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Edith J. Barrett
University of Connecticut

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Women's Work Attitudes, Aspirations, and Workforce Participation Before and After Relocation from Public Housing

EDITH J. BARRETT

Urban and Community Studies
and Department of Public Policy
University of Connecticut

For the past decade or so, public housing policies have focused on moving residents from concentrated housing developments into newly designed mixed-income developments or, through housing choice vouchers, into neighborhoods with lower concentrations of poor. These newer programs are driven by research that suggests public housing residents will have greater opportunity for financial self-sufficiency and, although not openly discussed, will better appreciate the importance of work when they live among higher income working residents. Using panel data collected from public housing residents relocated following the closure of a public housing development, this study explores the relationship between individual characteristics, neighborhood characteristics, and work attitudes, aspirations, and actions. The findings reveal that public housing residents are no different from the non-poor in their attitudes about work, but that when residents move into high income neighborhoods, their dreams of satisfying careers become more solid.

Key words: public housing, neighborhood, employment, work attitudes, women

Since the Supreme Court ruling in *Hills v. Gautreaux* (1976) and the resulting consent decree from the U.S. District court in *Gautreaux v. Landrieu* (1981) ordering the Chicago Housing Authority to desegregate its public housing developments, model public housing in the United States has changed from concentrated developments into either integrated mixed-income developments or scattered-site housing through

vouchers. The Gautreaux case, although directly relevant only to the Chicago Housing Authority, lead the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to develop similar programs to deconcentrate poverty, most notably the Moving to Opportunity program for relocating residents into suburban areas and the HOPE VI program grants for dismantling decaying developments and reconstructing mixed-income sites.

These relocation programs were driven largely by a belief in the "geography of opportunity" (Galster & Killen, 1995). That is, the notion that the opportunity for self-sufficiency differs depending on the neighborhood inhabited. Established working- and middle-class neighborhoods should offer residents more chances for employment, education, and networking than deteriorating inner-city neighborhoods. Relocating public housing residents into better neighborhoods—the theory contends—will improve their and their children's life chances, not only because they will enter and stay in the workforce but also because the value of work prevalent in middle-class neighborhoods will provide role models for them and their children.

Employment and Relocation

Several studies over the past decade have explored whether able-bodied residents are more likely to enter, and stay, in the workplace when they are relocated out of public housing developments. Levy and Kaye (2004) found in their assessment of households relocated through Hope VI programs that the majority of working-age residents still lived in poverty after relocation and the rate of employment had changed little over the course of the two-year study. While 31 percent of Levy and Kaye's sample was working at both baseline and follow-up, 14 percent who had been working at baseline were no longer employed two years later. Another 15 percent was working at follow-up that had not been previously employed. Further follow-up studies by Levy and Woolley (2007) still noted no direct linkage between neighborhood and employment; they found the same percentage employed four years after the relocation as had been employed at baseline and two years post-move. Similar evaluations of the HUD-sponsored Moving to Opportunity program failed to find significant improvement in

employment among those who relocated to less impoverished neighborhoods (Kling, Liebman & Katz, 2007; Orr et al., 2003). The studies suggest that movement out of public housing does not dramatically improve employment status, at least in the short term.

The Meaning of Work

Scholars note the importance of work in modern society. Work allows individuals to provide food, clothing, and shelter for themselves and their families, it can provide stability and order, and not infrequently, it may assist in shaping an individual's personal identity and boosting self-esteem (Borrero & Rivera, 1980; Elliot, 1996; Friedman & Havinghurst, 1954; Kazanas, Baker, Miller, & Hannah, 1973). Past studies suggested that the majority of adults would continue to work even if they inherited enough money to live comfortably (Goodwin, 1969; Morse & Weiss, 1955; Vecchio, 1980), although recent studies point to a decline in the importance placed on work (Wray-Lake, Syvertsen, Briddell, Osgood, & Flanagan, 2011). Despite the growing desire for more leisure, work remains a significant element in the lives of most adults. Very often it is through work that individuals are able to show others their value to society.

The work of Friedmann and Havinghurst (1954), Morse and Weiss (1955) and others lead Kaplan and Tausky (1974) to advance typologies on the meaning of work. Kaplan and Tausky proposed that attitudes toward work could be divided into six categories. Four, they argued, conveyed what they called "expressions" of work, specifically work as: (1) an intrinsically satisfying activity that can lead to self-actualization; (2) a means for attaining status and prestige; (3) morally responsible; and (4) a foundation for building satisfying interpersonal relationships. The other two categories denoted work as instrumental: (5) as a means to an economic end; and (6) as an activity to keep one busy and occupied during the day.

To judge the relevance of their typologies, Kaplan and Tausky asked 275 people participating in an employment program why they wanted a job. The most prevalent response defined work as instrumental: 75 percent of the respondents said they wanted a job because they needed the money. Other

answers similarly reflected the instrumental nature of work, such as the individual who did not "want to be sitting home on my ass doing nothing" (p. 189). Respondents did not desire just any job, though. It was clear as well that they valued work as an expression of their humanity. They wanted work that paid a decent wage and provided benefits, that was secure, and that would allow them to work with friendly coworkers and supervisors.

