BEYOND MOBILITY:
THE LIMITS OF LIBERAL URBAN POLICY

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ABSTRACT: *Liberalism remains the dominant philosophical perspective underlying the development of urban public policy in the United States. At the heart of Liberal Urban Policy lies a Mobility Paradigm, which is marked by a strong emphasis on facilitating population movement as a means of addressing urban social problems. In this paper, I explicate the nature of this Mobility Paradigm across four key urban policy goals and then develop a critique of it. In its place, I offer one alternative—a Placemaking Paradigm—and discuss its contrasting conceptual attributes and policy implications. The Placemaking Paradigm points toward the nascent development of a Critical Urban Policy, which stands as an insurgent normative and empirical challenge to hitherto liberal dominance.*

Liberalism remains the dominant philosophical perspective underlying and animating much of the discourse surrounding the development of urban public policy in the United States. This dominance is especially stark in the academy, as well as in quasi-academic research institutions such the Brookings Institution and the Urban Institute, and major charitable foundations with a strong interest in urban problems. While much attention of late has been paid to liberalism's "neo" variety in the urban context (Hackworth, 2007; Peck, Theodore, & Brenner, 2009), the dominant urban policy discourse to which I refer—and that undergirds what I shall call *Liberal Urban Policy*—is, instead, primarily rooted in the tradition of New Deal/Great Society liberalism (see, e.g., Dreier, Mollenkopf, & Swanstrom, 2004), which itself is a "close [American] first cousin" to European social democracy (Elkin, 2006, p. 266). Neoliberalism and New Deal/Great Society liberalism, of course, share a common philosophical foundation—liberalism—and are more similar than is often understood. But whereas neoliberalism often seeks the (selective) rollback of the state in favor of market processes to (ostensibly) promote economic efficiency, New Deal/Great Society liberalism seeks to expand activist (or positive) state power as a means of realizing social equity.

What *all* forms of liberalism share in a philosophical sense is an affinity for, and normative embrace of, individual mobility. As the eminent political philosopher Michael Walzer (1990, p. 12) summarizes: "Liberalism is, most simply, the theoretical endorsement and justification of this movement" (what he calls the Four Mobilities—geographic, social, marital, and political). "In the liberal view," Walzer (1990, p. 12) points out, individual mobility represents not only "the

enactment of liberty" but also the very "pursuit of . . . happiness" itself. In essence, then, mobility is how liberalism's key normative objectives (liberty, as well as the "triumph of individual rights") are made "manifest." Mobility is thus the "practical working out" of liberal theory. So, for example: the right to free movement entails geographic mobility; the idea that careers should be open to talents, social mobility; the legalization of divorce, marital mobility; and the right to free association, political mobility (Walzer, 1990, pp. 17, 22).

In this paper, I intend to first illustrate how Liberal Urban Policy is imbued with this theoretical endorsement and normative justification of individual mobility (particularly, the type most central to *urban* policy issues—the movement of individuals across geography or *space*). At the heart of Liberal Urban Policy, then, is what might be called a Mobility Paradigm—where, in programmatic terms, there is a heavy reliance on moving people through metropolitan space as a means of addressing urban social problems. After specifying the workings of this Mobility Paradigm across four key urban policy goals, I develop a critique of it. In light of this critique, I offer one alternative—a Placemaking Paradigm—and discuss its contrasting conceptual and policy attributes. I conclude by drawing out the broader implications of my analysis for the future development of urban policy in 21st-century America. In particular, I suggest the emergence of what might be called a Critical Urban Policy, which could, in time, offer a powerful normative and empirical challenge to its more established liberal rival.

