentrated poverty in American metropolitan areas (Goetz, 2003). The policies that constitute these efforts have given rise to another body of research, one that incorporates the theories and methods of social network analysis to examine the state of social relations in low income areas and the effects that different policies have on those relations (e.g. Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010; Kleit, 1999). In the following sections, I will review many strands of literature that weave together to form what I refer to collectively as the “place matters” debates. Included in these debates are competing conceptions of community, different theories on how communities may impact individual
opportunities and outcomes, and ambiguous results of policies that are aimed at alleviating the “neighborhood effects” of certain communities. Ultimately, I argue that these debates have not yet adequately looked into how people in low incomes areas view their own communities and how those views may impact what policies might be most effective at alleviating neighborhood effects.

*The Nature of Community*

The first place matters debate consists of differing opinions on the extent to which communities are bound by space. The Community Question (Wellman, 1979) arose from the rapid urbanization of America beginning in the early twentieth century. Prior to the rise of great cities, convenient transportation, and long-distance communication, the people with whom a person interacted were largely determined by geography. Small towns where most people knew each other and maintained the bulk of their social relations within a confined area were the norm. A community referred to both a place and the people in that place, and the two were one and the same.

As more people began to move to cities, the connection between place and community became more tenuous. In a dense, urban area it is impossible for everyone to know everyone else, and as the industrial revolution gained steam, numerous sociologists and writers began to develop theories as to the state of the modern community.

Ferdinand Tönnies ([1887] 1955) conceptualized the new society brought on by industrialization and the growth of cities as one split into two categories—*gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, or community and civil society. According to Tönnies, community is
comprised of personal relationships based on informal roles and values, whereas civil society is made up of formal institutions and specialized, impersonal roles. Several decades later, Louis Wirth (1938) described cities as places characterized by a “relative absence of intimate personal acquaintanceship, the segmentalization of human relations which are largely anonymous, superficial, and transitory, and associated characteristics” (p.1).

Barry Wellman (1979) classifies this theory as the Community Lost argument. Community Lost bemoans the life of the modern urban dweller as one devoid of meaningful social connections and characterized by many superficial and specialized relationships (Tönnies, [1887] 1955; Wellman, 1979). This view of urban life dominated through the middle of the twentieth century.

By contrast, the Community Saved argument, which emerged in the 1960s, asserts that even though cities contain a large number of people moving and interacting across great distances and at great speeds, urban areas still contain villages, of sorts (Jacobs, 1961; Gans, 1962). According to the Saved argument these villages, though located within and affected by the hustle and bustle of large cities, can be characterized as tight-knit communities built on strong bonds of support and reciprocity. Much of the evidence for Community Saved is based on ethnographic research of working class and low income communities, such as Carol Stack’s (1974) classic work, *All Our Kin*, which details the lives and relationships of a poor African American neighborhood.

The Community Liberated theory asks that we put the idea of community as a specific place on the shelf and instead consider community as a network of relationships.
In the late 1970s and early 1980s Barry Wellman (1979) and Claude Fischer (1982) conducted large-scale surveys of residents of a Toronto suburb and an area of northern California, respectively, and concluded that in most cases people maintained a strong personal community made up of close kinship and friendship ties. This evidence disputes the Community Lost argument. However, as opposed to the urban village view, Fischer and Wellman discovered that many people’s robust personal communities were not confined to a neighborhood, but rather were geographically dispersed throughout a metropolitan area, and some people even resided in globe-spanning personal communities. Community Liberated is the argument that in the modern age communities remain strong but are largely divorced from neighborhood.

Though supportive of the idea of widespread networks as the new community, both Fischer and Wellman offer caveats: people who are not in the workforce, are elderly or homebound, and those of lower socio-economic status do tend to have networks that are more place-based, less diverse, and contain fewer overall ties. Thus, the question becomes not whether community as a whole is lost, saved or liberated, but rather for whom each is the case.

Though many sociologists prefer the network definition of community, planners and policy advocates believe that geographic location continues to be an important unit of community. In response to the conversation around the Community Question, the authors of Moving to Opportunity: The Story of an American Experiment to Fight Ghetto Poverty (2010) note that the debate is interesting, but it misses
several important things relevant to our story…First, community can mean different things, each of them meaningful, to different people—and even different things, to the same people, at different times…But second, and conversely, neighborhoods can still ‘supply’ uniquely valuable functions of community, for example, a felt connection and trust among neighbors, which provide the foundation for acting in concert to accomplish shared goals, such as keeping the streets safe or keeping young people on track (Briggs, 2010, p. 115).

The Origins of Neighborhood Effects

In many low-income African American communities, the goals of safe streets and productive young people are not being met. This insistence on the primacy of place is based on decades of evidence that people who live in low-income areas—particularly areas of racially concentrated poverty—experience worse outcomes on nearly every measure of personal well-being, from educational attainment to teen pregnancy to rates of obesity and heart disease (Jencks & Mayer, 1990; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Diez Roux, 2001; Ellen et al., 2001). Collectively, this line of research is known as the neighborhood effects literature (Sampson et al., 2002). Though the evidence is overwhelming that a person’s neighborhood has an impact on any number of life outcomes, determining the exact pathways through which these occur is a source of the second place matters debate.
To properly understand the neighborhood effects debate, one must first look to the
history of American neighborhood formation and how some neighborhoods became
“good” and others “bad.” The dividing of cities into neighborhoods along racial, ethnic,
and class lines is perhaps as old as cities themselves. As early as 1890, Jacob Riis
documented how recent urban migrants of various races and ethnicities toiled in slums in
his photo history of New York tenements, *How the Other Half Lives*. However, most
recent work on residential segregation in the United States has focused on divisions
between whites and African Americans, both within cities and between suburbs and
cities.

In *American Apartheid*, Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton (1993) outline the
origins and persistence of residential segregation in the United States. Throughout the
early- and mid-twentieth century, white neighborhood associations used strategies such
as lobbying for restrictive zoning and racially restrictive covenants to keep blacks out of
their neighborhoods. Meanwhile, financial institutions reinforced segregation by limiting
loans to African Americans and charging higher rates on available loans. Toward the
middle of the century, whites began to use less overtly racist methods to separate
themselves. Instead of trying to keep black households out of existing neighborhoods,
they used economic resources made available through the G.I. Bill and the rapidly
expanding U.S. highway system to move to de facto segregated suburbs (Massey &
Denton, 1993). In more recent years, it has often been the implicit bias in patterns of
white housing choice, rather than explicit racism, which has maintained the level of
segregation seen in many metropolitan areas (Briggs, 2005).
As the neighborhood effects literature has demonstrated, the problem of American residential segregation is not only that people of different races live apart, but also that neighborhoods with concentrated populations of people of color tend to have lower rates of employment, weaker physical and economic infrastructure, higher crime, and worse social outcomes than largely white communities (Jencks & Mayer, 1990; Wilson, 1987). Scholars have presented both spatial and social reasons for this confluence of phenomena.

One prominent explanation for the poor economic conditions of these urban neighborhoods is the spatial mismatch hypothesis (Holzer, 1991; Kain, 1968, 1992). This theory rebuts the classic residential choice theory that people balance the benefits of living in the suburbs (more space and lower housing prices) with the costs of longer and more expensive commutes to jobs that are located in the central city. The spatial mismatch hypothesis posits that as business and industry followed the middle class migration to the suburbs in last half of the twentieth century, urban laborers increasingly began to bear the burden of commuting to find work (Holzer, 1991; Kain, 1968). On top of sheer distance, many urban dwellers lack adequate transportation to make those commutes because of the expense of owning cars and insufficient public transportation networks to the suburbs. The barrier posed by the distance between working class urban dwellers and suburban jobs decreases the net income obtained from jobs, sometimes to the point of cancelling out the economic benefit of employment. This means that many workers living in the central city get less benefit from work and may drop out of the labor force entirely (Briggs, Popkin, and Goering, 2010; Holzer, 1991).
The combination of housing and “job sprawl” affects not only personal livelihoods, but important institutions, such as schools. Although legal school segregation is a thing of the past, de facto segregation because of residential location persists, with suburban schools becoming increasingly homogenous and suburban families sequestering financial and organizational resources within their own districts (Briggs, 2005, p. 7). The physical conditions of neighborhoods also suffer when residents lack economic resources. Low income areas often lack investment in green spaces, have lower access to quality grocery stores, contain higher rates of vacant and abandoned properties, and have greater exposure to toxic releases from commercial facilities (Briggs, 2005; California Newsreel, 2008; Dutko et al., 2012).

Distance from jobs, limited access to institutional resources, and poor environmental conditions are some of the physical and spatial reasons that living in a low income neighborhood might affect life outcomes. Discussing these more tangible aspects of neighborhood environments is fairly uncontroversial. However, at various points in the past fifty years scholars and policymakers have delved into the social environment of areas of concentrated poverty. It is this issue that most inspires debate and political backlash.

In 1965, Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan composed a report to President Lyndon B. Johnson entitled *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*. Often referred to simply as *The Moynihan Report*, this document describes the ghetto conditions of many African American neighborhoods and outlines the numerous barriers that their residents would face in the coming decades, despite the achievement of
greater equality under the law, thanks to the civil rights movement. In the report, Moynihan states that “A middle class group has managed to save itself, but for vast numbers of the unskilled, poorly educated city working class the fabric of conventional social relationships has all but disintegrated” (Moynihan, 1965, p. i). The reaction to this report was extremely negative, with many liberals and civil rights activists accusing Moynihan of racism and blaming the victim (Wilson, 1987).

In taking up this same issue two decades later, sociologist William Julius Wilson (1987) cited the reaction to The Moynihan Report as one of the reasons liberals shied away from discussing the “tangle of pathology” Moynihan described (1965, p.29). In his classic book, The Truly Disadvantaged, Wilson (1987) documents an increasing concentration of poverty in historically black urban communities in the immediate post-civil rights era and offers a theory as to why these areas also suffer from such problems as high rates of female-headed households, welfare dependence, male joblessness, drugs, and violent crime. Wilson asserts that, paradoxically, it was the success of the civil rights era that paved the way for the creation of a black urban underclass. He claims that as legalized racial discrimination in housing decreased, middle class blacks were able to migrate out of racially concentrated urban areas. As these middle class residents left for previously all-white suburbs, they took with them the links between black neighborhoods and the rest of mainstream society. According to Wilson, it is this social isolation from middle class norms and behaviors, alongside economic and physical deprivation, that produce “concentration effects” (1987, p. 46).
Wilson uses the idea of isolation to bolster a largely cultural theory of the social ills facing neighborhoods of racially concentrated poverty. Numerous other scholars have employed the concepts of social networks and social capital—or a lack thereof—for alternative or complementary explanations.

In *The Strength of Weak Ties*, social network analysis pioneer Mark Granovetter (1973) lays out logical and empirical evidence for why having diverse and wide-ranging networks is important for economic advancement. This is because in dense networks of close kinship or friendship ties, most people in the network will have the same information, and there are multiple pathways through which a piece of information can reach an individual. By contrast, novel information from a distant source may travel through a tie that is weakly connected to only one person in a network. Therefore, in terms of the spread of information, particularly information about jobs, a weak tie may be more valuable than a strong tie.

Granovetter’s research does not explicitly deal with the spatial aspects of strong or weak ties. However, when viewed in light of other research on social segregation and the network characteristics of low income people, it may stand to reason that low income communities may contain a dearth of weak ties. Given the evidence that lower income and less educated people tend to have more homogenous and less wide-ranging networks (Fisher, 1982; Wellman, 1979; Campbell, Marsden, & Hurlbert, 1986; Campbell & Lee, 1992), the implication is that lower income people have less access to diverse information about potential employment. When combined with evidence of the geographic concentration of low income African Americans (Massey & Denton, 1993; Wilson,
1987), the implication is that low income communities and the people living in them may lack advantageous, social space-spanning weak ties.

Though some research looks at lack of geographic network breadth as a consequence of geographically concentrated poverty (Wilson, 1987), it may also be a cause. Additional studies suggest that low-income people and minorities rely heavily on informal information provided through personal networks to find housing, and this may constrain their housing location decisions (Kleit & Galvez, 2011).

Though most evidence confirms that low income and low education tends to be correlated with having a less wide-ranging network (Campbell & Marsden, 1986; Fisher, 1982; Wellman, 1979), size and diversity are not the only aspects of a social network. Content and function of ties are difficult characteristics to measure, but they are important to the understanding of how individuals carry out their daily lives, make decisions, and relate to their neighborhoods. The content of ties and the resources available to individuals through their ties is often referred to as social capital (Putnam, 2000; Lin, 2001). In categorizing the content of ties and how they relate to social capital, scholars have tended to employ dichotomies.

Perhaps the most popular dichotomy is bridging versus bonding (Warren, Saegert, & Thompson, 1999). A bonding tie is by definition strong and multistranded, meaning that the two people connected by the tie are in close contact, and their relationship may be characterized in many ways. For example, siblings may also consider each other friends, and they may occasionally share financial resources or professional information. Networks of bonding ties also tend to be homophilous, in that they connect
people with similar traits, such as age, gender, race, or socioeconomic status (SES) (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). By contrast, a bridging tie is generally weak and single-stranded. The people connected by it are in contact infrequently and have a purpose-specific relationship. An example is a classmate or a business colleague. According to Granovetter (1973), it is these weak ties that are often the key to finding jobs or spreading innovation, as they tend to be less homophilous and carry information and resources to individuals from more distant places in the social universe.