The values highlighted by Kaplan and Tausky avoided questioning the possible negative connotations of work. Marx wrote of the alienating effects of work when the effort of the laborer merely supports the wealth of the owner (Sayers, 2005). In capitalist economies, according to Marx, work denies the humanity of workers by forcing them to be nothing more than labor machines. Borrero and Rivera (1980) submitted that jobs in which workers are defined as mere cogs in the wheel can be especially distressful for women, who are often forced by their circumstances to accept menial and underpaid jobs. With this background, Drenth (1991) added to the meaning of work typologies the possibility that some individuals may define work as an exploitative and dehumanizing experience. Thus, in addition to the economic, social, and emotional aspects of work proposed by Kaplan and Tausky and others, Drenth suggested that work may also be a burden, physically and mentally, which can lead to stress and unhappiness.

The multi-year international "Meaning of Work" study incorporated the ideas from Kaplan and Tausky, Drenth, and others into a survey instrument to measure workers' attitudes (MOW International Research Team, 1987). England (1991) reported data showing that Americans most value good pay, satisfying work, and congenial colleagues. Residents of then West Germany were similar to their U.S. peers (Quintanilla & Wilpert, 1991) in seeing work first and foremost as economically and personally satisfying. Israeli workers also placed high value on fulfilling work, but contributing to society was more important to them than a good salary (Harpaz & Fu, 2002).

The MOW research did not assess how the poorest residents define work. The poorest residents are those least likely to have good paying jobs, jobs that might possibly lead to self-actualization, or jobs that make an obvious impact on society. If even indirectly public housing relocation programs

are designed to realign residents' attitudes toward work, the assumption behind the policy must be that before relocation, those views are different from attitudes of the middle class. One purpose of this research is to explore whether public housing residents view work differently than other Americans, and if so, whether those attitudes change when individuals move into less impoverished neighborhoods.

Focused Goals

In the U.S., just over half (52 percent) of the households living in public housing are headed by neither an elderly nor disabled individual, and 71 percent of the able-bodied heads of households are mothers with children (National Center for Health and Public Housing, 2008). Thus, women make up the majority of public housing residents who could be employed. Because of their family obligations, however, women workers often find themselves facing different work situations than their male peers. Affordable childcare presents a significant hurdle for low-income women seeking employment, as does a lack of reliable transportation (Kalil, Schweingruber, & Seefeldt, 2001; Meyers, 1993; Siegel & Loman, 1991). Often undereducated and lacking in specific job skills, low-income women struggle to find full-time stable employment and to balance work with family responsibilities (Kalil et al., 2001).

The external obstacles poor women navigate can be vast, and keeping a positive sense of the possibilities can make a difference. Lee and Vinokur (2007) surveyed 1,404 women in job training programs about their sense of mastery over their environment. They learned that women who had the strongest sense of mastery also perceived the fewest barriers. Lee and Oyserman (2009) further explored what unemployed low-income women see themselves doing in the future. Almost 75 percent of the 298 women interviewed expected that they would be working and earning a living wage, and 40 percent anticipated pursuing an education to improve their career options. The authors concluded that those women with a positive outlook and a strong sense of mastery had the strongest chance of overcoming external barriers to success. If moving women out of the concentrated poverty of a public housing development opens them to seeing greater possibilities in

their lives, the women may also be emboldened to fight the inevitable challenges to being working women and mothers. Thus, a second goal of this research is to learn from relocated women about their career aspirations before and after the move out of public housing.

To some extent, the argument motivating relocation programs such as Moving to Opportunity and Hope VI is that former residents of public housing developments will discover greater opportunities for employment when they no longer live in an area of high poverty. Results on employment rates post-move have been mixed, and, as other studies have noted, finding and keeping employment can be difficult for relocated public housing residents. On the other hand, while families may not experience immediate benefits in terms of employment, the move might at least change their hopefulness about finding work. Indeed, Cove, Turner, Briggs, and Duarte (2008) observed the beginnings of such a change when they heard relocated residents articulating pride in the fact that their neighbors worked and expressing a greater motivation to work themselves. The final purpose of this paper is to explore the work attitudes and employment habits of public housing residents before and after relocation. Attitudes are not always predictive of behavior, but changing negative attitudes to work and strengthening positive attitudes could be an encouraging outcome of the move.

Research Methods

Participants and Procedures

Residents of a public housing development in a southwestern city were informed in the fall of 2001 by their local Public Housing Authority (PHA) that the land on which the development stood was to be sold and the buildings demolished. All households would need to move out within a year. The PHA offered residents personal help in finding and securing new housing and gave residents cash intended to pay for utility deposits and moving expenses. The relocation program was not part of a HOPE VI renovation; no HOPE VI money was granted to the project and no replacement units were constructed on the original site.

In the early spring of 2002, before most had left the public housing development, all remaining residents were asked to complete a questionnaire asking them about the composition of their household; employment, education, and economic information; experiences with their neighbors; psychosocial well-being; as well as some demographic information. The survey was administered on site at the public housing development (available in English and Spanish), and 200 of the 243 heads of household completed the baseline survey. Excluding all men and disabled or elderly women (defined as 60 or older), the baseline sample size used in this paper was 126. Over the next four subsequent years, a similar questionnaire was mailed to respondents at their new addresses. Respondents were paid \$10 cash for their participation in Year 1, and received \$15 Wal-Mart gift cards or cashiers' checks when they returned surveys in later years. Not surprisingly, given the dispersion of residents across the area and the financial instability of most households, tracking residents became more difficult over the years. In the second year, 95 non-elderly, non-disabled women completed the survey, 89 of whom had also completed the first survey. By the third year, only 79 working-age able-bodied women returned the survey, 72 of whom had completed the initial survey. By years four and five, the sample sizes had dwindled to 60 and 58, respectively. Included in the analyses for this paper are only those women for whom there is pre-move data and only for the first three years.