ILLUSTRATING THE MOBILITY PARADIGM: ADDRESSING FOUR KEY URBAN PROBLEMS

Enhancing the Economic Opportunities of the Urban Poor

Poverty remains a chronic problem in urban America, with more than one-quarter of the population of many U.S. cities officially classified as poor. Perhaps the clearest and most straightforward example of the Mobility Paradigm is found in efforts to enhance the economic opportunities of the urban poor, especially recipients of public housing assistance. In Liberal Urban Policy discourse, there is an overwhelming consensus that such opportunity can, for the most part, *only* be reached via a *move to* it, that is, via the "dispersal" of the urban poor.[1] The urban poor hence must make a "move to opportunity," usually in spatial terms from inner cities to suburbs, where they can more easily access better jobs, schools, and neighborhoods.[2] In programmatic terms, dispersal has been most prominently reflected in three major, and now familiar, initiatives: the Gautreaux program in Chicago, the federal Move to Opportunity (MTO) demonstration, which was modeled on Gautreaux, and the HOPE VI program. All three initiatives involved the relocation of residents of public housing to "different, presumably improved, neighborhoods" (Goetz & Chapple, 2010a, p. 152). And, similarly, all three have been strongly endorsed, even lionized, in the discourse of Liberal Urban Policy (see, e.g., Dreier et al., 2004; Cisneros & Engdahl, 2009; Popkin et al., 2004; Goering & Feins, 2003).

Of late, however, this application of the Mobility Paradigm has been confronted by a harsh reality: a large accumulation of careful, social-scientific research has clearly demonstrated that the dispersal efforts of both the MTO and HOPE VI programs have been largely ineffective as vehicles for enhancing economic opportunity (for a summary, see Goetz & Chapple, 2010a, 2010b). Because it acutely evinces the depth of their theoretic and programmatic commitment to mobility, what has been most interesting is the *response* offered by Liberal Urban Policy analysts to these embarrassing results. Namely, rather than questioning the efficacy of the Mobility Paradigm itself, as Goetz and Chapple (2010a, 2010b) among many others have done, these analysts instead have called for urban policy to promote an *even greater* degree of mobility

(see, e.g., Turner, Popkin, & Rawlings, 2009). From their perspective, a large part of the problem with these programs, it turns out, is that the urban poor did not disperse *far enough*.

To make this point, Liberal Urban Policy analysts frequently draw a comparison between the disappointing federal MTO program and Chicago's Gautreaux program, which supposedly registered more positive results.[3] For example, Briggs, Popkin, and Goering (2010, p. 150) note that, whereas many Gautreaux participants moved to "middle-class, mostly white suburban communities 15–20 miles from their mostly black origin neighborhoods in Chicago," MTO recipients typically moved much *shorter* distances, often to a "low-poverty, majority-minority neighborhood in the outer ring of the central city" (or, at best, "an economically diverse inner suburb proximate to the central city . . . within a few miles of, or in some cases adjacent to, the ghetto-poor origin neighborhoods . . ."). Hartman and Squires (2010b, p. 5) similarly see dispersal's benefits being "clearest" in Gautreaux, because families "made long-distance moves" in contrast to the MTO program "where most moves were from poor to nonpoor neighborhoods, but often in nearby communities . . . ." DeLuca and Rosenbaum (2010, p. 192) add that, while the MTO program contained a stronger study component with a superior research design, compared to Gautreaux it was a "weaker 'neighborhood change treatment,'" involving mostly short moves that failed to "change . . .[the] social context" for families, especially in terms of school quality and labor market strength (p. 194). Such "differences in neighborhood placements," write Rosenbaum and another coauthor (Rosenbaum & Zuberi, 2010, p. 27), "may explain why Gautreaux found [a] larger impact than MTO in education and employment outcomes . . . ."

Thus, in sum, we see that, for Liberal Urban Policy, the key to enhancing economic opportunity for the urban poor is mobility, and when mobility fails, the preferred corrective is *even more* mobility.

Creating Mixed-Income Communities in Inner Cities

The recent push to remake poor sections of inner cities into mixed-income neighborhoods offers a second illustration of the Mobility Paradigm and its centrality in Liberal Urban Policy. The roots of this effort can be traced to Wilson's (1987) wildly influential book on the so-called "urban underclass," *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Since the publication of Wilson's landmark work, the discourse of Liberal Urban Policy has been preoccupied with the notion that the "tangle of pathology" in many inner-city neighborhoods resulted in large part due to what Wilson called "concentration effects." Wilson's now-familiar story explained how these neighborhoods were once, in the not too distant past, socioeconomically mixed and stable, but a few decades of extreme selective outmigration of middle-class and stable working-class families left them with heavy concentrations of poverty. In Wilson's account, this outmigration removed an important "social buffer" in inner cities, taking away a means of deflecting the full impact of economic decline on neighborhoods. And, even more importantly, it resulted in the "social isolation" of urban poor from the "mainstream" of American society (Wilson, 1987, p. 21, pp. 56–58).