In his article “Brown Kids in White Suburbs”, Xavier de Souza Briggs (1998) offers a different way to dichotomize tie function: those that offer support and those that offer leverage. A supporting tie is one that helps a person “get by” through financial or other means, whereas a leveraging tie is one that helps a person “get ahead” by connecting them to other people or putting in a good word on a job application (Briggs, 1998). This categorization carries with it a critique of the traditional bonding-versus-bridging scheme. On the surface, it would seem that strong, bonding ties are those that supply support, whereas weak, bridging ties offer leverage. This may be true in many cases. However, Briggs points out that the function of a tie may not be related to its strength or social spanning capacity. For example, having many weak ties may not provide any leverage, even if those ties do “bridge” some different social groups. One can certainly imagine a situation in which a person has a large circle of acquaintances, but none of those acquaintances have the right kinds of connections of their own to offer any leverage. On the other hand, if your father is the CEO of a company, though he may be a strong and supportive tie, he could also be a bridge between you and socially distant
people you would never meet otherwise. Furthermore, he may be able to use his influence on your behalf to help you get into a school or gain employment at a prestigious firm. At the other end of the spectrum, close and bonding ties may offer neither support nor leverage. Quite the contrary, as Briggs and others have noted, some close ties may constitute negative social capital, commanding emotional and financial resources without reciprocation (Briggs, 1998; Curley, 2009).

Characterizing Low-Income African American Neighborhoods

Many network explanations have been put forth as to why an individual may become isolated or struggle to gain employment, such as a lack of bridging ties or insufficient leverage within a personal network. However, another body of research seeks to go beyond individuals’ network characteristics to look at how the collective social structures of people within a given place may impact the outcomes of that place and the people in it. Much of this research focuses particularly on the social aspects of low-income, African-American communities. The differing views on such communities yielded by this research constitute the third place matters debate.

In their chapter, Neighbor Networks of Black and White Americans, Barrett Lee and Karen Campbell (1999) outline three theories to explain the social relationships in black urban communities. The first theory, exemplified by the ethnographies of Stack (1974) and others, describes a sort of Community Saved urban village, where residents are deeply involved in neighborhood relationships. This is called Compression Theory because it posits that the social constraints historically placed on African Americans have
compressed their social interactions and support within narrow geographic confines. Despite the geographic constraints, Compression Theory envisions networks of largely beneficial reciprocity and support (Lee & Campbell, 1999).

At the other extreme, Avoidance Theory, similar to Social Disorganization Theory, predicts a level of social disengagement in these communities, characterized by an overall lack of social ties and distrust of neighbors due to high levels of crime in the neighborhood (Kubrin & Weitzler, 2003). This theory best describes the work of Moynihan (1965) and Wilson (1987). In Avoidance Theory, rather than relying on neighbors for support, residents steer clear of their neighbors for fear of being drained of resources or being exposed to dangerous situations.

Finally, Composition Theory suggests that network differences between blacks and whites are not the result of race, but rather of SES, and that once factors like income and education are controlled for there should be little difference between blacks and whites. If this is true, then even within areas of concentrated African American poverty, we should see that higher income African Americans have more ties and greater network range (Lee & Campbell, 1999).

In their study of residents of Nashville, Tennessee, Lee and Campbell (1999) used a large survey to analyze the social network features of black and white urban dwellers to test Compression, Avoidance, and Composition theories. Overall, their results largely supported compression theory, and they conclude that “community for African Americans appears to be a more intense, spatially concentrated phenomenon than it is for whites” (p. 139).
Though Lee and Campbell’s (1999) study largely supports Compression Theory, it is Avoidance Theory and the idea that low-income African American neighborhoods are socially disorganized places of crime and deviance that residents would like to escape from that has guided much public policy in their arena of housing.

Dispersion: Policies, Programs, and Results

Since such strong evidence exists that segregation and poverty concentration is associated with poor life outcomes, much affordable housing policy has operated under the assumption that poverty dispersal and de-concentration will lead to better outcomes. However, several decades of such policies have yielded mixed results, and disagreements over the efficacy of dispersal programs constitute the final place matters debate.

The origins of dispersal programs can be found in the mid- to late-1960s. In 1968, The Kerner Report, a detailed analysis of American housing conducted by the National Advisory Committee on Civil Disorders, painted a grim picture of the state of racial disunion in the nation. The report famously proclaimed that, “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal” (1968, p. 1). The commissioning of The Kerner Report was one of several steps taken at the federal level to rectify decades (if not centuries) of housing segregation. Other steps included an executive order by President Kennedy to end racial discrimination in federal housing assistance and the passage of The Fair Housing Act of 1968 (Goetz, 2003).

The late 1960s and early 1970s also marked the beginning of the end of high-rise “project” towers that housed large numbers of poor families in close quarters. The dismal
failure of projects such as St. Louis’ Pruitt Igoe had proven that placing large numbers of struggling households in close proximity to each other and away from the rest of society created more problems than it solved (Yancey, 1971). Replacing such large-scale public housing projects with scattered-site assisted housing was what Edward Goetz (2003) refers to as the first generation of American housing dispersal programs. The first generation of dispersal programs sought only to address racial discrimination in housing. However, later efforts have explicitly had the goal of de-concentrating poor populations, thus, the programs have been income-based rather than race-based. The second generation of programs has included housing project demolition, a variety of voucher strategies, and tax incentives for the creation of mixed-income developments (Goetz, 2003).

The most widely used dispersal policy is the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, formerly called Section 8. Section 8 began in 1974 as a program through which certificate holders could apply a subsidy based on income to any home in a given jurisdiction meeting quality standards and being rented at what HUD determined to be Fair Market Rent (FMR). Over time, the geographic restrictions of Section 8 have been loosened, and now current HCV holders can apply their voucher anywhere in the country. Section 8 has long been a favored form of housing subsidy because this type of tenant-based subsidy has greater rates of dispersal than unit-based approaches (Goetz, 2003). However, the majority of vouchers are still used in low income areas (Briggs, 2005).

The goal of housing vouchers has always been to give recipients greater choice as to where to live than they would have in traditional housing projects. However, as
policymakers keyed in on the problem of concentrated poverty in the 1990s, the motivation behind housing policy went from providing broader location options and correcting prior injustices to actively de-concentrating poor neighborhoods. When this motivation changed, the emphasis of low-income housing policy shifted from choice to mobility. One method for encouraging mobility has been through programs that use vouchers that carry a requirement that tenants move to a higher income area. To achieve this, these programs also include relocation counseling for tenants and landlord recruitment. The two most notable such programs have been the Gautreaux program and Moving to Opportunity (MTO) (Goetz, 2003).

The Gautreaux program grew out of a decades-long Chicago lawsuit that sought to put an end to the provision of public housing in exclusively poor, minority communities. Beginning in 1976, Gautreaux participants were given special Section 8 vouchers and assistance in relocating from Chicago’s worst projects to the suburbs. A study comparing suburban Gautreaux participants to other assisted households who had moved within the city found that those who ended up in the suburbs were drastically better off several years later in terms of education and employment (Polikoff, 2006).

Early reports of success from the Gautreaux program paved the way for MTO (Briggs, Popkin, and Goering, 2010). Piloted in five major metropolitan areas across the country, MTO also employed an experimental design—though more rigorous than that of Gautreaux—to allow numerous researchers to study the impacts of relocation on prior residents of areas of concentrated poverty. Reports from MTO have been much more mixed. Indeed, some households that relocated through the program have been successful.
in staying in low-income areas and report other good outcomes, most notably a reduction in stress and mental health problems for parents and adolescent girls (Kling, Liebman, & Katz, 2007). However, even for families who have successfully stayed in their new neighborhoods, improvements in jobs and economic outcomes have been negligible. In addition, the social benefit of interacting with middle class households has not materialized as expected, as many families maintain close contact with family and friends in their old neighborhoods (Briggs, Popking & Goering, 2010). In education, girls often do better in their new schools both socially and scholastically, but adolescent boys typically struggle in terms of their behavior and academics (Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010; Kling, Ludwig, & Katz, 2005; Kling, Liebman, & Katz, 2007). Despite the mixed results for those who successfully stayed in their new neighborhoods, researchers emphasize that success should not only be measured on whether relocated families improve their economic outcomes, but also on whether their quality of life improves. In Moving to Opportunity, the authors note that a major future benefit of the program may lie in improved outcomes for younger children from higher quality parenting due to the reduction in psychological strain on parents (Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010).

The mixed results of those who successfully stayed in higher income areas do not include the outcomes for households who were not able to sustain their relocation. These households were numerous. Some of the reasons people moved back to their old neighborhoods or other low-income areas had to do with finances and the conditions of the housing market. However, another major reason for returning to home neighborhoods was social. The distance between new homes and important family and support networks
in the old neighborhood proved too much for many households (Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010).

Gautreaux and MTO are both programs based on voluntary relocation, but another major de-concentration effort has employed involuntary relocation. The Housing Opportunity for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) program operates in large part by demolishing existing housing projects and replacing them with new mixed-income developments. The demolition forces either temporary or permanent relocation of previous residents. Residents are given some choice as to how and where they would like to live, but they are not offered the broad relocation assistance available through MTO. Some use vouchers to permanently relocate to new areas, while many find new housing in their existing neighborhood. Still others find temporary housing during demolition and construction and later move back to the original site after completion (Kleit, 2010).

Curley (2009) found that moving from HOPE VI sites provided an opportunity for some residents to rid themselves of ties that drained them of emotional or other resources. In addition, Kleit (2010) found that for many people social support ties remained largely intact after the move, suggesting that even for low income people social networks are geographically flexible. This echoes the findings of MTO studies that show that households maintain ties to the old neighborhood even if they stay in a higher income neighborhood (Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010; Katz & Kling, 2007).

Both MTO and HOPE VI relocation studies have found that the hoped-for interactions between relocatees and new neighbors are often limited. This is not to say that movers do not like their neighbors or find them untrustworthy, but the types of ties
created between mixed-income neighbors are not the emotionally close bonds of mutual support that exist with ties in the old neighborhood (Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010; Kleit, 2010).

Another form of housing subsidy that aims at achieving mixed-income developments, but without any explicit relocation or dispersion goals is the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC). The LIHTC initiative offers tax incentives for rehabilitation and new development of mixed-income housing. There are no geographic limitations on where construction of such projects can be undertaken, but there are bonuses for building in Qualified Census Tracts (QCTs), tracts with a poverty rate of greater than twenty-five percent and at least half of residents living below sixty percent of the area’s median income (U.S. Small Business Administration, n.d.). Dispersal and de-concentration can happen in two ways via LIHTC development. On one hand, building LIHTC properties in higher income areas increases the availability of below-market rate housing in those neighborhoods, potentially allowing low-income people to move to higher opportunity areas. On the other hand, developments in low income areas could improve the housing stock in the area, attracting more people who can afford market rate housing while still providing additional affordable housing units. The QCT provision has called into question how effective LIHTC can be at achieving dispersal by means of building in higher income areas, and indeed, the presence of a QCT is a strong predictor of LIHTC development (Tegeler, 2005; Oakley, 2008). However, Oakley (2008) notes that LIHTC developments are much more likely to be built in areas of low poverty and low unemployment than other assisted housing developments.
Attempts to de-concentrate areas of high poverty in the United States have taken multiple forms, from place-based investments such as LIHTC to personal choice programs like HCV to programs that force mobility in some way, such as HOPE VI, and MTO. A body of research has followed these programs, often concerned with their dispersal effects (e.g. Tegeler, 2005; Oakley, 2008; Goetz, 2003) and the social impacts on individuals participating in the programs (e.g. Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010; Kleit, 2001, 2010; Kling, Liebman, & Katz, 2003). However, we know much less about what motivates individuals to participate in mobility programs in the first place.

In *Waiting for Gautreaux*, Polikoff (2006) quotes a magazine article’s recounting of the first meeting of some of the initial recruits for the Gautreaux program:

Of those attending the meeting, only a handful are drawn by the prospect of living in the suburbs. Most are simply desperate to move out of the projects and willing to explore any possibility. One woman has been burned out of her home and a middle-aged man wants to get out of Cabrini-Green to a place where he ‘can sleep in peace at night’ (pp. 219-220).

In MTO surveys, respondents also reported escaping crime as a major motivation for volunteering for the program (Orr et al., 2003). However, the reasons most people volunteer for relocation programs are complex, and the account from *Gautreaux* highlights the ambivalence participants feel about leaving their homes. In many cases, we
do not know if people who relocate out of poor neighborhoods are doing so because they want to leave the neighborhood or because they are simply taking advantage of any program that will provide them with better housing. Furthermore, many of the studies of mobility programs focus only on the individual low income residents in the worst of the worst housing projects in low income neighborhoods. In some cases these studies conflate high poverty projects with entire communities and assume that avoidance theory is at play throughout. The ethnographic research of urban communities has often highlighted community resources and support available to residents (Gans, 1962; Stack, 1974), but housing and mobility studies have lacked real attention to these resources in home communities, despite the fact that they are often cited as reasons participants fail to stay in their new neighborhoods. If mobility programs are to be pursued, we need a better understanding of who really wants to move, who does not, and why. Examining the full range of social resources within low income communities and how they relate to housing preferences may be a key to understanding what type of person would be most successful in a relocation program and what housing strategies would be most effective for improving lives and resources within struggling communities.

At its core, this study seeks to explore the question of whether or not residents of a low-income, largely African American community would like to relocate to a higher income area and the reasons that might underlie the motivation to move. In order to place answers to this question in proper context, several other issues are addressed. The first is the general state of housing and other economic and social conditions of the neighborhood. The second is the nature of social relationships in the community and how
those relationships have impacted housing decisions thus far. The third is residents’
general sentiments toward their community. Taken together, the exploration of these
issues is used to paint a picture of a whole neighborhood in order to better explain why
individuals make the housing decisions they do.

The results of the study will be compared to the theories of community outlined in
this chapter, such as Community Lost, Saved, and Liberated and Compression
Avoidance, and Composition Theories. If the neighborhood displays characteristics of
Community Lost, Community Liberated, or Avoidance Theory, then we might assume
that dispersion programs would be an appropriate solution, as they would remove people
from high crime areas without the risk of disrupting close, place-based, supportive social
networks. However, if the evidence supports Community Saved or Compression Theory,
then dispersal programs may be detrimental to individuals in the community, as
displacement from their current neighborhood would separate them from the beneficial
networks of their urban village.