In addition to survey data, every year the researchers convened three focus groups of approximately ten former residents each. Topics addressed in the focus groups varied from year to year, but always the relocated women were asked about their employment situations. Focus group participants were paid \$20 cash. Information from the focus groups is also included in this paper to highlight the attitudes and experiences of the women in their own words. Finally, the larger study also included biennial structured interviews. The interviews focused largely on the needs of relocates, and therefore those data are not reported in this paper.

Close to half of the women in the year 1 sample were under the age of 26 ($N = 54$, 43%) with women 26-35 ($N = 37$, 30%) and those 35-59 ($N = 34$, 27%) comprising an equal proportion of the remainder. Over half ($N = 71$, 56%) self-identified

as African American and a third ($N = 47$, 37%) as Latina. Only seven women (6%) listed themselves as White and one as Asian. The overwhelming majority ($N = 108$, 85%) had children living in the household, and 15 of the 18 who did not were over 35 (none were under 26). All but seven women (6%) had no spouse or partner living in the household, although 37 (30%) had at some time during their lives been married. Just over half of the sample had not completed high school ($N = 67$, 54%) while 18% ($N = 23$) had some post-high school education or professional training. There was no age difference among those without a high school diploma, but as would be expected, the youngest group of women was least likely to have any post-high school educational experience (13% as compared to 23% of those over 25). Finally, over a third of the women had lived in the development one year or less ($N = 45$, 36%), and 41% ($N = 50$) had lived there between two and five years. Adding the years respondents lived in other PHA units to the years in the current development still showed that just under a third (36, 29%) had lived in public housing for one year or less, and only a quarter ($N = 33$, 26%) had lived in public housing for six or more years. Logically, older women had spent more years in public housing than had younger women ($r = 0.40$).

There was no evidence over the three years of differential attrition. Of course all respondents grew older, but the racial/ethnic characteristics of the samples were similar over the three years, as was the proportion of households with children. A few more women married or re-married by the third year, decreasing the proportion of never married women to 61% (from 64% in years 1 and 2). Finally, six women who stayed in the study completed their high school equivalency degree (GED) after moving and eleven did some post-secondary coursework. Thus, in the second year 46% and in the third year 43% of the sample had no high school degree (as compared to 54% in the first year). By the third year, 32% of the sample had some post-high school training (as compared to 18% and 25% in years 1 and 2, respectively).

Measures

Work experience. Respondents were asked their current employment status and how long they had been working (if

employed). Those who were not employed at the time of the survey were asked when they last worked. The responses were transposed into a 3-point scale: worked the full 12 months of the previous year, worked at some point during the year, and never worked during the previous year. The employment questions were included in the surveys every year, so it is possible to see the women's pattern of employment.

Attitudes toward work. Respondents were given a series of ten questions that asked what work means to them. Based on questions developed by other scholars (Kaplan & Tausky, 1974; Mor-Barak, 1995; MOW International Research Team, 1987), respondents were asked about work as: (1) an intrinsically satisfying activity ("Work helps me learn more about myself," "Work gives me a chance to use my skills"); (2) a morally and socially responsible activity ("Work sets a good example for my children"); (3) a source of positive interpersonal experiences ("Work is a place to meet other people"); (4) an economic activity ("Work is a way of paying my bills); and (5) a routine activity to fill time ("Work is something to do during the day rather than watch TV"). Attitudes about the alienating aspects of work (Drenth, 1991; Sayers, 2005) were measured with two items: "Work means that I have to follow other people's rules," and "Work does not pay me a living wage." Finally, respondents were asked about trade-offs between work and other aspects of their lives: "Work takes time away from my family" and "Work means I cannot live in public housing." All items were measured on a four-point scale ranging from 0 (never true) to 3 (always fits the description). In subsequent years, the scores were compared to Year 1 and rescaled to represent change: -1 (changed to be a less frequent descriptor), 0 (no change), 1 (changed to be more frequently appropriate).

Neighborhood characteristics. Over the three years reported here, respondents had moved into 55 different census tracts. To keep the data collection relatively simple, 2006 U.S. Census Bureau estimates were coded for the relocation census tracts. To capture the characteristics of the census tract of the original public housing development while residents still lived there, the 2000 Census data were used. According to the 2000 Census, 48% of the residents in the census tract of the housing development had incomes below the federal poverty threshold,

36% identified as Latino, and 31% as African American. Three quarters of the housing units in the public housing census tract were rental housing (76%) and 58% were apartments. The 2000 median family income within the public housing census tract (\$18,426) was only 29% of the median family income of the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA, \$63,100).