In response to Wilson's study, as well as some related work, a consensus emerged in Liberal Urban Policy discourse regarding how to alleviate this "tangle of pathology" in poor inner-city neighborhoods: They must be recreated into the mixed-income communities of, to use the parlance of the street, "back in the day," by breaking up heavy concentrations of poverty within them.[4] In programmatic terms, the most significant (and direct) policy response emanating from this consensus has been the HOPE VI program. HOPE VI attempts to remake distressed public housing projects by (normally) demolishing existing buildings and replacing them with low-density, new urbanist-style developments, inhabited by a socioeconomically diverse group of residents. While Liberal Urban Policy analysts have identified some (relatively isolated) problems with the program, for the most part, they have heralded HOPE VI as a grand success (see Popkin

et al., 2004; Cisneros & Engdahl, 2009), with some even advocating the model be extended "to rundown privately owned properties in poor neighborhoods" (Kingsley, 2009, p. 286).[5] This upbeat assessment stands in sharp contrast to numerous other researchers who have strongly condemned the program.[6]

What is perhaps most striking about this approach to creating mixed-income communities in inner cities is how much of it relies on *mobility*. In the HOPE VI program, for example, normally *all* public housing residents must move as their homes are demolished (or rehabilitated). Then, after a period of time, some of these former residents, varying from less than 10% to 75% (Popkin & Cunningham, 2009), need to move again, back to where they started. In the meantime, higher income "in-movers" (Briggs, 2005b, p. 330) need to relocate to the development, ideally at a rather rapid pace, to quickly fill the void created by the departure of the poor, thus securing the proper mixing of incomes. In essence, then, the very force that supposedly destroyed inner-city communities—extreme and rapid migration—is advanced by Liberal Urban Policy analysts as the means to save them.

Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing

The problem of affordable housing in the United States is as chronic as is it acute: By 2005, *nearly half of all renters* in the United States were spending more on housing than what is considered affordable, while nearly one-quarter of homeowners were doing the same, even before the mortgage crisis (Briggs et al., 2010). While there are significant demand elements to this problem, mostly caused by the limited nature of both labor market wages and government housing subsidies for lower-income Americans, much of the urban policy discussion revolves around the deficiencies in the supply of affordable housing units (see Schwartz, 2006).

For decades, Liberal Urban Policy has focused much attention on the contribution made by suburban land-use restrictions to this supply problem (see Danielson, 1976; Downs, 1994; Pendall, 2000a; Dreier et al., 2004; Levine, 2006; Katz & Turner, 2008; Briggs et al., 2010). Such restrictions, especially in the form of zoning practices, have the effect of constricting the production of affordable housing units, especially rental units in more affluent suburbs. The result has been to make such suburbs less diverse than they might otherwise be (Pendall, 2000b). Yet, given that it is far from clear how much this exclusionary zoning actually contributes to the overall affordability problem, especially for lower-income households (Hartman, 1991; Schwartz, 2006), the disproportionate attention paid to it by Liberal Urban Policy is again revealing of the Mobility Paradigm lying at its heart.

To see why, we need to better understand some of the underlying assumptions of Liberal Urban Policy in this regard. Most crucially, there is an assumption that land-use regulations *trap* central city (and inner-ring suburban) denizens in place by blocking their desired and *natural* relocation to exclusionary suburbs. In essence, the logic at work presumes that a good deal of mobility that would otherwise occur cannot because (presumed) arbitrary restrictions militate against it. "Such exclusion," as Downs (1993, p. 263) puts it, which results from an "overall system of local regulations in every metropolitan area," in practice "encourages, even compels, most of the poorest people to live in the oldest, most deteriorated neighborhoods because they are legally excluded from more desirable ones." From this perspective, then, a key to solving much of the affordable housing problem is to unblock this supposedly desired and natural mobility by having exclusionary suburbs build lower-cost units to which those in search of affordable housing will then be able to, freely, *move*.