In this study, I hypothesize that Composition Theory will be most at play. I make
this prediction based on the conflicting images of low-income African American
communities presented throughout the literature outlined above and the mixed results of
dispersal programs thus far. Taken as a whole, previous research has not painted a
coherent picture of such neighborhoods. I believe this is because there is great diversity
within the neighborhoods. If Composition Theory is at play, the social networks of
people of different socioeconomic levels within the community should look very
different. People of higher SES should have more wide-ranging, liberated networks, and
people of lower SES should have networks that are smaller and more geographically confined. If this is the case, the question of what housing policy is most appropriate becomes murkier. That is why it is vital not only to examine the social networks or socioeconomic statuses of individuals and make assumptions about appropriate housing policies, but to ask residents directly what their housing preferences are.

This study is unique in that it looks at housing mobility and dispersal programs in the context of an entire community that fits the description of neighborhoods that are the targets of such programs. Previous research that seeks to characterize the overall social worlds of such neighborhoods has done so without the goal of answering specific housing policy questions. Research that has looked at the efficacy of housing mobility programs, on the other hand, has only studied residents affected by the those programs. These residents are, by definition, those who struggle with housing. Broadening the scope of a housing policy-focused study to include a diverse swath of residents may provide insight into why residents might volunteer for mobility programs, what type of household should be the target of such policies, and what alternative strategies would feasible to assist people who prefer to stay.
Chapter 3: A Mixed Methods Approach

This study examines questions of what the conditions of a neighborhood are, how residents came to live in their current homes, and why they would or would not want to move to another neighborhood. These are fundamentally different types of questions, and as such, they require different modes of investigation. Mixed methods research has a rich history in the geographic and social sciences. As Elwood (2010) points out, there are numerous reasons for employing more than one research method in a project. In some cases mixed methods are used to address a single question, and the results from the different methods are used to either validate findings or identify discrepancies. However, in other cases of mixed methods research the different methods are employed to examine separate but related questions. For example, quantitative methods may be used to estimate the prevalence of certain phenomena, but qualitative methods may be used to understand the processes through which those phenomena occur.

In this project, both mixed methods strategies are pursued. Quantitative and geographic data from existing sources such as the U.S. Census and the Columbus Police Department are used to show trends in the study population and to demonstrate how the Linden area compares to other areas of Columbus, Ohio, on a range of indicators. A community survey carried out in conjunction with a local social service organization is then used to ask more detailed questions regarding housing, employment, and financial
need of a sample of the population. Results from the survey are then compared to data from the existing sources to determine the survey’s representativeness and to identify potential biases in the survey data. Collectively, the survey and existing data sources are used to show trends in housing, employment, crime, and financial need. The purpose of identifying these trends is twofold. First, they are used to establish that the Linden area shares many characteristics with neighborhoods that have been targeted for mobility studies, and thus it is valid to compare results from the Linden neighborhood to previous studies on mobility programs. Second, they show the diversity of the Linden population.

The first purpose of the quantitative data is to answer questions of what and how much about the overall conditions of the community. Having answered these questions, the quantitative data provide the basis for the selection and recruitment of the residents who serve as case studies in the final, qualitative portion of the project. Qualitative data are used to answer questions of how and why about residents’ individual experiences. Data from both quantitative sources and qualitative data from the interviews are then used to compare the types of measurements that are often used to guide public policy decisions with residents’ perceptions of the community.

Secondary Data Sources and Analysis

Secondary data from a variety of sources are employed in this study to serve three main purposes. The first purpose is to demonstrate the ways in which the Linden area’s history and demographics match the narratives of areas of concentrated African American poverty typical of the neighborhood effects and housing dispersion literature.
This is important to establish that the neighborhood being studied is a valid point of comparison to previous literature. These data come from library archives, the Columbus Department of Development, the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, and the United States Census. These data are analyzed using ArcGIS software and basic descriptive statistics. A digitized map of Columbus’ historic Home Owner’s Loan Corporation (HOLC) ratings—also known as redlining maps—are overlaid with neighborhood boundaries and race data to demonstrate historical racial bias in lending practices. Additionally, historical Census data is used to show demographic changes over time. Finally, point plots of current housing projects and subsidized housing demonstrate the present state of housing policy in the Columbus and the Linden area.

The other purpose of the secondary data is to show how Linden currently compares to the rest of Columbus in terms of housing, income, poverty, and crime. Dispersal programs operate by sending residents from lower opportunity to higher opportunity neighborhoods. Mapping several indicators associated with opportunity establishes that Linden could be classified as an area of low opportunity relative to other areas of Columbus, and that according to the logic of mobility and dispersal, residents could have access to greater opportunity by moving to other areas. These data are obtained from the U.S. Census and the Columbus Police Department. Analysis of this data is also done through ArcGIS and descriptive statistics. Choropleth maps showing rates of various indicators overlaid with neighborhood boundaries, race data, and crime point data show racial and economic disparities among the different neighborhoods of Columbus that might motivate mobility or dispersion policies.
The final purpose of the secondary data is to provide a point of comparison to determine how representative the primary survey data is of the Linden area in general. One of the aims of this project is to study the overall housing, economic, and social conditions of the whole area. This is a question of prevalence, so it is necessary to determine whether the survey data collected truly represents the area or in what ways the data may be biased. Since the primary survey data is not collected via a randomized sample, it is necessary to have a point of comparison from another source to understand possible biases. Current U.S. Census data on housing occupancy status, gender, and age are compared to similar indicators in the survey to do this.

_Survey Data and Analysis_

Primary survey data was collected in conjunction with St. Stephen’s Community House, a social service hub that has served the Linden Community for nearly 100 years. Alongside the secondary data sources, the survey is used to answer _what_ questions about the state of the Linden neighborhood. This helps to both establish that Linden is a typical target area for dispersal programs. However, the survey allows for a deeper dive into the conditions of the community than are often used in the literature. Though the survey data may not be as reliably representative of the area as data from the Census, the value added lies in the more detailed questions that get at the housing histories of residents. These more detailed questions show greater diversity in the neighborhood.

The survey was designed and implemented as a collaborative effort between St. Stephen’s staff, a fellow graduate student, and myself. St. Stephen’s conducts an
independent community survey every year, but collaboration with the university is usually limited to analysis of the data. For the 2013 survey, though, my partner and I took a more active role in the design and data collection, and St. Stephen’s permitted us to include questions on housing that are not typically asked.

Questions in the survey can be divided into five broad categories: basic demographics, employment and financial security, housing and transportation, communication, and St. Stephen’s program usage. The bulk of the surveys were collected as part of a community canvass on May 17, 2013. Approximately thirty staff members and volunteers traveled door-to-door administering the survey between the hours of 1 pm and 6 pm. The survey took approximately twenty minutes to complete as an interview. A second round of canvassing took place later in the evening on May 21, 2013 with approximately 15 staff members. The day and time of the survey is believed to have affected the response rate and the proportion of working people surveyed. It is estimated that most surveyors visited twelve houses per hour, with on average four of those houses having someone home. Of the houses with someone home, just over sixty percent agreed to take the survey. Thus, the overall response rate of the survey is approximately twenty percent for the canvass area. Some additional surveys were administered by staff throughout the summer at the various St. Stephen’s programs. A total of 431 surveys were collected.

Address geocoding was used to display the geographic distribution of surveys completed. In some cases surveys were completed by people living outside the research area with 327 containing correct addresses of respondents. In the case of surveys
collected inside St. Stephen’s this occurred because the surveys were filled out by people who had traveled from outside the area to take part in a St. Stephen’s program. In the case of surveys completed during the canvass this occurred because people were visiting friends or family who live in the Linden area on the day of the canvass. For this analysis, surveys of people who reside outside the research area are excluded.

The majority of survey data analysis was completed using SPSS software (IBM Corp, 2013). Questions analyzed for the purpose of this research are those regarding basic demographics, employment, housing, transportation, and neighborhood communication. Indicators of age, gender, housing, and workforce participation are compared with U.S. Census data to determine the representative nature of the sample. ArcGIS (ESRI, 2013) was used to visually inspect the data points and to test whether there may be differences in indicators in different sections of the research area.

Analysis of all survey data employs exploratory data analysis (Bernard 2006). In some cases indicators are cross-tabulated to show possible relationships between different variables. Because the survey was not implemented in a randomized way and is somewhat biased toward older people and those on disability or otherwise unemployed, it is not used for rigorous statistical methods such as regression or to test any specific hypotheses. Rather, the purpose of the survey is to provide more detailed information on the housing and work situations than can be obtained through Census data for a large number of Linden residents (McLafferty, 2003). The survey data is also used to demonstrate a fuller range of experiences and housing situations among the residents to an extent that is not possible using only secondary data sources. The knowledge of this
diversity is then used as a basis for recruiting and selecting exemplary case studies for the interview portion of the research project.

*Interview Data and Analysis*

The purpose of the interview portion of the project is to describe how residents in various financial, housing, and social situations in Linden make decisions with regard to their housing and whether or not social ties impact those decisions. The interviews and their analysis follow an imbedded case study logic. This type of case study involves utilizing several individual units of analysis within a single context. In this case, the Linden neighborhood and its social relation and resources serve as the single context to be examined, and the individual interviewees serve as multiple units of analysis to be examined both in terms of how they compare to each other and how they contribute to the larger context (Yin, 2009). In research that involves comparing different cases, Yin (2009) emphasizes that the goal of case selection is different from that entailed in a survey. For case comparison, the underlying logic is that of a repeated experiment. The researcher wants to see under what circumstances a phenomenon is repeated and what conditions may cause a different outcome. To do this, cases must be selected that are the same along some criteria and different along others. Thus, the individuals chosen for the case study analysis are not intended to be statistically representative of the area as a whole, but rather to represent a diverse swath of the population and different “types.” Interviewees occupy different statuses in terms of education, occupation, age, and gender, but most have counterparts within the sample with whom they share some demographic
characteristics. Most importantly for this study, interviewees represent a variety of different housing situations. These individual case studies include homeowners, private renters, frequent movers, one HCV holder, public housing residents, adults living with relatives, and people who have recently been homeless or living in shelters.

In total, 17 semi-structured interviews were completed, all between seven and eight months after the survey data collection. Interviewees were recruited from voluntarily given contact information from the survey, referral from contacts at St. Stephen’s and other interviewees, and local area commission meetings.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews means that comparable information can be collected from all participants, but it allows for the flexibility to ask follow-up questions and permit the participants to give more detailed explanations and opinions than would be possible in a survey. The interviews also provide some emic perspective on the part of the interviewees (Bernard, 2006). This emic perspective is crucial in a study of housing because previous research has demonstrated that housing and location choices are complex choices involving many personal--and often emotional--factors.

The interview questions ranged from “grand tour” questions (Spradley, 1979) such as “tell me about your current home and how you came to live here” to more specific social network elicitation questions. The more general questions are aimed at getting interviewees to narrate about their lives, homes, and communities. Follow-ups to grand tour questions are used to delve deeper into certain issues brought up by the interviewee or to clarify information given in previous questions.
Four social network elicitation questions, or “name generators,” (Wasserman & Faust, 1994) were employed during the interviews. All four questions are based on survey questions used in other studies. Those four questions, their sources, and the type of ties they are expected to elicit are as follows:

1. From time to time, most people discuss important matters with other people. Who are the people with whom you discuss matters important to you (Hampton & Marin, 2007)? - Discussion circle/information gathering ties

2. Suppose you needed a small favor like borrowing a tool or getting help with cleaning or a small home repair, from whom outside your household would you ask a favor like that (Hampton & Marin, 2007)? - Neighborhood-based ties

3. If you were going out to find a new job, who do you know that would be a good source of information about getting a job, or getting a better job than you have now (Kleit, 1999)? - Economic/job resource ties

4. Please list anyone who is especially close to you who you have not listed in one of the previous questions (Hampton & Marin, 2007).-Remaining close ties

Because of the casual nature of the interviews, the questions were not asked using the exact wording that would be used in a survey. This was done in order to maintain the flow of the interview and make the interviewee feel as though they could give more
complex answers to the questions than simply a list of names. In addition, if the participant gave an answer to a name generator that seemed out of line with the spirit of the question, follow-up questions were asked to clarify the nature of the relationship the interviewee was describing or the circumstances under which support or information would be exchanged.

Using a less rigid method of network elicitation carries both advantages and limitations. A major limitation is the possible lack of consistency between interviews. In many cases, a single name generator question was revisited at more than one point during an interview because the interview was taken in a new direction when the participant began to narrate about a specific relationship or because he or she realized through answering another question that a person had been left out of the initial response. Because of this lack of consistency, quantitative network analysis, such as measures of density and range, is not part of the analysis.

Some of the same circumstances that create the inconsistency that prohibits quantitative network analysis can also be an advantage of more flexible, qualitative network analytic methods. As stated above, participants were sometimes able to “discover” additional members of their networks through their responses to later questions. They were also able to give rich descriptions of the relationships and people they listed in response to name generator questions. These aspects of the semi-structured approach to network elicitation mean that in most cases I was able to obtain information on more relationships and in more detail than would be generated through a survey instrument. For example, in the “cup of sugar” question that is meant to elicit
neighborhood ties, one older female participant said that she would not ask such a favor of anyone. However, she qualified her answer by saying that since she is one of the older and more financially secure members of the neighborhood, it is she who provides such favors to other neighbors. This could be seen as evidence of “draining ties,” but when asked to elaborate on these neighborhood relationships, she did not say she was overly put out by these small requests, but rather saw them as evidence of the friendliness of the area and her current stature. If this woman had responded to this question on a survey, the result would have been that she simply has no “small favor” ties in her neighborhood, which could lead to the conclusion that there is a lack of neighboring occurring in the area, when in fact quite the opposite is true.

Though not currently en vogue in the social network analysis literature, qualitative studies of social networks have a long history and are still preferable in many cases. In her review of qualitative methods in network analysis, Hollstein (2011) notes that qualitative social network analysis is appropriate for exploring meaning behind networks and developing new network theories.