In their first move post-relocation, 42 (48%) of the sampled women had moved into non-PHA owned units, 38 (43%) had moved into units within PHA mixed-income developments, and eight (9%) had moved into units within another traditional PHA development. The majority of women relocated into census tracts with poverty rates lower than 25% (see Table 1), and only four women moved to neighborhoods with poverty rates at or above that of their previous public housing census tract (which had been 48%). Although a quarter of the women moved to areas with median family incomes less than 50% of the MSA median, only four moved into census tracts with median family incomes as low as in the PHA neighborhood (\$18,426, or 29% of the MSA median family income). A quarter of the women moved into census tracts with relatively high concentrations of Blacks, but those who selected such neighborhoods were disproportionately likely to be Black themselves (34% of Black women as compared to 5% of non-Blacks moved into higher Black concentration neighborhoods). The same was the case for Latinas. Although 14 women moved into areas with 25% or greater Latinos, 10 of those women were Latinas. In other words, 32% of Latinas as compared to 7% of non-Latinas moved into high Latino concentration neighborhoods. The demographics of neighborhoods selected were not surprising, given that the general population of the southwestern city was 34% Latino, 18% Black, and with 16% below the poverty line. Finally, the majority moved into neighborhoods with at least half rental housing and almost half chose neighborhoods in census tracts in which the majority of housing units were apartments.

For many households, the first move out of the housing development was intended only as a temporary relocation while the housing authority built or bought permanent replacement units. During the time between the administration of the Year 2 and Year 3 surveys, the housing authority opened one newly

Table 1. Census Tract Characteristics of Residents by Year

	Year 1 (pre-move) 2000 Census N (%)	Year 2 2006 Census N (%)	Year 3 2006 Census N (%)
Poverty Rate			
Less than 10%	0	15 (17%)	19 (27%)
10%-25%	0	55 (63%)	42 (59%)
Greater than 25%	126 (100%)	18 (20%)	10 (14%)
Percent Black			
Less than 10%	0	31 (35%)	22 (31%)
10%-25%	0	38 (43%)	38 (54%)
Greater than 25%	126 (100%)	19 (22%)	11 (15%)
Percent Latino			
Less than 10%	0	11 (12%)	10 (14%)
10%-25%	0	63 (72%)	50 (70%)
Greater than 25%	126 (100%)	14 (16%)	11 (16%)
Median Family Income as % of MSA			
Less than 50%	0	24 (27%)	11 (16%)
50%-99%	0	47 (53%)	47 (66%)
Greater than 100%	126 (100%)	17 (20%)	13 (18%)
Percent Rental Housing			
Less than 25%	0	10 (11%)	14 (20%)
25%-50%	0	29 (33%)	25 (35%)
Greater than 50%	126 (100%)	49 (55%)	32 (45%)
Percent Apartments			
Less than 25%	0	25 (28%)	26 (37%)
25%-50%	0	21 (24%)	18 (25%)
Greater than 50%	126 (100%)	42 (48%)	27 (38%)

constructed and one newly purchased mixed-income development. Not surprisingly, therefore, the majority of the women who completed both the baseline and third year survey had moved at least a second time since leaving the development ($N = 42$, 59%). Four of the women still in the sample who had originally moved into a traditional PHA development and seven who had moved into private housing with a voucher relocated to a mixed-income development by the third year. The relocations (and the decrease in the sample size) led to slight

shifts in the types of neighborhoods represented in the third year sample. The majority of the sample was living in a PHA mixed-income development ($N = 40$, 56%), and only three (4%) were still in traditional PHA units by the third year. As Table 1 depicts, a larger proportion of the households were living in census tracts with the lowest levels of poverty. Proportionally, slightly fewer were in census tracts with high concentrations of African Americans. More were in census tracts with median family incomes close to, if not exceeding, the MSA median family income, and fewer lived in census tracts with high rental housing and apartment units. The percent of women living in neighborhoods with relatively high concentration of Latinos did not change.

Research Findings

Pre-Move Responses

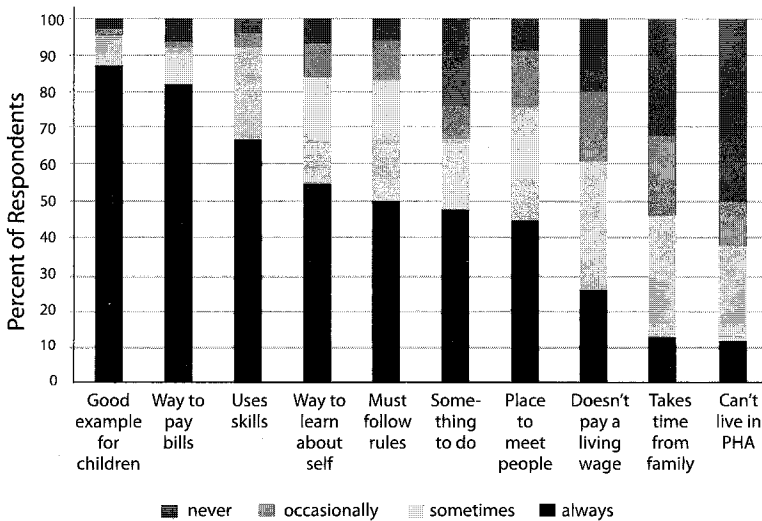
Work engagement. At the time of the initial survey—conducted at the PHA development—more than half of the surveyed women ($N = 64$, 51%) reported that they had not worked at all during the past year, and only 26 (21%) had worked continuously throughout the entire year. Women with children still living in their home were about as likely as women without children to have worked sometime during the year [51 (48%) as compared to 10 (52%)], but they were much less likely to have worked continuously the whole year [18 (17%) as compared to 8 (42%)]. Women under 26 were more likely to have worked sometime during the year than those 26 or older [30 (57%) as compared to 30 (43%)], but they were less likely to have worked uninterruptedly [8 (15%) as compared to 18 (26%)]. Women who had not completed high school were less likely to have worked at all [25 (38%) as compared to 34 (61%)] and less likely to have worked the full year [8 (12%) as compared to 17 (30%)] than those with a high school education. There were too few married women ($N = 7$) to draw any conclusions about the relationship between employment and marriage.