From the liberal philosophical perspective, and by extension Liberal Urban Policy, the idea of institutional (especially governmental) authority arbitrarily blocking mobility (whether social or geographic) is particularly noxious in a normative sense. The elimination of this blockage,

and hence the liberation of the individual from freedom-repressing constraints, was in large part the *raison d'être* for the original development of liberalism in the 17th century. Its strong moral condemnation of constrained individual mobility perhaps best explains why, among all of the various injustices that coalesce and congeal to produce America's housing affordability crisis, suburban land-use regulations are singled out by Liberal Urban Policy analysts for a level of scorn greatly outmatching their likely harm.[7]

Redressing Racial Inequality

The challenge of redressing the unrelenting and virulent problem of racial inequality offers a fourth illustration of the Mobility Paradigm. Again, the problem at hand is chronic and acute: Almost a half-century since the apex of the civil rights movement, racial inequality between African Americans and whites across all major dimensions—including income, education, employment, and quality of life—remains at appallingly high levels. Perhaps most stunning is the tremendous—and growing—wealth gap between the races, as whites now stand some 20 times wealthier than African Americans. In addition, African-American median income stands at just above 60% that of whites (Shapiro, Meschede, & Sullivan, 2010).

Within the discourse of Liberal Urban Policy, the orthodox remedy for addressing the problem of racial inequality remains residential integration, despite some recent challenges to, and disillusionment with, this consensus.[8] Reflective of this ongoing orthodoxy is Hartman and Squires' recent volume, *The Integration Debate* (2010a; also see Carr & Kutty, 2008), where the latter (debate) is largely muted in favor of continued enthusiasm for the former (integration).[9] The volume's opening statement sets the tone:

> Racial inequality and racial segregation stubbornly persist, and at great cost to the victims and to society as a whole. . . . If recent efforts to desegregate the nation's neighborhoods have disappointed, new and better approaches are required. If integration does not "work," as some critics claim, it may well be because it has never really been tried . . . . (Hartman & Squires, 2010b, pp.1–2).

Anything else, they conclude, raises the specter of *Plessy*: "Separate but equal has been tried and clearly found wanting to all but the most diehard racists" (Hartman & Squires, 2010b, p. 2).

In short, the discourse of Liberal Urban Policy continues to hold fast to the proposition that African Americans will achieve political, social, and economic parity *only* when they begin to live near whites. As the quintessential—and enduring—statement of this view, Massey and Denton's (1993, p. 235) *American Apartheid,* powerfully concludes: If racial segregation "is permitted to continue, poverty will inevitably deepen and become more persistent within a large share of the black community . . . ." Similarly, many other scholars writing from the Liberal Urban Policy perspective echo this sentiment. For example, Ellen's (2000, p. 160) careful discussion, while giving a hearing to contrasting views, nevertheless concludes that: ". . . while these [contrasting views] are certainly sound arguments, the best evidence to date suggests racial segregation is in fact linked to greater social and economic isolation and adverse outcomes for blacks . . . ." Although some Liberal Urban Policy analysts of late have emphasized that integration need not be strictly racial, as long as African Americans have access to "communities of opportunity" (Briggs, 2005a, p. 8; also see Dreier et al., 2004), in practice Liberal Urban Policy sees this route toward racial equality as extremely limited. This is because, as a recent publication by the Urban Institute explains, "very few predominantly African American communities fully meet

the definition of an opportunity community," given "the extremely small number of stable, low-poverty minority communities" that exist in contemporary U.S. metropolitan areas (Turner et al., 2009, p. 88; also see Briggs et al., 2010).

What is often lost in the emotional and contentious discussion of residential integration is its heavy reliance on spatial mobility. It requires—by definition—movement. African Americans must move to neighborhoods that are predominately white or whites must move to African-American neighborhoods. Consider, for example, the common measure of neighborhood segregation, the index of dissimilarity. This familiar index, which varies between 0 and 100, "can be interpreted as the percent of either group that would have to change neighborhoods [that is, move] in order to be evenly distributed across the neighborhoods in a metropolitan area" (Denton, 2006, p. 63). So, for example, metropolitan Milwaukee's segregation score of almost 80 between African Americans and whites means that either 80% of the white population or 80% of the black population (or some combination) *would have to move* to produce an even distribution of the two races. In Chicago, 76% must move; Cleveland, 73%; St. Louis, 71%, and so on (Logan & Stults, 2011).