In addition to merely eliciting a variety of relations, the interviews in this study also asked participants questions that attempt to directly link aspects of their social networks to their current housing situations, their attitudes toward the community, and their level of desire (if any) to relocate to another area. In a typical social science survey, the relationships between these factors would most likely be done through a regression analysis. Though surveys and statistics have the advantage of being able to say something about an entire population with a degree of certainty, they cannot trace the pathways of
causation in the way that can be done through more in-depth, qualitative methods. In short, statistics may be better at answering the question of what for a whole population, but they do a poor job at telling us the why for anyone (Yin, 2009). When it comes to questions of how to address the housing needs of people living in areas of concentrated poverty, the many failures of prior policy initiatives suggests that we must do a better job of understanding why people make the decisions they do with regard to housing and location choice.
Chapter 4: The Linden Neighborhood: Past and Present

The Linden neighborhood is known as a fairly poor, largely African American area of Columbus, Ohio. It began as a working class neighborhood with many small, locally-owned businesses, but since the 1960s it has seen population loss and general economic decline. The neighborhood also struggles with drugs and other crime, though many residents are quick to point out that these problems are not as severe as one would believe based on local news reports. The challenges facing Linden are twofold: on one hand, quantitative data reveals that the area suffers from some very real issues of unemployment, vacant housing, and a number of other “social pathologies” that define neighborhoods that tend to be the target of dispersion policies. On the other hand, Linden has an image problem. The portrayal of Linden in the local media and these quantitative measures themselves ignore the many assets of the community and make it difficult to attract people and investments.

This section outlines the history of the Linden neighborhood and the housing situation in both Linden and Columbus as a whole. It also shows how Linden looks by the numbers. This is important because much housing policy is driven by data on poverty, racial concentration, and current housing availability. This section serves to establish that, by most conventional measures, Linden is a place of “low opportunity” where efforts should be made to give residents mobility options. The next section will examine mobility and dispersion policies in light of the perspectives of a diverse array of
residents, highlighting how conclusions about appropriate housing interventions may change when personal, social, and institutional resources are taken into account.

* Linden and Its History *

Linden is located in the northeastern portion of Columbus. The whole of Linden is a large area, encompassing approximately 11 square miles, but for government and planning purposes it is formally separated into North Linden and South Linden, with Hudson Street as the dividing line. This strict division has been significant for various reasons across the decades, but the general consensus is that its importance now is largely administrative. People mostly speak of Linden as a single place, and there has been a formal effort on the part of the city and multiple organizations to create an identity as the Greater Linden area.

As with most neighborhoods, the boundaries of Linden are fuzzy, and they have changed over time. According to the planning division of the Columbus Department of Development the boundaries extend from Eighth Avenue on the south to Cooke and Ward Roads on the north and from the railroad tracks just east of Interstate 71 on the west to Alum Creek on the east. For this study, census tracts are used to define boundaries instead of roads or natural features because census data is an important part of the analysis. This does not change the boundaries a great deal, but it does extend the southern boundary to Fifth Avenue and the eastern boundary to Sunbury Road.

The location of Linden is important because of its relative proximity to many other places in Columbus. Though the area is in the northeast portion of the city, because
of the direction of sprawl, the neighborhood is actually centrally located relative to many key places in both the city and the northeast suburbs. Linden is less than a mile from the Ohio State Fairgrounds, about two miles from Ohio State’s main campus, 4 miles from downtown Columbus and Columbus State Community College, and 6 to 10 miles from Central Ohio’s two largest shopping malls. With a car, a person could access just about any form of employment, education, or recreation within a 10-minute drive. Without a car, these short distances can be an obstacle; however, Cleveland Avenue has well-served bus route to many places in the city (Columbus Department of Development, 2003).

The Beginnings of Linden

Linden was largely farmland until the early 20th century. One of the first settlers was Frederick Weber, after whom Weber Road is named. The name Linden first appeared with the Linden Field Airport. In 1901 the area was named Linden Heights Village, and its boundaries were Weber Road to the north, McGuffey Road on the west, Genessee Avenue on the south, and the railroad to the east. Linden Heights was then annexed by the city of Columbus in 1921. At the beginning of the twentieth century Linden quickly became a working class neighborhood by virtue of the brickyards and lumber companies in the area and its proximity to the railroad. Since 1913, when Cleveland Avenue was initially paved, it has been the heart of Linden and a site of much of the area's commerce. Prior to World War II Cleveland Avenue was a bustling retail center for the area, specializing in numerous furniture establishments (Columbus
Department of Development, 2003). Linden was never a wealthy area, but prior to World War II it was exclusive in the sense that it was over 90 percent white (Jacobs, 1998).

**Freeway Construction and a Demographic Shift**

In the two decades following the second world Columbus underwent a massive transformation, both physically and demographically. For Linden, three factors were most important in reshaping the neighborhood form the 1950s through the 1970s. The first was the construction of the freeways, which displaced many members of the Columbus African American community and forced them into several pockets throughout the city. The second was the construction of Windsor Terrace, a public housing project built to house the increasing number of poor residents in South Linden. The final factor was a retreat to the suburbs by a large number of businesses and white residents. This movement outward was due partly to the availability of cheap land and mortgages and commutes made convenient by the very highways that had so disrupted the black Columbus community. However, it was also due to racial prejudices that were aggravated by the fight over busing in Columbus Public Schools (Jacobs, 1998).

The foundation of Linden’s racial divide was laid long before South Linden’s first black residents arrived. Figure 1 shows the 1936 Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) “redlining” maps of Columbus overlaid with race in 1940 and contemporary highways. The map shows that much of Linden was given a “D” rating by the HOLC, meaning it was designated as a place where investment was risky. The map also demonstrates that most of the highways that now run through the city were built in
neighborhoods given a C or D rating. A common narrative regarding HOLC practices is that they redlined areas because those neighborhoods were dominantly black. The Columbus map shows that the main African American neighborhood, located along Long Street and in much of what is today known as the Near East Side, was indeed given a D rating; however, numerous white neighborhoods were also given this rating, Linden among them. In 1950 less than 10 percent of Linden was listed as non-white by the Census (Jacobs, 1998).

When the freeways were constructed in the 1960s, one of two things tended to happen in areas with a C or D rating: they were either run through with a new road themselves, or they became home to the numerous members of the Columbus black population displaced when Interstates 70 and 71 were run through the Near East Side. South Linden’s case was the latter.
Figure 1. Historic HOLC Investment Grades and Current African American Population
At the same time that existing black Columbus residents were forced to find homes in new neighborhoods due to freeway construction, large numbers of African Americans from the American south were moving north to find work and escape Jim Crow laws in the final waves of the great migration. As the African American population of Columbus increased by 112 percent between 1950 and 1970, both real estate agents and lenders, through various practices, acted to keep African Americans contained in narrow portions of the city (Jacobs, 1998). It was during this era that the division between North and South Linden became most pronounced. Figure 2 shows the sharp increases in the percentage of the population that was African American in South Linden between 1950 and 1970. During the same period North Linden remained almost entirely white (U.S. Census). In the 1960s Hudson Street was a line that could not be crossed.

![Percent African American](image)

Figure 2. African American Population in North and South Linden (Percent)
The flood of black households presented a challenge for South Linden in terms of housing. As an old working class community, most of Linden’s housing stock consisted of single family homes, and many had seen better days. Even if the old houses were well maintained, many of the new residents could not afford to buy them outright and could not get loans because of the racialized lending practices of the day. To deal with this housing problem, in 1959 the city constructed Windsor Terrace, a public housing project located just east of Cleveland and Eleventh Avenues. At its peak, Windsor Terrace housed hundreds of low income households. It also became infamous throughout the city as the site of many social disturbances and conflicts with police throughout the 1960s (Columbus Department of Development, 2003).

While the escalating crime at Windsor Terrace certainly did nothing to help the image of South Linden in the 1960s, the biggest issue of the day had yet to unfold. Though Linden was sharply segregated, the location of Linden McKinley High just two blocks south of the dividing line made it one of the few Columbus schools to have a student population with a fairly even mix of African American and white students. This fact would place it front and center in the conflict over desegregation busing (Jacobs, 1998).

In the mid-1960s, in the wake of Brown v. Board of Education and subsequent legal decisions regarding segregation in education, the Columbus Public School District had to face up to the fact that its schools were de facto segregated by virtue of the residential landscape of the city. Though the 1960s had marked great strides in terms of legal equality and statements of respect for African Americans, many white Columbus
residents and school board members vehemently opposed any concrete plans for achieving educational equality and integration. The Columbus black community was growing impatient with empty rhetoric, and many groups began protesting at various schools throughout the city. The tensions peaked in May of 1971, when black students at Linden McKinley attempted to replace the American flag with a black nationalist flag on school property. As white students tried to stop them, administrators closed the school for fear of violence. The school remained closed for most of the remainder of the year, with seniors only being to take their final exams under the watch of dozens of police officers (Jacobs, 1998).

The standoff at Linden McKinley and the media coverage that went along with it served to fan the flames of racial fear and animosity in the city. As Jacobs (1998) writes:

The words _Linden-McKinley_ came to connote the unspoken fear and disdain with which whites viewed the burgeoning black presence in the schools, implicitly encapsulating the stereotypes—physical violence, deficient discipline, lax moral standards, declining academic achievement, and generally inferior status—that many whites associated with blacks. In a matter of a few weeks, Linden-McKinley had become a sort of understood social footnote, a symbol that would be cited for years by white parents to justify avoiding sending their children to Columbus Public Schools (p. 26).
And avoid the schools they did. Long before the city schools began busing students across the city in the name of integration, the steady outflow of white families to the suburbs and their separate school districts ensured that Columbus Public Schools would remain segregated for years to come. For both North and South Linden, this initial exodus in the 1960s and 1970s marked the beginning of decades of population decline and disinvestment.

The 1970s and 1980s saw a loosening of the racial boundaries between North and South Linden. Figure 2 shows the steady increase in the African American share of the North Linden population, from just over four percent in 1970 to over 40 percent in 1990. The percentage increase is due to both an increase in the black population and a loss in the white population. In absolute terms, the entire Linden area lost a significant portion of its population over these two decades. The population of South Linden peaked in 1960 at just over 25,000. North Linden peaked in 1970 at over 42,000. By 1990 North Linden had lost 42 percent of its peak population. South Linden fared slightly better, losing only 16 percent (U.S. Census). As the homes of these former residents were vacated, they were often bought up by investors from outside the area, contributing to the problem of absentee landlords that plagues the area to this day (Columbus Department of Development, 2003). Additionally many homes have been vacant for multiple years. Nineteen percent of housing units in Linden are unoccupied, compared to just 12 percent for the county as a whole (U.S. Census).
The 1990s to Today

In the past two decades there has been somewhat of a convergence of North and South Linden. This has happened formally through the creation of organizations and initiatives that seek to unite the two Lindens, but also informally through changing demographics. Though the administrative convergence has generally taken the form of civic activism and engagement, the demographic merging has not been entirely positive.

Today North and South Linden look more alike along many indicators than they have since the 1950s. Though North Linden remains majority white, but the African American share of the population has remained constant at over 40 percent since the 1980s. South Linden remains over 80 percent black. The major change in South Linden over the past twenty years has been a continuation of the population loss it has endured since 1960. Between 1990 and 2012 South Linden’s population shrank by another 22 percent. This occurred while the populations of Columbus and Franklin County as a whole have both grown by over 20 percent (U.S. Census). North Linden’s population stayed approximately the same over that time period, but the people living there began doing substantially worse. Figure 3 shows that by 2012 North Linden’s poverty rate had nearly caught up to South Linden’s.
Increasing poverty rates are a reflection of the overall poor economic and educational conditions in the area. Though the unemployment rate of Linden is 10 percent, it belies a much more distressing employment problem. Over 40 percent of adults over 16 are not in the labor force at all (U.S. Census). This is partially a product of employers leaving the area and businesses relocating to suburban shopping centers (Columbus Department of Development, 2003). However, the problem could also be blamed on education. In Franklin County 36 percent of adults have at least a bachelor’s degree, but in Linden the rate is only 10 percent. By contrast, 20 percent of adults in Linden do not have a high school diploma or the equivalent, compared to just 10 percent for the county as a whole. A comparatively large portion of young adults in Linden are considered “drop outs” according to the Census, meaning they are between 16 and 19, do not have a high school diploma or equivalent, and are not enrolled in school. Seven percent of females 16 to 19 fit this description in Linden, but the problem is much worse for males, at 12 percent. Both of these rates are twice the county average. Education is a
challenge inside the schools, as well. Linden-McKinley High School, now Linden-McKinley STEM Academy, has a graduation rate of just 68 percent (ODE, 2014), and it’s Ohio Department of Education school report card, which contains indicators of student proficiency and school improvement, is littered with Ds and Fs (ODE, 2014).

Safety is the biggest concern of residents and business owners, including a range of issues from drugs and prostitution to excessive speeds of vehicles driving through neighborhoods. There are eight parks and one recreation center in the North Linden area. Maintenance of these areas is sometimes a problem, and residents report not feeling safe in some of the park areas (Columbus Department of Development, 2003). However, as the inset of Figure 4 shows, the park areas of Linden are hardly hot spots of crime. Much of the crime in the area, particularly robberies and murders, occur along Cleveland Avenue in South Linden. The larger map of figure shows the violent crime rates in Columbus by census tract. This demonstrates that, while the stretch of Cleveland Avenue in South Linden does have a fairly high crime rate, much of the rest of Linden experiences no more crime than many other areas of Columbus. A portion of North Linden has a crime rate of less than .5%, comparable to many of the more affluent areas of the city. However, the majority of Linden does have a violent crime rate that is higher than higher income areas. The differences in crime rates throughout the area are important, as they call into question whether we should expect the experience of crime to be universal throughout a neighborhood.
Figure 4. Violent Crime Incidents in Columbus, 2000
The combination of racial concentration, poverty, low employment and education, and crime paints a picture of Linden as the type of neighborhood described in the neighborhood effects literature. By nearly any measure, the area would be a candidate for dispersion programs. For the MTO experiment, the definition of a “low opportunity” census tract was one where the poverty rate was over 40 percent. The poverty rate of the Linden area as a whole is nearly that, at 35 percent, but Figure 5 shows that many tracts fall well above the 40 percent threshold. In addition, of the residents who formally fall below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), sixty percent are below 200 percent of this poverty measure, which is considered “poor or struggling” by the Census.
Figure 5. Franklin County Population, Percentage African American and Below Poverty
Housing and the alleviation of blight from vacant homes and properties have been major focuses of community activism in recent years. In an effort to reunite the two Lindens while working toward better housing and community programs, the Greater Linden Development Corporation (GLDC) was created in 1994 out of the former South Linden Development Project. The GLDC remains a hub of operations for many housing and community coordination efforts in the area.