Meaning of Work

An overwhelming majority of the women (101, 87%) agreed that working always sets a good example for their children,

and 100 (82%) agreed that work is always a way to pay bills. There was less agreement among the women on other possible definitions of work. Figure 1 highlights the respondents' views of work while still living in the public housing development. As the figure shows, a fair number of the women saw work as an opportunity to use their skills, learn about themselves, and meet other people. On the other hand, a significant number also felt that work meant that one has to follow the rules of others while also not earning a livable wage. Interestingly, given that the overwhelming majority of the respondents were mothers of minor aged children, only 15 (13%) agreed that work always takes time away from family.

Figure 1. Year 1 Definitions of Work



As Figure 1 demonstrates, with only two exceptions, opinions about work varied across individuals. For the most part, however, the differences of opinions were unrelated to demographic characteristics. Using a scale from 0 (never) to 3 (always), tests of differences between demographic groups failed to detect a relationship, with only a few notable exceptions. Although still strongly accepted, White women (Mean = 2.33) were less likely than Black (Mean = 2.89) and Latina (Mean = 2.81) women to believe working provided a positive example to their children [$F(2,111) = 2.93, p < .05$]. White

women (Mean = 0.86) were also less likely than Black (Mean = 1.92) and Latina (Mean = 2.09) women to define work as "something to do besides watch TV" [$F(2,114) = 3.17, p < .05$]. Although not strongly endorsed by any of the respondents, nonetheless, women with children still in the home (Mean = 1.35) were significantly more likely than those without children (Mean = 0.71) to define work as an activity that takes time away from family [$t(113) = 2.14, p < .05$]. There were no significant differences in work attitudes across the age groups.

A high school diploma and, more importantly, training beyond high school, generally open more skill-based employment opportunities for individuals. Not surprisingly, therefore, women who had higher educations were more likely than others to define work as a place where they can use their skills and a place where they can learn more about themselves. Women with post-high school training were more likely to use these definitions (Mean = 2.91 for using skills; 2.71 for learning about self) than women with only a high school diploma (Mean = 2.53 and 2.55, respectively), who, in turn, supported the meanings more than those without even a high school education (Mean = 2.43 and 2.0, respectively) [$F(2,111) = 3.46$ and $F(2,104) = 6.81, p < .05$]. Perhaps because they valued their work more, high school graduates and post-graduates also were more likely than non-graduates to agree that work sets a good example for their children (Mean = 3.0, 2.91, and 2.67 for post-graduates, graduates, and non-graduates, respectively) [$F(2,110) = 3.28, p < .05$].

There was little difference in work attitudes between those who had worked in the past year and those who had not worked. There were two definitions of work that seemed related to employment experience. Women who worked continuously (Mean = 2.96) were more likely than off-and-on workers (Mean = 2.79) and non-workers (Mean = 2.51) to define work as an activity that pays bills [$F(2,166) = 3.65, p < .05$]. They were also less likely to describe work is a place where one must follow the rules of others (Mean = 1.92, 2.06, and 2.53, respectively) [$F(2,112) = 5.64, p < .01$]. Unexpectedly, workers were no different from non-workers in their sense of a time tradeoff between work and family.

Desired Job Skills and Career Goals

When asked if they would like to learn a job skill, and if so, what they would like to study, 80 women (63%) gave a response. The largest group ($N = 29$) wanted to learn more about computers, although some of those also wanted other preparation as well. A third ($N = 27$) said they would like training that would lead to a job in a medical profession, such as nursing, phlebotomy, and medical or dental assistance. Other responses included training in medical record keeping, clerical skills, cosmetology, paralegal studies, and English as a second language.

Asked to describe their ideal job, 96 (75%) of the women wrote a response. About a quarter ($N = 26$) mentioned a job that involved computers, clerical, or office work. Another quarter ($N = 25$) listed a job in a medical profession (e.g., Certified Nursing Assistant, dental assistant). For the most part, the career aspirations reflected the occupations for which housing authorities and/or community colleges traditionally offer training, although a few dreamt of jobs that would require post-graduate study (e.g., dentist, physician, and pharmacist). While most provided a specific career, some respondents expressed a less precise vision of what they wanted to do. For example, one respondent said she wanted to be a "receptionist or teacher," while another listed only "in a factory or restaurant." Perhaps reflecting on their current employment situations, some replied, "anything," "it really doesn't matter," or "a job that pays more."

Respondents with some post-high school education were more likely than their less educated peers to list a medical focused career (50% as compared to 20%), while respondents without a high school diploma were more likely to desire a clerical job (30% as compared to 23%). Women without a high school degree also tended to provide more general ideas of what they might like to do (e.g., "working in an office" or "working at a hospital") while post-high school educated women were more specific ("registered nurse," "pharmacy technician," or "cosmetologist"). Forty percent of the respondents without a high school degree either left the question blank or wrote in that they did not know or would take any job. On the other hand, 27% of high school graduates and 22% of those with a