Moreover, to realize this residential integration, Liberal Urban Policy focuses an inordinate degree of attention and energy on combating racial discrimination via fair housing policies (see, e.g., Goering, 2007; Hartman & Squires, 2010a; Carr & Kutty, 2008; Silverman & Patterson, 2011). But much of the fair housing effort (in regard to race) is not simply about combating housing discrimination in an aspatial fashion. Rather, this effort is—first and foremost—about facilitating individual mobility. For Liberal Urban Policy, enduring racial discrimination in housing must be vigorously confronted, not simply because it is inherently evil, but rather because it prevents spatial relocation, especially the outward movement of African Americans to areas that are predominately white. Once again, there is an underlying but questionable assumption that a great deal of desired (and even *natural*) mobility that would otherwise occur is being arbitrarily blocked, in this case by racially discriminatory practices. Also once again, the main thrust of Liberal Urban Policy is to remove this blockage (through the strict enforcement of strong fair housing laws) so that minorities can freely *move* to white neighborhoods.

A CRITIQUE OF THE MOBILITY PARADIGM

As we have seen, in its effort to achieve these four key (and venerable) policy goals (economic opportunity, income mixing, housing affordability, and perhaps most venerable of all, racial equality), Liberal Urban Policy relies heavily on shuffling people throughout metropolitan space (i.e., on the Mobility Paradigm). In essence, from the vantage point of this perspective, relatively few people in a given metropolitan area actually live in the place *where they are supposed to*. The urban poor do not live in "opportunity areas," the middle (and upper middle) classes do not live in inner cities (or at least not in the right, nongentrified, parts of inner cities), the less affluent segments of the working classes do not live in exclusive suburbs, and—in the most extreme manifestation—many whites and nearly all blacks do not live in racially integrated neighborhoods.

What all of this adds up to is something cleverly captured by the title of a recent article by Goetz and Chapple (2010b): According to the prescriptions of Liberal Urban Policy: "You Gotta Move."

> You may be high/You may be low/You may be rich, child/You may be poor/But when the Lord gets ready/You've got to move – written by Mississippi Fred McDowell and Blind Gary Davis [and most famously recorded by the Rolling Stones]

And, moreover, not only do "You [or, in any event, many of us] Gotta Move," these prescriptions often would imply some people even "Gotta Move" *more than once*, that is, Liberal Urban Policy likely requires the need for *multiple* moves. Such multiple moving would be the case in HOPE VI-type programs, where public housing residents—or, conceivably if the model is extended as some Liberal Urban Policy analysts prescribe (e.g., Kingsley, 2009), private ones as well—must move away from original sites and then move back again to these same sites. In addition, "in cases of phased demolition and redevelopment," Manzo (2008, p. 13) points out, some HOPE VI families may have to move additional times, "especially if they wish to remain on site for as long as possible" before relocating.[10] Such multiple moves may be required in MTO-type programs as well, as it is increasingly recognized that voucher recipients must move further and further away from the central city in search of "opportunity." Moreover, if, once achieved via initial moves, the appropriate economic or racial balances in neighborhoods are later upset by subsequent (and powerful) social forces (such as gentrification in the case of income-mixing or white flight in the case of racial integration), additional moves would be required to redress these imbalances, perhaps within just a few years.

Clearly, if a society is to be free, a certain degree of mobility (geographic or otherwise) is necessary and even desirable (see Dahrendorf, 1997; Imbroscio, 2004; Walzer, 1990). Yet, the key normative defect in Liberal Urban Policy, as well as many versions of (philosophic) liberalism itself (Walzer, 1998), is its call for, or compatibility with, *excessive* mobility. Constituted in this way, Liberal Urban Policy, if implemented, would bring about widespread residential instability in the metropolitan population base.[11]

Problems with Residential Instability

What, then, makes this excessive mobility, and the resultant social condition of residential instability it engenders, normatively problematic?

First of all, it is highly deleterious to the quality of political and social life. Democratic theorists have long identified the link between the hypermobility of citizens and the corrosion of local political institutions and participation (see, e.g., Elkin, 1987). As Dagger (1997, p. 162) points out, the "unsettling effects" of "widespread mobility" on the nature of citizenship are clearly apparent. There is, he writes, "a tendency of residential mobility to loosen the ties that bind individuals into a community." Citizenship, he explains, "grows out of attachment to place and its people – out of a sense of community – that only forms over time." Yet, "those who move about frequently are not likely to acquire this attachment." And, pointing to the broader consequences of residentially instability, Dagger adds that "even those who seem rooted to a place are affected, for they are likely to feel abandoned as the faces about them become less familiar and their neighborhoods less neighborly."