Another development on the housing front took place in the mid-1990s—the demolition of the Windsor Terrace. A HOPE VI grant was used to tear down the old housing project and, with the help of additional LIHTC funding, construct new apartments and mixed use development in the vicinity. The mixed use development, known as the Four Corners project because it consists of developments on all four corners of the intersection of Cleveland and Eleventh Avenues, contains offices of the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA), the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), and the GLDC, some other nonprofit neighborhood organizations, a restaurant, and a tax preparation business. The new public housing units are known as Rosewind Apartments. Rosewind contains 230 units, nearly all of which are low income (Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, 2012).

Besides Rosewind, the Linden area has a few other public housing options, but these are mostly for seniors. As the neighborhood’s housing stock remains mostly single family homes, the majority of subsidized housing in the area takes the form of Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs). Figure 6 shows the distribution of public housing and HCVs in Franklin County. It demonstrates that Linden and other low income areas are home to a
disproportionate share of both forms of subsidized housing, which aligns with prior research on subsidized housing location (e.g. Varady & Walker, 2007; Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010). However, vouchers are not limited to low-income areas, with high income areas such as Harrison West showing a fair number of HCVs.
Figure 6. Subsidized Housing and Median Income in Franklin County
Despite the concentration of vouchers in Linden, housing affordability remains a struggle for many residents. Even though the neighborhood has relatively low rents and property values compared to the rest of the city, 57 percent of renters in the neighborhood are rent burdened, paying over 30 percent of their income in rent, compared to 46 percent for Franklin County as a whole (U.S. Census).

*Housing Histories and Community Information Sharing in Linden*

Some important information on housing can be gleaned from census data, such as vacancy rates, average rents, and homeownership rates. However, the census tells us little about individuals’ housing histories and the locations of prior homes. In the 2013 St. Stephen’s Community Survey, questions regarding the length of time individuals have lived in their homes, the location of their last residence, and number of homes they have lived in the past five years, as well as more general questions about the community, supplement secondary data available through government sources.

Since the survey was conducted through a convenience sample, it is biased in some important ways. However, acknowledging that the data may not be wholly representative of the area at large, it still provides a glimpse into the housing situations of Linden residents.

A total of 431 people took the 2013 survey, and 326 contained addresses that were successfully geocoded. Of those geocoded surveys, 285 were determined to be
inside the study area. Most likely due to the fact that the study was conducted during the work day, it is biased toward an older population. Figure 7 shows the age distributions of the survey sample compared to data from the 2008-2012 American Community Survey (ACS) five year estimates.

The survey sample also contains a much larger proportion of females than the general population. Nearly 70 percent of the sample is female, compared to just 53 percent according to the Census. This may be because women were more likely to agree to take the survey than men or because more women were at home during the afternoon caring for children. Alternatively, the explanation could be that females are overrepresented because they are more likely to be heads of their household (cite census

Figure 7. Comparison of Age Distribution of Census and Survey Sample
number), and the survey tended to be administered to heads of household. Renters are also overrepresented in the survey, with 65 percent of survey respondents reporting that they rent their home. According to the Census, this number is closer to 47 percent for the area.

A somewhat surprising way in which the survey sample is not greatly biased is in employment status. It was assumed that because the survey was conducted largely during the workday that unemployed residents and those out of the labor force would be overrepresented. However, Figure 8 demonstrates that, while a slightly larger number of respondents reported being out of the labor force than the Census would predict, the bias is not as strong as predicted. The unemployment rate of the sample is almost identical to that of the Census.

![Employment Status](chart.png)

**Figure 8. Comparison of Employment Status of Census and Survey Sample**
With the understanding that the sample is somewhat biased toward older, female renters, some of the survey data still provides a great deal of useful information on the details of some residents’ housing situations. First and foremost, the length of time that residents have lived in their homes is bimodal. The highest peak is that of residents who have lived in the current homes for more than 10 years, the majority of whom are homeowners. This is an important finding because it shows a level of stability in the neighborhood that is often underplayed in the literature. The second peak is for residents who have lived in their homes one to three years, most of whom are renters. This generally fits with common narratives of low income areas. Additionally, nearly 14 percent of respondents report having lived in their homes for less than one year. Another striking result of the length of housing tenure question is that very few homeowners have lived in their homes less than seven years, demonstrating a lack of new homeowners in the area, which would serve to stabilize the housing market and raise property values (Rohe & Stewart, 2010). Though the majority of residents who have lived in their homes 10 or more years do own their homes, a surprising number do not, and nearly half of respondents who have lived in their homes between seven and ten years are renters. This begs the questions: why are these long-time residents not transitioning to homeownership?
Figure 9. Length of Tenure by Homeownership Status

For respondents of nearly all lengths of tenure, their previous homes were either in the neighborhood or in another area of Columbus. Figure 10 shows the portions of people responding that their previous homes were in the neighborhood, elsewhere in Columbus, elsewhere in the state, or abroad. Since respondents were permitted to employ their own definitions of “neighborhood” to answer this question, it is possible that a larger proportion of previous homes were in Linden than might be suggested by the “in
the neighborhood” response. Since Linden is a fairly large area and is sometimes still thought of as two separate sections, someone moving from one end of Linden to another might consider their move to be to “another neighborhood in Columbus.”

![Figure 10. Location of Previous Homes](image)

Figure 10 shows that the largest single portion of respondents has been in their homes more than five years. However, the majority have moved at least once. Over 20 percent have moved two or more times in that time period.
Figure 11. Respondents’ Number of Homes in the Past Five Years

Of the respondents who have lived in three or more homes in five years, many have moved within the neighborhood. Excluding current residences, of the people who have lived in three or more places in five years, collectively 38 percent of those homes were in the neighborhood. For the 19 respondents who have lived in four or more homes, that number is 40 percent. This means that many frequent movers are either moving within the neighborhood or are moving in and out, suggesting that there is something that pulls them back to Linden.
Though some of the literature would suggest that it is a lack of availability of cheap and subsidized homes in higher income areas that keeps frequent movers in the same neighborhoods (Turner, Popkin, & Cunningham, 2000), the results of MTO point to the fact that social networks and other aspects of community in homes neighborhoods can also be an important draw. Another survey question could lead one to believe that there is more life in the Linden community than is indicated in much of the data presented thus far. When asked about how they find out what is going on in their neighborhood, the vast majority of respondents reported that friends, family, and neighbors are their most important sources of information.

Figure 12. How Respondents Find out What’s Going on in the Neighborhood
This reliance on personal sources of local information, despite the prevalence of instability in housing, suggests that the social world of Linden and how it relates to housing requires further investigation. In the next section, a series of in-depth interviews on social ties, community attitudes, and housing decisions serve to illuminate how relationships and community attachment interact with often constrained housing choices.
Chapter 5: Relationships, Community, and Housing Preferences

Many things that happen in a community cannot be studied through quantitative means. Questions of how residents came to live in their current homes, how they feel about various aspects of their community, and why they would or would not want to move to another area can only be answered by allowing people to give lengthy and detailed answers. The interview portion of the study gives many residents the chance to narrate the experience of living in Linden. Through these narrations, a picture of Linden emerges that differs from the one we might expect using only the measures employed in the previous section.

The survey results were used to establish certain common profiles of Linden residents—for example, older homeowners, single mothers, and frequent movers. In addition to filling these profiles, the goal of interview recruitment was to include people with different types of housing subsidies. Participants were recruited using several methods. First, survey respondents who fit the desired profiles and had provided contact information in the survey were contacted. Many of the survey respondents did not voluntarily give contact information, and those who did fit only some of the necessary demographic profiles or had given phone numbers that were no longer working by the time the interview recruitment took place. To fill the gaps in this method of recruitment, two alternative methods were used. The first was to use snowball sampling from the initial interviewees. The first participants were asked if they knew people of certain ages
or housing situations, and they were asked to give the researcher’s contact information to those people. The second method was recruitment through contacts at St. Stephen’s, the Greater Linden Advisory Council, and the area commissions. Interviewees found through these organizational contacts were just as likely to live in subsidized or other rental housing as those recruited through the survey, and they were by no means the only participants to have positive views of the neighborhood. However, it should be noted that these are all organizations that advocate for Linden, so it is possible that people recruited through these means were more likely to have a positive image of Linden.

Like the survey, the interviews are skewed slightly older and female. Interviewees range in age from 27 to 78. Two are in their late twenties, six are in their thirties, one is in her forties, five are in their fifties, and three are over sixty. There are four males and 13 females.

![Work Statuses of Interviewees](image)

Figure 13. Work Statuses of Interviewees
All interviewees have at least a high school diploma or its equivalent. Four finished high school through alternative means either because they had dropped out, become pregnant, or had a disability that required additional time and accommodations for high school completion. Eleven have no education beyond high school. Three have some college or an associate’s degree. Three have a bachelor’s degree. None have an advanced degree.

Figure 14. Interviewees’ Housing Types

*Housing Situations*

A college degree is no guarantee of work or homeownership. Three of the people with postsecondary education are unemployed and living largely off a family member’s
income. A lack of postsecondary education or steady employment does not preclude homeownership.

There is great variety in satisfaction with housing. Over half of the market rate renters report mild to severe issues with their landlords, ranging from slow responses to issues like fixing doors and cabinets to a failure to take care of serious health threats like carbon monoxide and mold. All but one market rate renter report that their landlords live outside the area and subcontract to a variety of professionals or neighborhood people to maintain the homes. Two of the market rate renters like their homes very much and do not have any issues with their landlords. Both of these renters work full time.

Theresa is an example of such a renter. She lives in a market rate apartment in a small complex. She has been there for two years. She moved after her divorce and is still trying to sell her old home, which she can no longer afford. Before she owned that house she had lived in another unit owned by her current landlords, the sons of a pair of brothers who have owned rental property in Columbus for several decades. She had a good experience with them in the past, so when she was looking for a new place she called them.

Several other market renters are generally the worst off in terms of housing, and many report wanting to get a voucher but being unable to for some reason. Gabrielle, a single mother of three, was living in a family shelter prior to moving to her current home. She took her current apartment because her time at the shelter was almost up. She found it through a posting at the shelter, and they helped her with the security deposit and first
month's rent. Since she only works part time and currently has no hours at her job at a local restaurant chain, she is severely rent burdened. As she explains it,

It's hard to get low income or Section 8...when I first had my daughter in '05, I had signed up for it, and I had moved, but I hadn't updated my contact information, so my number came and when I finally did give them a call they were like your number came up six months ago, so you have to reapply. And by then the wait list is like seven, eight years long, and the low income is the same thing. It takes forever...You gotta make sure you update. I knew that, but with everything else that was going on at the time, it just slipped my mind.

Of the two voucher holders, one is pleased with her home and has lived there for eight years. The other has lived in four homes in the last five years and has had numerous issues with unresponsive and absentee landlords. However, she has been able to use recourses through the local housing authority to help negotiate conflicts and find new housing, which is an advantage over renters in the private market.

Those living in owned homes work hard to maintain them, even those who are living in homes owned by their parents. Michael, a 36-year-old who moved back to Linden from New York City after his mother had a stroke, now lives in his childhood home on the eastern edge of Linden, which his mother has owned for nearly thirty years. The home is not in terribly good shape, and when I met with him for the interview he was in the process of doing renovations in the kitchen and living room. He says that his
mother did not maintain the house very well, but he uses what extra income they have to
do necessary work on the house and improve it.

None of the people living with family members work, but in many cases they
actually seemed less stressed about housing and were less likely to complain about
landlords or the condition of their homes, possibly because they are not charged with
maintaining the homes. The two people living in public housing generally like their
physical apartments and the maintenance staff that cares for them, but they have other
housing complaints, mostly about their neighbors.

*Patterns in Social Networks*

For the questions that pertained to the people with whom they discuss important
matters, most interviewees were able to name at least three core discussants. All but one
reported at least one person. True to prior research, most core discussion groups are made
up largely of family members and spouses or significant others (e.g. Wellman, 1973;
Marsden, 1987). Nearly all interviewees named at least one family member who lives in
Linden among their discussants; however, equally prevalent were family members who
live in other parts of Columbus, and many people named out-of-state family members as
confidants. Most of the women named a best friend who is not a family member, but
none of the men did. These best friends nearly all live outside the Linden area, mostly in
other parts of the city. The women most often met their best friends in school.

There are some slight patterns in these emotional support networks along
socioeconomic lines. Those with more education were more likely to name core
discussants who live in more affluent suburbs or in other cities or states. The geographic
dispersion of these networks has to do both with childhood friends and family members
moving away for employment and with the interviewees themselves having lived,
worked, or gone to school in other areas. This tendency for more educated people to have
more geographically diverse networks aligns with previous findings (Fischer, 1982). It
also supports composition theory, which states that differences in network structures have
mostly to do with socioeconomic characteristics of individuals (Campbell & Lee, 1999).

Though more highly educated individuals in the study are more likely to have
ties in suburbs and other cities, this does not imply that less educated people have entirely
place-based networks. In fact, all interviewees who reported having confidants named at
least one person outside the Linden area. The difference is that most of the confidants of
less educated people are located in other low income areas, such as Weinland Park or the
Southeast Side of Columbus. Also, in many cases a larger portion of these networks is
located in Linden.