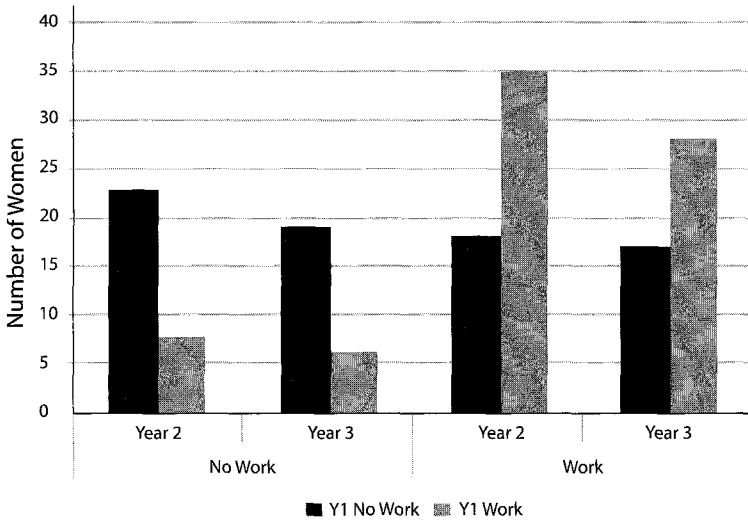
post-high school education skipped the question. Career aspirations did not differ between those who had worked in the previous year and those who had not worked, nor did any of the other demographic characteristics appear to relate to career goals.

Post-Move Responses

Changes in employment. Almost half of the 41 respondents who had been without work for a year before the move reported working sometime during the year following the move, and only 8 (19%) of the 43 who had worked during the year before the move were unemployed the year after. On the other hand, 23 (56%) of the long-term unemployed remained unemployed into the second year of data collection. By the third year of data collection (second year post-move), only 15 (25%) of the 59 with three years of information had not yet entered the workforce. Most respondents entered and exited work over the period of data collection, although four women worked continuously all 36 months. The data presented in Figure 2 includes those women who completed the Year 2 or the Year 3 survey, as well as those who completed both post-move surveys. The figure highlights a positive potential impact of the move. Those who had been working while living in the PHA development were likely to continue to be employed after the move, and those who had been unemployed in the year prior to the move were as likely to start working as stay unemployed post-relocation.

In the year after the move, previously unemployed younger women were much more likely than older women to be in the workforce. Only five (36%) of the 14 women under 26 in the first post-move year who had not worked in the year before the move remained unemployed, but 12 (92%) of the 13 women over 35 were still not working. Among the smaller sample of women who completed both the second and the third year surveys, three (30%) of the ten younger women never reported working, but eight (89%) of the nine older women never entered the workforce. Women between 26 and 35 were similar to their younger peers in their workforce participation: four (33%) of the 12 previously unemployed remained without work through the third year. Thus, long-term unemployment dropped after the move, but only for women under 40.

Figure 2. Work Engagement Years 1, 2, and 3



As already mentioned, high school educated respondents, and especially those with post-high school training, were more likely than those who had never graduated to already be in the workforce when living in the PHA development. That said, among the women who had not worked the year before the move, high school graduates were no more likely than non-graduates to be working in the first post-move year; 14 (58%) of the 24 non-graduates remained unemployed as compared to nine (56%) of the 16 graduates. Two years after the move, education still was not a useful factor in predicting which previously unemployed woman would enter the workforce.

Theory would predict that women who moved into neighborhoods with lower poverty rates and higher median incomes would be more prone to enter the workforce than those who continued to live in lower-income and higher-poverty areas. Although the sample size was small, the findings during the first post-move year failed to show a striking connection between employment and neighborhood. In fact, five (62%) of the eight previously unemployed women who moved into low poverty neighborhoods were still not working while five (62%) of the eight who moved into high poverty neighborhoods began working. Furthermore, although four (67%) of the six who moved into neighborhoods with median family incomes equal to or above the MSA median entered the workforce

after the move, so too did seven (58%) of the 12 who moved into neighborhoods with median family incomes lower than 50% of the MSA median. Among the even smaller sample of 62 women who completed the initial and first two post-move surveys, only 13 (21%) continued to be unemployed the entire time. These long-term unemployed women were more likely than others to have moved into a lower-poverty neighborhood (6, 46% as compared to 13, 26%) and just as likely to be living in the highest income areas (1, 8% as compared to 8, 16%). In other words, there was no clear pattern between workforce entrance and the economic characteristics of the receiving neighborhood.

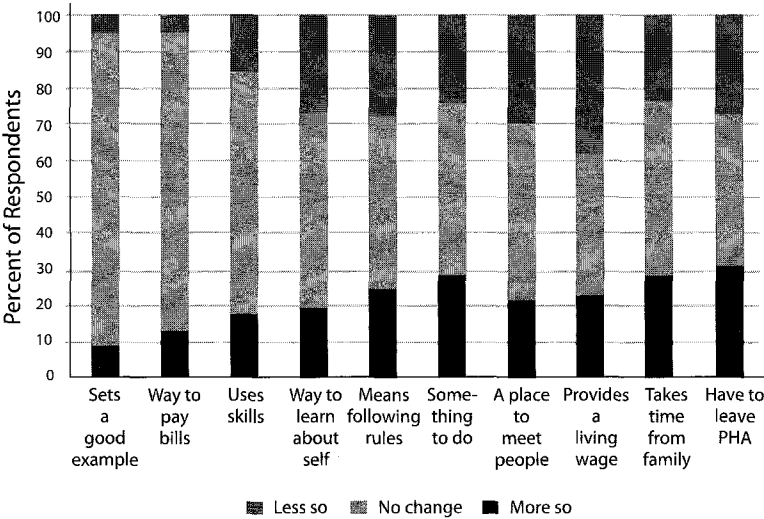
Focus group discussions about the job search process may shed light on the seeming lack of neighborhood influence. Many of the participants expressed frustration by what they felt was harmful stereotyping. A few suggested the discrimination was based on race or ethnicity, but more often than not, the women felt they were branded as "public housing residents." As one woman living in a mixed-income development described it, they were "blackballed from this area. If we put down our address, we don't get calls." Another lamented, "We put in applications, but few people get hired from around here. We see hiring signs, but we go in and no one calls us." Some persevered and eventually found work, others reported that "nobody every calls me back; I quit looking." None of these comments was made by women living in the lowest income areas.