A large collection of research provides empirical confirmation of these insights. For example, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady's (1995) large-sample statistical study found that civic involvement (especially on the local level) increases as people spend more years in a community. In a more recent study, Williamson (2010) similarly found that, statistically controlling for a number of independent variables, neighborhoods exhibiting high levels of residential stability (with people living in the same house for five years previously) are a positive predictor of many forms of political engagement. A parallel result was reported by Kang and Kwak (2003).

In a broader sense, as Hartman (1984, p. 302) put it long ago in his now-classic article, "The Right to Stay Put," there are "a host of personal and social benefits" engendered by stable neighborhoods (and hence lost with residential instability): "Long-term residence brings safety of person and property ('eyes on the street,' people looking out for each other and each other's homes), helpful and satisfying social ties to neighbors and local commercial establishments,

greater care for public and private space, and lower housing costs" (also see another classic, Jacobs, 1961). Such benefits in part add up to what researchers now commonly conceptualize as "social capital" (see Putnam, 2000). Summarizing a body of studies, Sampson (1999, p. 258) points out that "findings suggest that residential stability promotes a variety of social networks and local associations," something that thereby tends to increase the stock of social capital in local communities (also see Williamson, 2010). Moreover, evidence suggests that the benefits of residential stability cut across a range of places, as Turney and Harknett (2010, p. 499) recently found that such stability "is associated with stronger personal safety nets irrespective of neighborhood quality."

In addition, if the prescriptions of the Mobility Paradigm end up requiring *multiple* moves—which, for reasons noted above, seems possible, if not likely—further normative problems would arise. Most notably, such frequent moving can lead to a number of psychological and social problems, especially for the most vulnerable (see, e.g., Schulz et al., 2008; Manzo, 2008; Fullilove, Hernandez-Cordero, & Fullilove, 2010; Fullilove, 2004). Reflecting this dynamic, Manzo, Kleit, and Couch (2008, p. 1871) effectively title their recent study of HOPE VI with the poignant response of one public housing resident facing multiple relocation: "Moving three times is the same as having your house on fire once." Somewhat ironically, this well-known phenomenon is readily recognized in Liberal Urban Policy discourse. For example, in a recent and important contribution to this discourse, Briggs et al. (2010, p. 75) acknowledge that "frequent moves converge with other risks to create a cumulative set of stressors affecting poorer children and adults." These stressors are attributed to "the wrong kind of housing mobility," where moves are "involuntary" (Briggs et al., 2010, p. 75), yet the distinction between what counts as an involuntary move and a voluntary move (made by free choice) is itself highly contested (see Steinberg, 2010; Imbroscio, 2008).

The harmful effect on young persons is especially pronounced, as Briggs et al. (2010, p. 259) underscore. They highlight the "recent research on child and adolescent development" that demonstrates the "deleterious effects of frequent moving," such as "poorer emotional health, weaker academic outcomes, strained family relationships, [and] smaller and less stable peer networks . . . ." Children and adolescents also show "a greater risk of gravitating toward deviant or delinquent peers after arriving in new schools and communities" (also see Stack, 1994; Pribesh & Downey, 1999; Haynie & South, 2005). Crowley (2009, p. 231) similarly notes that relocation itself, whether multiple or not, can have a "harmful effect on school-age children, who risk falling behind in their studies when they move during the school year." And, in a more general indictment of the broader consequences of widespread residential instability, she also points out, insightfully, that it is "not just the children who move who are affected. With the churning of students through classrooms over the school year, all students are subject to disruption of the learning process."

Yet, whatever the problems with residential instability happen to be, it also can be said that the Mobility Paradigm and the widespread relocation it prescribes does nonetheless seem to fit well with Americans' well-known penchant for wanderlust (see Houseman, 1979). This view, however, now seems dated. Americans are choosing to be "ever more rooted" (Fischer, 2002, p. 177) or, as another keen observer of urban trends, Joel Kotkin, puts it, less nomadic (Kotkin, 2010). By 2008, reports Kotkin, the total number of people moving was fewer than in 1962, when the United States had 120 million less residents. Mobility rates have now fallen to their lowest point since the census starting tracking population movement (in 1940). Most relevant for Liberal Urban Policy, given its prescriptions for intrametropolitan population shuffling, is the fact that, since the middle of the 20th century, "Americans were less likely to move *locally*," while rates of longer distance moves "stayed roughly constant" (Fischer, 2002, p. 193, emphasis in original).