Jasmine is a person whose whole network is in Linden or nearby neighborhoods.
A 27-year-old single mother of two who also cares for her nephew, she has lived in three
homes in the past five years, all in Linden. Most recently, she has moved in with her
mother because her apartment building was closed down. Her neighbors are her family.
Jasmine's core discussion group consists of her mother, her boyfriend, his mother, and his
godmother, all of whom live just down the street. The only discussion group member
who lives outside the area is her best friend since middle school who lives about two
miles away in the Short North neighborhood.
There is significant overlap between core discussion networks and small
favor/neighbor networks, but this is not because interviewees are especially close to their
neighbors. Rather, it is because they have family members who live nearby. Only two of
the interviewees reported that the first people they would ask for a small favor like
borrowing a tool would be a non-related neighbor. Most said they would ask a family
member who lives in Linden, even if to do so would require driving a few minutes.

Only three of the individuals interviewed have cultivated a significant
professional network that does not overlap with family, and all three either currently own
a business or have in the past. Dorothy, a homeowner in her sixties, has been a small
businesses owner for over 25 years. She started with a cleaning company and later went
in to event planning with a business partner. She plans events mostly in Columbus, but
has sometimes worked in other parts of the country. She has slowed her schedule in
recent years as she has gotten older, but she still plans about an event a month. She says
she no longer has to advertise because she gets all the business she can handle through
word of mouth. She has a large network of professional acquaintances, and she says that
if she were to refer someone who was looking for a job, who she would refer them to
would entirely depend on what type of job they were looking for.

More typically, when asked who people would contact if they were looking for a
job or were helping someone else look for a job, people responded that they would rely
on a local social service agency or an online resource, such as Craigslist™. When
pressed, a couple of those interviewed were able to come up with a couple of references
from past or current jobs. Though Michael’s current occupation is caring for his mother,
he says that if he were to look for work he would post his resume online. When pushed as
to whether there were any particular people he might reach out to, he cited his employers
from his old job as a car salesman.

Another group of people reported that they would rely on family members for
information about jobs. Jasmine does not currently work because she cares for three
children and receives some form of government assistance for each of them. However, in
the past she has been employed in warehouse jobs and did not mind the work. She has
also done secretarial work through a job placement. She says she enjoyed the secretarial
work and would like to do it again. Jasmine names her uncle and her oldest brother as the
people she would ask about jobs because they are always working and keep up on who’s
hiring. Her uncle works for a food bank and her brother works for a sign company in a
northern suburb.

*Linden Histories: How and Why They Came to Live Here*

All interviewees grew up in low income areas of Columbus, though several were
born out of state, mostly in the south. Twelve spent most of their childhoods in Linden.
The other five grew up in other parts of the city, primarily the southeast portion. All but a
handful have lived outside of Linden at some point in their adult lives. The more
educated people and those who are employed full time are much more likely to have
lived outside of Columbus proper as an adult. The reasons for these people living outside
of Columbus have mostly to do with moving to find jobs. Most of the market rate renters
have lived outside of Linden because they had to move to find housing.
People’s reasons for being in Linden as opposed to other areas of Columbus or its suburbs have very little to do with housing. Not a single interviewee cited not being able to find housing anywhere else as the main reason for being there. There are three main reasons for ending up in Linden. For most people, two or more of these reasons are true. The first is family. Two of the men interviewed moved back to Linden to care for their mothers after living in another state. Several others have ended up in their current home because it is near a family member. This is sometimes because of an explicit desire to be near that family member for reasons such as childcare and other support, but many times the move is due to information. Family members find out that a house or apartment is available, and they tell their relative who is searching for a home that it is available. Though most interviewees do not say that being near family is the main reason they like Linden or want to be here, all but one do have multiple family members in the neighborhood. The one exception has family in Milo Grogan, the neighborhood just south of Linden.

Edith is fairly typical among those interviewed. She has family in Linden, but also in other parts of the city. She relies on her sister and granddaughter, both of whom live in Linden, for emotional support, as well as her brother who lives outside the area but visits frequently. She has a daughter, grandchildren, and other extended family members on the south side of town. She does not have a car, but she regularly gets rides with nearby family members to go see them, and they have family nights with dinner and games.

The second reason for being in Linden is a general sense of comfort. Four separate interviewees used the exact word “comfortable” in their description of why they
stay in Linden. This sense of comfort is partly because of local support and neighbor networks described in the network elicitation questions, but it also goes beyond that. It has to do with a general sense of knowing and being known, both in terms of people and places. This form of comfort aligns with research on place attachment done in the field of environmental psychology. Place attachment involves the gradual bonding of people to places over time through the accumulation of experiences and emotions (Manzo and Perkins, 2006).

Two examples of comfort in the community on extreme ends of the economic spectrum are Theresa and Raymond. Theresa, who works full time as a teaching assistant and lives in a nice apartment, describes her neighborhood like this:

I'm familiar with it. I'm not scared of the environment when I'm around, you know? And I just like the area, and I live in a nice quiet area... It's what you make it. You know when they always say Columbus Public Schools are no good? It's what you make it. So if you go in and keep the neighborhood clean, like I go, and I get my gloves out, and... we make sure our area is nice and clean. So it's what you make it, really. If you're living in a bad area, keep your area clean. Get to know your neighbors and everything, and so, like I said, I feel safe. If I go out in the morning at 6:30 in the morning I feel safe. And most people probably wouldn't, but I'm okay with the neighborhood.
Raymond, on the other hand, has had more financial struggles than any other person interviewed. Raymond does not have any formal identification. At the moment this is the primary reason he cannot find work. He also has a felony conviction and has spent two years in prison. For the past several years he has worked odd jobs, from house painting and roof repair to electrical wiring, on a for-cash basis. To fill his time he volunteers nearly full time at a local food pantry, where a staff member is helping him with fees for the necessary paperwork to get an ID. His only income is what he gets from odd jobs and the food he is allowed to take home from the pantry. He stays in his step brother's rented house, but when things are bad between them he moves in and out of shelters and even stays in abandoned garages. Despite his struggles, Raymond is not interested in leaving Linden. He sees himself not so much as a resident as a local fixture. He knows everyone and everyone knows him. He relies on word of mouth through neighbors to get odd jobs to support himself. Raymond is a dyed-in-the-wool Lindenite: "I’m right here. I ain’t going nowhere…I might leave and come back. But I would never stay gone."

The sense of comfort also has to do with convenience. Many people emphasize Linden’s proximity to many amenities, both inside the neighborhood and just outside the area. Linden is a ten- to fifteen-minute drive from downtown, the Ohio State University, and a couple of major suburban shopping malls. Though many people remarked at how the neighborhood lacks businesses, most report being able to get groceries and run most of their errands without leaving the neighborhood. In the words of one interviewee, “everything is where I need it to be.”
The final reason for being in Linden, which overlaps significantly with the first two, is a sense of purpose, responsibility, and mission. This is true to varying extents for more than half of interviewees. For some, such as Angela and Cecilia, it is their life’s work.

Angela has worked at a local community center for most of her adult life, over 15 years. She began working in childcare there after they helped her get Christmas gifts for her young daughter. She now works 60 hours most weeks and is dedicated to her work in the community. “I just don’t work here. It’s definitely my passion, and it’s just, I’m relatable. I just enjoy the Linden area…I can go to the store; I can see people who I see that I’ve helped. And I’m just comfortable.”

Cecilia owns a community nonprofit that works with youth in the area. She also owns the two-unit building she lives in. She lives on one side; her sister lives on the other. She is passionate and optimistic about Linden and advocates for eliminating the "trashing" of Linden, in both the literal and figurative sense. She describes how people dump tires on abandoned properties and litter, often people from outside the neighborhood. On top of that, the local media is always quick to report on a robbery or murder, but the many positive community events that take place in Linden each year are rarely covered. As for herself, "Even if I won the lottery, I still would not move. Now, I might buy a vacation home in Paris, but first I would buy up the block here."

For others, that sense of commitment manifests itself as an avocation. When Michael first moved back to Linden, he was dismayed to see that the local recreation center that had meant so much to him in his youth had been shut down. He and a
neighbor worked together to get a grant to rebuild the center. It is now up and running again. Many other interviewees report small-scale service and involvement with youth through churches and community centers. Concerns about idle youth are a common theme throughout the interviews, and most view it as a problem with no single solution. As Theresa puts it, “you know that old saying, it takes a village? It really does, because kids have it rough out here. They really do.”

So, Would They Stay or Would They Go?

In contrast to what one might believe from the statistics in the previous section, only one interviewee reported a real desire to leave the Linden area. For the rest of the individuals, responses to the question of under what circumstances they would leave Linden ranged from “I would never leave Linden” to “I would move for a job” or “I would move for a better house.” However, those who said they would move for jobs or better housing all also responded that they either liked or had no real complaints about Linden, and finding a job or home in Linden would be preferable to moving.

Edith likes the people in the neighborhood, but she is not satisfied with her apartment. She enjoys being able to help people out and finds satisfaction in giving kids popsicles when it's warm out and sitting outside with her neighbors. Nonetheless, she feels her current home is too small, and she sometimes grows impatient with the slow response of the people her landlord hires to take care of the property. She would like to stay in the area, but mostly she would like a two bedroom home with only one floor so
she could have more space and get around more easily, so she says that she would move anywhere she could find a home like that she could afford.

Shawna, a 44-year-old single mother of four, lives in public housing through the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority. She does not mind her apartment, but she has only been able to find part time work on the janitorial staff for a large plastics manufacturer in the neighborhood since leaving the military. She "wish[es] it were full time," and though she likes being near her mother, who owns a home in the neighborhood, she says that she would move for a better job.

Crime as the Deciding Factor

At some point in their interviews, all residents mentioned crime without direct prompting. However, attitudes about the crime and the extent to which they are directly exposed to it vary greatly as a deciding factor in whether they feel a desire to leave the Linden area.

The most typical attitude toward crime is best summed up by Monica, a single mother in her twenties who lives in CMHA housing. She described some of the crime that occurred in the neighborhood and some of the suspicious behaviors of her neighbors in her interview. However, when asked if there was anything that would make her leave Linden, she says, “Everywhere you're going to have violence. Everywhere you're going to have crime. Even in your nicer neighborhoods you're going to have all of that. So that wouldn't make me want to leave. I think the only thing that would make me leave is if I began to feel suffocated by the foolishness. And when I say foolishness, by the crime. By
the violence.” And for the moment, she says that she does not feel suffocated, and her overall comfort and sense of belonging in the community overrides the effects of crime.

That is not the case for Stacia. Stacia grew up in Windsor Terrace and was rarely allowed to go outside as a child. As a result, as an adult she has been shocked by the crime and violence she has come across and has tried to be as protective of her sons as her parents were of her. She has four boys, ranging in age from three to sixteen. Since her oldest son is now a teenager she cannot keep him in the house any longer. She worries that he has no safe places to hang out with his friends. She still has family in the Linden area, but she does not rely on any of them and has even had conflicts with some. Much of her family has moved from the Linden area to the suburbs. Stacia cannot name a single family member or friend with whom she discusses anything on a regular basis. She says she relies on hotlines and local institutions for support: "if I'm depressed I call somebody who deals with depression; there's violence in the area I'll call 911. I wouldn't ask anybody around here for help because they don't help, really.” She harbors great mistrust of her neighbors and complains about gossip. She is especially fearful of letting her son run around the neighborhood because one of his friends has already been killed in a shooting.

Stacia has a voucher. She left her last home because of repeated poor maintenance and mold from leaky pipes. She found her current house through her aunt, who lives across the street, and she had to make a quick move because her time was running out, and she was about to lose her voucher: "you've got to be ahead of it or you're going to lose your turn." Despite problems finding a place in the past, she is optimistic about her
ability to use her voucher in another area, saying she can take her voucher "to Louisiana if I want to as long as they accept it." She hasn't tried, though. She's waiting until her oldest son graduates. "And when he turns 18 I'm out of here. I want to find a better place. Start all over again. And someplace really sleepy. And if I have my wish of where, I would want to go somewhere outside. I would go to Polaris."

Though Stacia is the only interviewee who reported a real desire to leave, one other person was undecided on whether to stay. Winnie sent mixed messages about her desire to move. On one hand, she seemed happy about the fact that her landlord keeps the option of buying her home open to her, she has many family members in the area, and she is friendly with many neighbors. On the other hand, she experiences a lot of stress as a result of conflicts with other neighbors and exposure to crime and violence because of her son and nephew, both of whom are in their early twenties and have been involved in crime. She was recently hospitalized and said that when she was released, she cried. She said it was nice to be taken care of. "And then everybody tried to come and stay with us. I don't want nobody stayin' with us. No. It's enough. I can't keep an eye on everybody."

She is happy that as a result of the hospitalization she has been assigned a social worker to help her navigate some of the paperwork and bureaucracies she has to deal with. That takes a lot of stress off. When asked directly if she would ever leave Linden, she enthusiastically said yes. When asked where she would like to live, she describes a time she traveled out to a rural county to buy her puppy. "I ain't saying I'm going to move there, but it was nice. Quiet, yeah. Basically if I could it would be like a farm area, and
then I don't really have a reason to come back." But Winnie is over fifty and has never lived outside of Linden in her adult life.

Both of these women would like to live somewhere “sleepy” or “quiet,” and for good reason. They have both been exposed to violence through their young sons in ways that most other interviewees had not. To live in Linden means to hear about crime and sometimes to see it. But true exposure to crime comes in the form of young men. These women fear for themselves because they fear for their sons.

**Policy Implications for Housing and Beyond**

The most significant finding of this study is the general lack of desire on the part of most residents to leave Linden. Though housing is often a major concern for individuals, the issue is just that: housing—not neighborhood. Even for individuals who struggle with housing and employment or have been affected by crime, the desire to leave is the exception, not the rule. Rather, they would like to find housing with more space or in better condition, and though a few said they would be willing to move to achieve this, the vast majority would prefer to stay in the Linden area. Many are severely rent burdened and have tried to get housing vouchers but have been unable to.