Changes in definitions of work. A year after the forced relocation, the majority of respondents continued to define work in terms of its social responsibility (i.e., setting a good example for their children) and economics (i.e., a means to pay bills), and nearly all gave the same response on the two items that they had given during the first year survey. A comment made in a focus group shortly after the move reflects respondents' views on work as an obligation: "[Life is hard] but people still need to get up and go to work," while another expressed her post-move pride in working when she said enthusiastically, "This is the longest I have ever worked at one job... two months at a daycare center!"

In the aggregate, the proportion of women supporting specific meanings of work did not fluctuate from year to year. The

distribution of responses shown for the first year in Figure 1 was closely mimicked in years 2 and 3 as well. However, the opinions of individuals did change over the years. As Figure 3 shows, for example, some women came to see work as more likely a place they can use their skills, learn about themselves, and meet new people, while others gravitated away from seeing work in those terms. The greatest change was in the number of women defining work as providing a living wage. About a quarter (16 out of 69) were more likely to see work as paying a decent way, but nearly 40 percent (N = 26) gave a response suggesting they were even less likely to see work as a way to make ends meet. Interestingly as well, nearly a third of the women (31 out of 71) thought it even more the case that working meant they would have to leave public housing, despite information they should have received from the housing authority telling them otherwise.

Figure 3. Changes in Individuals' Definitions of Work, Year 1 to Year 2



To some extent, women who moved into neighborhoods with lower poverty and higher median family incomes changed their definitions of work differently from those who moved into higher poverty and lower median income neighborhoods. The direction of the change suggested an increasingly more

positive view of some aspects of employment among those who moved into lower poverty areas. For example, six (50%) of the 12 women who moved into neighborhoods with poverty levels below 10 percent responded that work was more likely a place to use their skills, while none of the 15 women who moved into neighborhoods with poverty rates above 25% changed in a similar direction. Changes in attitudes about the utility of work as a place to meet people showed a similar pattern: lower poverty, more likely to see work as place to connect with others. A similar pattern emerged between women who moved to areas with median family incomes at or above the MSA median as compared to those who moved into less affluent neighborhoods.

The financial characteristics of the receiving neighborhood did not correspond to changes in attitudes about work providing a living wage, but they did seem to link to fears about earning too much to live in public housing. Women who moved to high poverty or low median income neighborhoods became even less likely to define work as a hindrance to living in public housing. Nine out of the 21 (43%) women in neighborhoods with median incomes lower than 50 percent of the MSA median were less likely to agree that work meant leaving public housing than they had before the move, but only three of the 12 (25%) who moved to high income areas changed similarly. Although the numbers were small, the findings suggested that the financial well-being of a neighborhood might influence beliefs about work.

Changes in career goals. A year after the move, 78 of the 89 women surveyed provided a brief description of their ideal career. Fewer than a third of the women ($N = 24$) listed the same career they had desired before the move, although those who did tended to be more precise in their explanation the second time around. For example, one woman who in the first survey wrote "working with people" responded with "social worker" in the second survey. Another who had wanted a "higher degree in nursing" before the move clarified the goal as a career in "nursing management" when asked a year later. There was no single career aspiration that appeared solidly fixed. Thus, although four women stayed with their dream of being a nurse, five who had said they wanted to be a nurse changed their minds and four who had not previously said

they were interested in nursing became so after the move. Three who had said they would take any job in the first year reiterated in the second year that same wish.

Table 2. Changes in Career Aspirations, Pre- and Post-Move by Receiving Neighborhood's Percent of Median Family Income

	Census Tract Percent of Median Family Income		
	< 50% (N = 22)	50-99% (N = 41)	≥ 100% (N = 15)
Same Career	N = 8 (36%)	N = 13 (32%)	N = 3 (20%)
Medical Related	3	4	1
Computer Related	2	4	0
Change or Addition	N = 12 (55%)	N = 27 (66%)	N = 12 (80%)
From Specific to "Anything"	3	5	0
From "Anything" to Specific	0	1	2
From Medical Related	1	5	2
To Medical Related	4	7	4
From Computer Related	3	1	1
To Computer Related	0	1	0
"Anything" (Y1), "Anything" (Y2)	N = 2 (9%)	N = 1 (2%)	N = 0

Over 40 percent of the career ambitions listed in the first post-move survey were different from those listed pre-move (N = 33). Some of the changes were within the same general field of work but differed in the specific occupation, such as the woman who before the move wrote that she wanted to be a physician and after the move said her ideal career would be an x-ray technician. More often, though, the switch was into a

substantially different career direction. For example, a change from being a nurse to an elementary school teacher, from a cosmetologist to a remodeler, or from a job in criminal justice to one in real estate. Also noticeable were the eight women who provided a career goal before the move, but a year later wanted only "a steady, good paying, dependable job." Finally, 18 women listed a job aspiration in the post-move survey but had left the question blank the previous year. Table 2 summarizes the findings.