Underlying these trends, at least in part, is no doubt something Liberal Urban Policy seems to underestimate (and undervalue): the continuing and perhaps increasing power of people's *attachment to place*—an attachment that remains significant even in the face of spectacular technological advances that ostensibly make place less and less relevant (see Kotkin, 2010). As King (2004, p. 216) reminds us, even people who command the necessary resources that allow them substantial freedom to choose where to live will tend to "develop loyalties to particular places as sites of formative associations and practices." Similarly, surveying a wide range of empirical literature in planning, urban studies, geography, and social psychology, Manzo and Perkins (2001, p. 20) find that, despite recent countervailing trends, "[i]t is evident that . . . emotional bonds to places are a real and important phenomenon . . ." (also see Manzo & Perkins, 2006). Similarly, Cox (2001, p. 14) has identified the experienced condition of what he calls "place dependence," as people engage in place-specific sociospatial practices that "tend to get routinized, and for very good reasons . . . [as] they not only facilitate realization of individual ends," but also "create a world of predictability and confidence" (Cox & Mair, 1988, p. 312). After such routinization and a period of settlement takes hold, Cox points out that "a resistance to change" commonly develops, as "the workplace, the living place and the particular spatial system of everyday life which they jointly constitute tend to acquire for people a certain necessity." Mutual aid relationships are formed with particular neighbors, baby sitters, recreation facilities, and medical services are all located, children get used to particular schools, homes may be purchased, and social networks are "laboriously constructed," all as an "identification with a particular place" becomes stronger and stronger (Cox, 2001, p. 14; Cox & Mair, 1988, p. 313).

An Increasingly Elusive Promised Land

Beyond the many problems brought about by the widespread residential instability it engenders, the Mobility Paradigm also faces an acute, yet seldom recognized, dilemma. Namely, much of population movement it prescribes involves relocation of the disadvantaged (or relatively disadvantaged) to the so-called "good" (usually suburban) areas of the metropolitan region. Such "good" places are marked by generalized affluence, strong quality of life attributes, high-performing schools, robust job markets, and, ideally, are overwhelmingly or at least predominantly white in racial make-up (see, e.g., Turner et al., 2009, pp. 84–89). These places, in sum, largely approximate what Orfield (1998, p. 5), following real estate consultants, famously labeled as "the favored quarter" of metropolitan areas (also see Leinberger, 2008b; Cashin, 2000).

The Mobility Paradigm's demand that movers relocate to such "good" suburban areas arose from the stark realization that the *mere* suburbanization of the disadvantaged is proving not enough to ameliorate urban problems. These newest suburbanites are, in short, often going to the "wrong" sorts of suburban places. As Briggs et al. (2010, p. 82) explain, "some of the fastest growth in immigrant and black suburbanization is occurring in 'at-risk' suburbs that feature school failure, weak fiscal capacity, and other problems long associated with vulnerable cities . . . ." (also see Orfield, 2002; Dreier et al., 2004). Moreover, in regard specifically to explaining (in part) why the MTO program showed such disappointing outcomes, Briggs et al. (2010, p. 82) lament that, when MTO families "reached the suburbs at all, it was almost always to these vulnerable suburbs," rather than "the upper tier of communities (and school districts) within each metro region" (i.e., rather than Orfield's favored quarter). Similarly, Weir (2009, p. 7) reports that, in Chicago, poor African Americans spurred to move out of the city by the mobility-inducing HOPE VI program (as well more general gentrification processes) are facing limited economic prospects because they "are moving to very poor suburban towns on the far south side of the city, far from the centers of job growth . . . [in the] north and west of the city" (i.e., once again, far from the favored quarter(s)). This trend—the growing outward movement of the poor to declining

inner-ring suburbs due to urban gentrification—extends well beyond Chicago and is evident in a variety of large American cities (Leinberger, 2008a; also see Hanlon, 2009).