This implies that many of Linden’s residents who would be candidates for relocation programs may be better served by investments within the neighborhood to provide more subsidized housing, increase access to vouchers, and improve the quality of homes that accept vouchers.
The results of this study imply that neighborhood-based subsidized housing investments would be to the benefit of many individual residents. However, though all residents interviewed recognized the need for improving the housing stock and expanding access to safe, affordable housing, many also had negative opinions of Section 8 and public housing. This is sometimes true even for those who live in income-based housing.

Donald is a homeowner who knows many of his neighbors and is an advocate for homeownership in the area. He keeps records of all homes that are up for demolition and frequently writes to city council and other officials to advocate for renovation in lieu of demolition. Donald believes that houses have stories, and he is a fierce advocate for improving the housing stock in North Linden. He is against the rampant demolition that takes place in the area and keeps track of all demolitions and houses marked for demolition so that he can write to public officials to. He also writes to advocate for other investments. He does not belong to any formal organizations, but considers himself a member of an informal group of loyal COTA (Central Ohio Transit Authority) bus riders and regularly attends area commission meetings and meetings of the Greater Linden Advisory Council. He sees vacant and abandoned properties and properties bought by investors and not maintained to be a major source of the area's problems. When he looks into the state of some of the unoccupied homes, he finds that many do not have a deed or have owners who live out of state. He views the prevalence of Section 8 in the neighborhood as a problem, but mostly because he views all renting as a problem. He believes the way to turn the neighborhood around is to get more people to own their
homes and take pride in where they live. He does not think this will be accomplished if more vouchers are brought to the area.

Monica is equally wary of income-based housing, even though she lives in it herself. She worries that the community will become “saturated” with subsidized housing.

They’re knocking down houses and rebuilding them. But now let's look at the families that are getting put in these house…Now you're saturating this community with based-on-your-income housing. Because you're knocking down a house that was there, building a new house, but then you're putting based-on-your-income residents there. So do you want this area to always be based on your income? Is that the goal? I mean, they're nice houses. I do know someone that lives in [one]. And they're really, really nice. But it's like, is that the goal? Or is the goal to show the people in this area how to be homeowners?

As for herself, Monica has mixed feelings about her housing. She likes the condition of the apartment, but she says “you never really fall in love with your neighbors,” and “I do seclude myself to my house, but I have my own personal reasons because there are some things going on outside that I just don't participate in. And it's better for me to be in the house.”

This avoidance of neighbors is true of the other public housing interviewee, as well, and of a few other renters and voucher holders. Several of the people who do like
their neighbors and feel they live in quiet, safe areas emphasize that this is not true of every area of Linden. Many talk about the public housing areas and “the number streets” as bad places to live. No one could say for sure that a certain end of the neighborhood was better than another, but several could name specific streets that they would or would not want to live on. According to Kimberly, the good and bad areas are “street by street.” This points to an important distinction in much of the thinking that backs dispersal policies. Residents such as Monica agree that concentrations of poverty and subsidized housing lead to social problems. Many of the interviewees have experienced them firsthand. However, many studies, such as MTO (e.g. Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010) assume that concentration effects occur or can be measured at the census tract or neighborhood level. This study suggests that there are concentration effects in Linden, but they exist only on a much smaller scale. Large public housing developments and pockets of high-poverty homes surrounded by vacant buildings do, according to interviewees, breed crime, but that crime does not necessarily invest the entire neighborhood. This conforms to the visual representation of violent crime in the previous section, as well as growing research on crime through the use of hot spot analysis (Eck, 2005). Many of the residents would like to avoid these high crime areas or, if they are currently living in a high crime area, would like to move to other areas.

Dispersion may be needed in Linden, but not in the sense that it is typically used. Low-income residents do not need to be dispersed to other areas of the city. Rather, they need to be dispersed within Linden. Mixed-income developments or more dispersed voucher locations within the community may allow residents who live in concentrated,
high crime pockets to escape environments they perceive as detrimental or threatening while remaining close to support networks in a neighborhood in which they feel comfortable.

Though housing policy is the focus of this research, one non-housing issue came up repeatedly in interviews, and that is the problem of adolescent boys and young men. In many cases interviewees cited the presence of young men loitering in a neighborhood as a strong indicator of the safety of the area. For those who have young men in their household, finding constructive activities and positive role models their sons is a huge source of anxiety and a strong incentive to leave the Linden area completely. Thus, the problems of young men and housing policy may be directly related. Investments in activities for this group, including wraparound services that involve families and schools in creating positive habits (NWI, 2014), could reduce the influence that groups of young men play in deterring investments in some parts of the neighborhood. These types of services have been shown to decrease the likelihood that juveniles with prior offenses will participate in negative social behaviors (Carney and Buttell, 2005). This type of holistic approach, by incorporating parent and family support, could also be instrumental to improving the lives of parents like Stacia, who feel isolated because of fear for or of young men.

Theoretical Implications

For some residents in Linden, the neighborhood is the basis of nearly all social interaction. For others, neighbors are to be avoided because they carry a risk of
involvement in crime or violence. For still others, the personal community extends far beyond the Linden neighborhood. With regard to the theories of community outlined in Chapter 2, neither Compression nor Avoidance Theory can be said to be at play in all or even most cases among those interviewed in this study. For some people, Linden is a Community Saved, while one feels Lost because of exposure to crime and chaos. For a few others, their networks are Liberated, spanning the entire Columbus metropolitan area and beyond. This variety of findings might suggest the initial hypothesis of this study, that Composition Theory is at play, is correct. There is some evidence to support this. Several of the more educated interviewees have networks of greater geographic breadth. However, a few lower income and less educated people also have connections in other parts of the city or even in other states. The difference between the more and less educated interviewees likely has more to do with the social status of the people to whom they are connected than the geographic distance their networks cover, suggesting that more educated people have greater social capital, regardless of the location of that capital (Lin, 2002).

The most significant theoretical finding of this research lies in the fact that it fails to adhere to any of the existing theories of low-income African American communities. Though Linden fits the description of neighborhoods that are the target of dispersal policies on many quantitative measures, the social worlds and attitudes of people in the neighborhood vary widely. The experiences of individuals in Linden are just that—individual. General satisfaction with the community is the norm, but the level of a
person’s satisfaction or willingness to move varies by location, family ties, housing condition, and even personality.

Even more importantly, the physical and social geography of Linden varies dramatically in spaces much smaller than a census tract, meaning the easy measures of neighborhood well-being are inadequate. Though some blocks or streets are, indeed, filled with vacant houses and are the site of frequent crime, there are also truly lovely places in Linden. In these areas, homes and lawns are well maintained, and neighbors enjoy each other’s company. Though not everyone lives in a nice area of Linden, nearly everyone agrees that the nice places are there, and that is why they are satisfied with the neighborhood and would like to stay.

It is a great source of frustration for many residents that representations of Linden in the local media continually focus only on the crime and economic decline in the area instead of the many positive efforts put forth by numerous individuals and organizations. Residents interviewed for this study are aware of the challenges facing the community, and more than one stressed not wanting to “sugar coat” the state of the neighborhood. But despite the lack of employment and economic resources in the immediate area, a great number of Linden residents are able to lead purposeful, productive lives in the neighborhood. People have attachments to the neighborhood that override any desire to move to a location that, by traditional measures, would provide them with greater opportunity. This suggests that Linden is not a neighborhood of low opportunity, but a space of dedication and resilience.
Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study represents a select sample of residents in a single neighborhood. Though the results call into question theories of low-income African American neighborhoods and many of the assumptions that motivate dispersal and mobility programs, more research is needed to draw firm conclusions.

A major limitation of this study is its size and recruitment strategy. A larger study with a greater emphasis on recruiting hard-to-reach populations would ensure that the sample is not biased toward people with greater involvement in and attachment to the community. The most common way to achieve a large sample size is to employ a survey. However, this research demonstrates the importance of allowing for open-ended responses to questions. Throughout the interviews, many participants added to or even amended their initial responses to key questions. Since the subjects of community attitudes, relationships, and housing preferences are complex, research subjects must be allowed to give complex answers. Qualitative and mixed-methods analysis software has the capability to allow for collaborative coding between multiple users, making large-scale interview studies easier than in the past. Therefore, an expansion of the scale of a project such as this study need not entail a change in method.

Other methods that could be used to confirm the findings in this study are point-cluster analyses, or hot spot analyses, to assess whether crime or certain types of housing cluster together. The purpose of such a test would be to demonstrate the scale at which clusters exist. Aggregated crime rates at the census tract level may mask smaller clusters. This type of cluster analysis has been done in the case of Section 8 housing (Wang and
Varady, 2005) and crime analysis (Eck, 2005). Crime hot spot analysis has typically been done as a means to determine where police are needed most. It remains to be tested whether crime and certain types of housing cluster together at the same scale. If this is known, it may be possible to target within-neighborhood dispersal programs to alleviate hot spots.

Dispersal may be necessary in Linden, but not dispersal to other areas of Columbus. Within-neighborhood dispersal programs that break up small pockets of concentrated poverty would allow residents to stay in the community they are connected to while alleviating stress from crime and conflict with neighbors. This could be achieved through a variety of means, from increased investments in vouchers and support for landlords who accept them to improving the stock of subsidized housing to additional mixed-income development through programs such as LIHTC.

Of course, many of the Linden’s problems cannot be addressed through housing policy alone. Investments must be made in the schools and businesses and retail must be improved so that good jobs are easier to come by. The population decline in the area must be reversed, either through bringing back residents who have moved to the suburbs or by attracting new residents, possibly by creating better connections to the Ohio State campus area. One thing is certain, though—the population decline cannot be solved by moving more people out. The vast majority of residents interviewed, even those who struggle with housing and poverty, do not want to leave Linden. But they would like for Linden to be a better place to stay.
Chapter 6: Conclusions

Many housing efforts have been aimed at curbing the neighborhood effects of concentrated poverty. Many of these programs, such as Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs), HOPE VI, and Moving to Opportunity (MTO), use a person-based approach to dispersion by encouraging mobility to higher income areas. However, recent research on mobility programs suggests that people’s social networks may play a large role in where residents relocate and how successful they are after relocating (Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010; Curley, 2009; Kleit & Galvez, 2011).

The failure of many residents of these studies to successfully stay in the new neighborhoods calls into question the wisdom of mobility-based programs. It also highlights how little we know about what motivates the housing decisions of low income residents. This study has explored the housing situation in one low-income area of Columbus, the Linden neighborhood, and looked into the social networks and community attitudes of some of its residents.

In terms of social networks, most residents interviewed maintain at least a small network of family ties in the Linden community, and they rely on those ties for both emotional support and small favors. This finding, which is nearly universal among interviewees, supports both the community saved argument and compression theory. However, most residents, in addition to local family ties, also maintain close kinship and friendship ties with people outside the neighborhood. For people of lower education and
economic levels, these extra-neighborhood ties tend to be located in other low income areas of Columbus. For college educated individuals, these ties are more likely to be located in Columbus suburbs or in other cities or states. This finding, that people maintain support networks of large geographic breadth, aligns more closely with the community liberated argument. The differences between people of higher versus lower socioeconomic status also slightly support composition theory.

Most interviewees reported some degree of positive interaction with their neighbors. For a few these relationships were particularly close and sociable, but most described their neighbors more as acquaintances than friends. The exceptions to this finding are the two public housing residents and one voucher holder who lives in a section of the neighborhood described as “bad” by other interviewees. These people describe actively avoiding their neighbors, either because they are trying to avoid conflict or because they distrust the behaviors of their neighbors. This finding suggests that avoidance theory may be at play in some parts Linden.

As a whole, those interviewed for this study display great diversity in terms of their social networks. There are a few trends, mentioned above, but in general, as leading social network analyst Barry Wellman (2007) puts it, “the network is personal” (p. 349). As such, all networks in this study are unique, and there is an exception to nearly every rule.

The vast majority of people interviewed in this study report no real desire to leave Linden. Though personal relationships were often cited as reasons people want to stay in Linden, more often than not interviewees expressed that their attachment to the
community has more to do with comfort, familiarity, and convenience. Some of that comfort and familiarity comes from proximity to the relationships named in the network elicitation questions, but a large part of it comes from a breadth of acquaintances and familiarity with faces and places. In many cases, the desire to stay in Linden is intense. All homeowners and several long-time renters work on behalf of Linden service agencies and advocacy groups to some degree. And as evidenced by the St. Stephen’s Community Survey, though the area contains a sizeable population that struggles with housing stability, it also has a strong base of homeowners and stable renters.

Though only a very small portion of people interviewed reported wanting to leave Linden, many expressed a desire for better housing and said they would be willing to move for a home that was larger or in better condition. In other words, housing type and quality is the first priority in choosing a home. If it can be close to family and friends, all the better.

For the exceptional cases of people who would want to leave Linden, having teenage boys and young men in the household has exposed them to crime, and that is the major motivating factor for wanting to leave. Other respondents noted that when looking for a place to live, they note whether there are young men loitering in the area, and if there are, that is a signal that it is not a good part of the neighborhood. The fact that the presence of boys and young men in the household may increase a householder’s desire to leave presents a problem in terms of previous research and potential policy implications. Studies of the MTO experiment have found that adolescent boys tend to do even worse in terms of education, behavior, and discipline when moved to higher income neighborhood
(Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010). This means that households that may be the most motivated to move may also be the least likely to thrive in a new area.

The general tendency for people who struggle with housing to want to stay in the Linden area challenges the assumptions behind many affordable housing policies. It may not be a lack of affordable housing stock in higher income areas that keeps people from moving, but rather a sincere desire to remain in their communities. The policy implication of this finding is that the goals of housing vouchers and other affordable housing programs should be aimed less at mobility to other neighborhoods and more at expanding the availability and quality of affordable units in high need areas. This could be accomplished through vouchers or through programs that increase or improve housing stock, such as LIHTC.