Policies that urge families to move out of public housing developments and into middle income neighborhoods are driven in part by the sense that living among those earning more will motivate the poor to improve their career trajectories. The results were suggestive of neighborhood differences, bearing in mind that once divided by neighborhood income, the samples were quite small. Proportionately, more of the women who moved into lower income neighborhoods reported the same career aspirations before and after the move as compared to women who moved into neighborhoods at the median or higher. As Table 2 shows, 21 (33%) of the 63 in areas with median incomes below the MSA median reported the same career while only three (20%) of the 15 in higher income areas gave the same goal. It is important to note that there was no visible difference in the initial goals between women who moved into higher and lower income areas. In other words, those women who kept the same career paths were not necessarily expressing low expectations.

More informative on the potential success of relocation were the responses from those who changed their occupational targets. None of the 15 who moved into a higher income area said that just any job would do. In comparison, eight (13%) of the women in census tracts below the MSA median income changed their career expectations from a specific occupation to "anything that pays good," "any right at this moment," or similar terms. Six women had suggested in the first survey that they would be willing to take any job. After the move, three continued to say they would take anything (all in areas below the median income) and three listed a specific career (one in a lower income neighborhood and two in above median income neighborhoods). Thus, the data did not suggest that living in a higher income neighborhood might raise women's career

aspirations—especially since many of those aspirations were not previously low. On the other hand, they did hint that living in a less economically distressed area might provide low income women the opportunity to think about what they want to do in their careers and to move beyond expecting only what they felt they could get.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

England (1991) learned that the most important aspect of work to employed Americans is the pay. The women in this study, regardless their employment status, also saw work first and foremost as an economic activity, or as measured through the survey, a way to pay their bills. England had also found that Americans tend to value work because it can be a personally satisfying activity. On this characteristic, the low-income women in this study were not unanimous in their endorsement. Some accepted that work could be personally rewarding, especially the women who had post-high school training, but the definition was not nearly as accepted among the former public housing women as England had found in his sample of employed individuals. Given the types of jobs the women often held, that they failed to see work as personally uplifting should not be surprising. At the time of the initial survey, those who were employed worked as housekeepers, cashiers, and telemarketers, for example—hardly occupations that many would find intrinsically fulfilling. Data from unemployed workers reported by Brief, Konovsky, Goodwin, and Link (1995) similarly suggest that the meaning of work may be primarily utilitarian when the individual is not in an otherwise satisfying employment situation. Furthermore, that the overwhelming majority of the women agreed that working sets a good example for their children, suggests that work is important to them for more than merely meeting financial needs. Thus, the results fail to depict public housing residents as anything other than typical of all Americans when it comes to their definition of work.

Much has been written of the real and potential impacts of moving public housing residents out of areas of concentrated poverty (e.g., Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010; Rubinowitz & Rosenbaum, 2002; Varady & Walker, 2003). Expectations of

improved job prospects is one important goal of relocation programs, and the results of this study suggest that the women did increase their workforce participation in the first two years following their move from public housing. However, whether individuals became employed post-move showed no relationship to the economic well-being of the neighborhood into which they moved. Women who moved into neighborhoods with above average median incomes were no more likely to be working post-relocation than those who moved into areas not dissimilar economically from their previous public housing neighborhood.

While there were no differences in overall employment, where the economics of the neighborhood showed a possible impact was in altering—or at least fine-tuning—the career aspirations of the relocated women. The women who found themselves living among the relatively more affluent were more likely than those remaining in lower income areas to provide clear and specific occupational goals. Women remaining in lower income neighborhoods had a tendency to talk in general terms, or worse, to limit their expectations to whatever they could get. While wanting a well-paying job is hardly a negative outcome, that the women were less likely to explain what type of job they would like suggests that their minds were more on finding a job and less on seeking emotionally satisfying work.

Of course, this study relied on the responses of a relatively small number of women living in one city over a three-year period. Although comparisons between those who left and those who remained suggest they were similar at baseline, there is no way of knowing whether they had different relocation experiences. Perhaps those who dropped out of the study were steadily employed and integrating into their new neighborhood better than those who continued to participate in the study. Alternatively, perhaps they felt so disenfranchised as to no longer care. It is impossible to know.

Furthermore, because all the respondents were relocated into neighborhoods within the same city, the economic situation of the area affected all similarly. Cove, Turner, Briggs, de Souza, and Duarte (2008) noted different employment patterns in Moving to Opportunity participants located in different cities, and Holzer, Stoll, and Wissoker (2004) found that

employers viewed welfare recipient workers differently depending in which city they worked. Were the dataset larger and more complete, encompassing more cities with greater economic-base diversity and including more residents over all time periods, other nuanced changes might have come to light.

Finally, it is important to remember that all the data were self-reported by the residents. The survey depended on the honesty of the respondents in recounting their employment history as well as describing their attitudes.

Despite the small sample, the findings are perhaps useful for two primary reasons. One, they show that women living in public housing are not different than other Americans in their thoughts about work. They value the financial gain employment brings, and they recognize the social value in working. Second, the results suggest that when low-income residents live among those with higher incomes they may more easily imagine themselves in satisfying occupations.

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