To the extent that dispersal in high poverty areas is needed, this study suggests that the scale of concentration effects may be much more local than is typically assumed. Census tracts and block groups are a convenient unit of analysis because of the availability of data, but aggregation to that large an area may be misleading. Many interviewees speak affectionately of the Linden area in general but can point to specific parts of streets of groups of houses where they would not want to live. The only people who reported wanting to leave Linden reside in such areas. Additionally, these interviewees plus those living in public housing report distrusting their neighbors. This suggests that breaking up small clusters of high crime or high poverty housing much below the census tract level and replacing it with mixed income development may allow
residents to escape the fear and social constraints associated with concentration effects while allowing them to stay close to the people and places that support them.

The results of this research suggest that many of the assumptions that underlie mobility-based housing programs may be flawed. The presence of crime and poverty in the Linden neighborhood do not necessarily undercut the feelings of attachment residents have for their community. In many cases, the problems in the neighborhood serve as a galvanizing force for the people who live there.

This study represents a small sample of a single neighborhood. To properly understand the prevalence of the desire of residents to relocate, much larger-scale studies are needed. This qualitative work has explored some of the reasons why people may want to stay in their communities or leave, and it could serve as a basis for formulating questions of a standardized survey that could be implemented to a larger sample of people on a metro-size scale.
References


Appendix A: St. Stephen’s Community Canvass Survey Instrument
St. Stephen’s Community Survey 2013

You are being asked as an adult member of this household to participate in a community assessment and research project. Are you age 18 or older, and do you currently live in this house?

The main purpose of this research is to assess the needs of residents of the St. Stephen’s service area. This survey will also be used as part of a Master’s thesis project at the Ohio State University.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate in this research, I will ask you to agree to answer questions about your knowledge and use of the services at St. Stephen’s Community House, as well as other questions about your household, employment, travel habits, and relationships in the community.

You have the option to refuse to participate or stop the survey at any time you wish for any reason without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You will fill out the survey questionnaire and return it to a St. Stephen’s survey conductor. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. You will receive a St. Stephen’s lip balm for participating in the survey.

It is not necessary to provide your name of contact information at any point in this survey. However, if you choose to provide your contact information, either to participate in further interviews (which may take up to 2 hours) or to receive more information about St. Stephen’s services, you will only be contacted for the reasons you have specified in the survey. Your name will not be used in any reports that result from this survey.

You have the right to review, edit, or erase any information that you do not want recorded or written down. There may be some questions you feel uncomfortable answering about employment status or household needs, but you are free to choose to not answer any question you do not wish to answer.

This survey is an opportunity for you to talk about some of your experiences living in this neighborhood, and your responses will be used to inform programs and outreach at St. Stephen’s Community House and to contribute to a broader knowledge about neighborhood diversity in Columbus. This study will help inform the services at St. Stephen’s Community House and hopefully will be used to help local governments be able to make informed decisions regarding housing policy and provision of social services.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please contact Hayden Shelby at Shelby.24@osu.edu or (614) 940-1049. In addition, if you have any concerns about this survey, please contact the Ohio State Office of Responsible Research Practices at 614-688-8457 or 800-678-6251.

Your filling out of the survey indicates your agreement to participate.

1) Have you taken the survey yet this year?
   ___ Yes (If yes, do not complete survey)
   ___ No (If no, continue)

2) What is your age?
   ___

3) What is your gender?
   ___

4) Would you describe yourself as the head of your household?
   ___ Yes
   ___ No

4) What is your address?

   __________________________

   __________________________

   __________________________

5) Including you, how many people live in your household?

   ___

6) How many people in your household are over the age of 65?

   ___

7) How many people in your household are under age 18?

   ___

8) If you have school age children in your household, what school(s) do they attend? (List all)

   __________________________

   __________________________

   __________________________
9) Please indicate which St. Stephen's services you (or someone in your household) have accessed in the last year and how often:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Once a week or more</th>
<th>1-3 times per month</th>
<th>Once every couple of months</th>
<th>2-4 times per year</th>
<th>Once a year</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Pantry</td>
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<td>Early Childhood Education Center</td>
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<td>After school academic programs</td>
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<td>Community Garden</td>
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<td>Youth Sports</td>
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<td>Parent Support</td>
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<td>Senior Programming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer Food Service Program for Children</td>
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</table>

10) Please indicate which St. Stephen's services you have heard of before today. Check all that apply:

- Food Pantry
- Early Childhood Education Center
- After School Academic Programs
- Community Garden
- Youth Sports
- Parent Support
- Senior Programming
- Summer Food Service Program for Children
- Christmas Care 1 New Toy
11. How useful would the following programs be for you if you knew about them and were able to take advantage of them? 1 (very useful) to 3 (not very useful)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>1 (very useful)</th>
<th>2 (somewhat useful)</th>
<th>3 (not very useful)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Pantry</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Education Center</td>
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<td>After School Academic Programs</td>
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<td>Community Garden</td>
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<td>Youth Sports</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Programming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer Food Service Program for Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christmas Care 1 New Toy</td>
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12. If you have ever been in a situation where you wanted to take part in an activity at St. Stephen’s and weren’t able to, what was the reason? (Check all that apply)

- Lack of transportation
- Lack of time
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of child care
- Not Applicable
- Other: ____________
13) How do you find out about what's going on in your neighborhood? Rank from (1) most important to (5) least important.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends or Neighbors</td>
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<td>Family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Stephen's Materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

14) How often do you use the internet?
- At least once a day
- 3-5 times a week
- 1-2 times per week
- Less than once a week
- Never

15) Where do you most frequently access the internet? (Check all that apply)
- Home
- Work
- School
- Library
- SSCH
- Friend or Family's House
- Other ________

16) Do you have a cell phone?
- Yes
- No

17) If you have a cell phone, can you access the internet on it?
- Yes
- No
### How do you usually get from place to place?  
**Rank from 1 (use most) to 5 (use least)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Car</td>
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<td>Walking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</table>

### Does someone in your household have a car?

- **Yes**
- **No**

### From your perspective, what geographic area makes up your neighborhood?

- **My street**
- **My street plus several streets surrounding it**
- **My subdivision**
- **The area within a 15 minute drive from my house**
- **An area larger than all of these**

### How long have you lived in your home?

- **Under 1 year**
- **1-3 years**
- **4-6 years**
- **7-10 years**
- **More than 10 years**
- **My entire life**

### Before you lived in this home, where did you live?

- **In a different house in the neighborhood**
- **In Columbus, but outside the neighborhood**
- **Outside of Columbus, but in Ohio**
- **Outside of Ohio**
- **Outside the United States**

### How many different homes have you lived in in the past 5 years?

- ****

### How often do you travel outside your neighborhood? 
**On average, per week**

- **Every day**
- **3-5 days per week**
- **1-2 days per week**
- **Less than once a week**

### Do you rent or own your home?

- **Rent**
- **Own**

### Which of the following best describes your work situation? (Check all that apply)

- I am currently employed full time (at least 40 hrs/week).
- I am currently employed part time (less than 40 hrs/week).
- I am not employed because I am retired or disabled.
- I am not employed because I stay home with my children by choice.
- I am not employed because I need childcare.
- I am not employed because I need additional education or training.
- I am not employed for some other reason.
- I am not employed because I am a caretaker of someone in my household.

### Are you able to sustain your household without assistance, such as SNAP or Food Pantry? (Check which best describes your situation)

- My household is always sustained without assistance.
- My household requires assistance 1-2 times per year.
- My household requires assistance 3-6 months per year.
- My household requires assistance meeting our needs most months.

### Of these homes, how many were in this neighborhood? (As you define your neighborhood)

- ****
20) **Approximately what percentage of your FAMILY lives in the following areas?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less than 25%</th>
<th>25-50%</th>
<th>50-75%</th>
<th>75-100%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inside my neighborhood</td>
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<td>Outside my neighborhood, but</td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outside Columbus, but in Ohio</td>
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<td>Outside Ohio, but in the</td>
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<td>United States</td>
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<td>Outside the United States</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

21) **Approximately what percentage of your FRIENDS lives in the following areas?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less than 25%</th>
<th>25-50%</th>
<th>50-75%</th>
<th>75-100%</th>
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<td>Inside my neighborhood</td>
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<td>Outside my neighborhood, but</td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbus</td>
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<td>Outside Columbus, but in Ohio</td>
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<td>Outside Ohio, but in the</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>Outside the United States</td>
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</table>
22) Would you be interested in being contacted to participate in further interviews for the purpose of research about the St. Stephen's neighborhood?
   __ Yes
   __ No
   If yes, please provide name and contact information

23) How would you like to receive information about programs at St. Stephen's? (Check all that apply)
   __ Email
   __ Social Media (Facebook or Twitter)
   __ Text Alerts
   __ Phone Calls
   __ Newsletter (mail)
   __ Other: __________

24) St. Stephen's offers free developmental screenings for children age 2.5 to 4 to check for kindergarten and pre-k readiness. Do you have child of that age whom you would like to have screened? (Participants receive a $20 Kroger gift card)
   __ Yes
   __ No
   If yes, please provide name and phone number

_________________________________________________________________________

25) If you would like to receive further information about other St. Stephen's programs and events, please provide your contact information (Name and phone number or email)

_________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your time!
Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview Guide

1) Describe your current home.
Probe: Do you rent or own? Is it an apartment, or is it a single house?

2) How long have you lived in your current home?

3) Who do you live with? How many people are in your household, including you?

4) Tell me about how you came to live in the home you’re living in now
   Probe: Why did you leave your previous home? How did you find out about this home?
   How did you decide on this home versus another? Before you moved here, did you know anyone else in the area?

5) How many homes have you lived in the past five years, including from this one? Did you know people in those places before you moved there?

6) Where were your previous homes? Probe: Were they in your neighborhood? In Linden? Columbus? Somewhere else in Ohio? Another state or country?

7) Tell me about your work situation. Probe: Do you work outside the home? Full-time or part-time? What kind of work do you do (further probe: What does your company do? What is your job title?)
8) (If appropriate based on previous question’s answer) How did you find your current job? *Probe: Was it through a friend or acquaintance, a recruiter, or a job listing?*

9) Tell me about Linden.

*Probe: What do you like about living here? Are there things that you dislike or want to change?*

-What resources and organizations do you use in the area?
-Where do you usually run errands like getting groceries?
-What do you do for fun? Who do you hang out with for fun, and where do you go?
-Do you have family here? Do you have family in other parts of the city? In other cities or states?

1. From time to time, most people discuss important matters with other people.  
Who are the people with whom you discuss matters important to you (Hampton and Marin, 2007)? *Discussion circle/information gathering ties*

2. Suppose you needed a small favor like borrowing a tool or getting help with cleaning or a small home repair, from whom outside your household would you ask a favor like that (Hampton and Marin, 2007)? *neighborhood-based ties*

3. If you were going out to find a new job, who do you know that would be a good source of information about getting a job, or getting a better job than you have now (Kleit)? *Economic/Job resource ties*
4. Please list anyone who is especially close to you who you have not listed in one of the previous questions (Hampton and Marin, 2007).-Remaining close ties

5. Do you belong to any groups or organizations, such as sports teams, churches, community groups, or professional organizations? Please list up to five groups that are most important to you, and, if possible, locate where they meet on the map.

10) If you had the opportunity to move to a different area of Columbus, would you want to move? If so, where and why? If not, why not?

What is your age?

What is your gender?

Would you describe yourself as the head of your household?

We are almost finished with the interview now. Before I go, is there anything else you think I should know about housing in Linden or the community in general?

Are there are any questions you would like to ask me about the interview or about this research project?
Appendix C: Interview Informed Consent
My name is Hayden Shelby. I am a master’s student in Geography and City and Regional Planning at Ohio State. I am asking you to participate in this interview that will be part of my thesis. You are being asked to participate based on your response to the St. Stephen’s Community Survey or because you have been referred by someone in the community as a person who would be interested in participating. Are you 18 or over, and do you still live in the Linden area?

The main purpose of this interview is to understand how people in Linden make decisions about housing and to find out what factors impact those decisions.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate in this research, I will ask you to agree to answer questions about your housing history, as well as other questions about your household, employment, and relationships in the community. The interview will take approximately one hour to 90 minutes.

You have the option to stop the interview at any time you wish and for any reason.

You may find some of these questions uncomfortable. You are not obligated to answer any questions you find uncomfortable. If you choose to stop the interview or refuse to answer certain questions, you will not be penalized in any way and will still receive a $20 gift card for your participation. I will take notes during the interview, and the interview will be audio recorded. I will also ask you to help me place some information on a map of
the area. The information collected on this map will be photographed for my records; however, I will not take any photographs of you, and the recordings of your voice will be deleted once they have been transcribed.

*It is not necessary to provide your name or contact information at any point in this interview.*

You will be asked for the approximate locations of some of your friends, family, and acquaintances during the interview, but you do not need to give their full names or exact addresses. To protect confidentiality, your name will never be used in any report of this research and will not be made publicly available. Any written records will be kept in a locked drawer in my office, and electronic records will be kept in password protected folders.

*You have the right to review, edit, or erase any information that you do not want recorded or written down.*

This interview is an opportunity for you to talk about some of your experiences making housing decisions and living in this community, and your responses will contribute to our knowledge about how people decide where to live and how they feel about those decisions. This knowledge is important in informing community development and policies about affordable housing, which may benefit you and your community. In addition, you will receive a $20 gift card to Kroger grocery store for your participation.
You will receive this gift card regardless of how you respond to any questions during the interview. In fact, I will give you the gift card before we begin the interview.

If you have any questions, concerns, or if you feel you were harmed as a result of study participation, please contact me at Shelby.24@osu.edu or (614) 940-1049.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in the study. You will be given a copy of this document for your records and one copy will be kept with the study records. Be sure that questions you have about the study have been answered and that you understand what you are being asked to do. You may contact the researcher if you think of a question later.

I agree to participate in the study.