The key problem, however, for the Mobility Paradigm is that more and more parts of suburbia are turning into these "wrong" sorts of places. The proportion of middle-class suburbs has been shrinking for a long time, being largely replaced by poorer ones. From 1980 to 2000, for example, while the number of suburban residents living in middle-class suburbs experienced a marked drop of around 20%, the number living in poor suburbs more than doubled (Dreier et al., 2004; also see Booza, Cutsinger, & Galster, 2006). And, contrary to what is often reported, these poor suburbs are not confined to the inner-ring areas located near central cities (the "first suburbs"). "Suburban decline," Dreier et al. (2004, p. 49) point out, "is concentrated not in pre-World War II suburbs, but in those built between 1945 and 1970. . . " (also see Lucy & Phillips, 2006). Furthermore, as Leinberger (2008b, p. 75) indicates, given current trends in housing demand and demographics, "much of the future decline is likely to occur on the fringes" of suburbia, "in towns far away from the central city, not served by rail transit, and lacking any real core." Thus, he adds, "some of the worst problems are likely to be seen in some of the country's more recently developed areas," as these places "become magnets for poverty, crime, and social dysfunction." Along these lines, Lucy (2010) documents that higher rates of foreclosures are occurring in new suburbs and exurbs, compared to cities.

What all of this adds up to, then, is a "glum forecast for many swaths of suburbia," as Leinberger (2008b, p. 75) succinctly puts it. Indeed, even before the more recent negative trends fully unfolded, it was already estimated that *half* the suburban population resided "in 'at risk' suburbs with high needs but low, and often declining tax bases" (Dreier et al., 2004, p. 49).

So, with much of suburbia being "poor" (Weir, 2009), "vulnerable" (Briggs et al., 2010), and at some level "at risk" (Dreier et al., 2004), these places are thus less appropriate *destinations* for those urbanites to be relocated via the various prescriptions of Liberal Urban Policy (something that the disappointing MTO results help demonstrate). In short, such places are not so-called "communities of opportunity" with good "schools, public services, and economic prospects" (Briggs, 2005a, p. 8). Furthermore, and just as significant, because these at-risk suburbs offer inadequate economic opportunity and a relatively poor quality of life for their *current* residents, the logic of the Mobility Paradigm would call for these residents to escape from these suburbs as well.

Where, then, within a given metropolitan area are all of these relocatees (whether coming from poor areas of central cities or declining suburbs) to go? The options, it turns out, are quite circumscribed. Herewith lies the acute dilemma for the Mobility Paradigm: There are too few "good" areas to accommodate the sheer volume of relocatees required for the Mobility Paradigm to be effective on anything except a relatively small scale. Some might move to (the relatively few) appropriate sections of central cities, but the forces of gentrification have left many of these places unaffordable for the disadvantaged (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; also see Booza et al., 2006). Similarly, the efforts of Liberal Urban Policy to remake inner cities into vibrant mixed-income communities also seem likely to fall prey to gentrification, as much of the research on HOPE VI suggests (see, e.g., Goetz, 2011). For the most part, then, that basically leaves the favored quarter of suburbs—the "upper tier of communities . . . within each metro region" (Briggs et al., 2010, p. 82). And, indeed, Liberal Urban Policy discourse has been marked by a keen preoccupation with these privileged suburban areas and their potential role in policy schemes to address urban problems (for major statements, see Dreier et al., 2004; Rusk, 1999; Orfield, 1998).

Yet, what is important to remember is that these areas are already sites of intense bidding wars to enter, given that they feature "safe housing . . . [that] is close to work and . . . [have] good public schools" (Segal, 2003, p. 54). This, in turn, has led to inflated housing costs that greatly burden much of the middle class (Segal, 2003; also see Warren & Tyagi, 2003; Frank, 2007; Dreier et al., 2004; Cashin, 2004). Segal (2003, p. 54), among many others, has pointed out that, if "middle

and low-income people had *more* money," they would simply "increase [this] . . . bidding war for housing that satisfies their needs" (emphasis in original). As Dreier et al. (2004, p. 90) put it: "More dollars are chasing a relatively fixed supply."

The Mobility Paradigm's key way out of this inadequacy of supply problem is through, as Downs (1973) termed it long ago, the "opening up" of the suburbs, especially via the rolling back of exclusionary zoning and related restrictions on land use. This, in turn, will allow for the construction of more affordable housing units in these "opened up" suburbs (see Downs, 1993). Yet, in the current suburban context, since there are so few "good" places for this affordable housing to go—essentially the favored quarter—this strategy seems doomed to fail (except, again, on a small scale). As Segal (2003, p. 54) put it, because "the shortage is not of physically adequate housing" per se but rather "of safe housing which is close to work and has good public schools"—that is, a *shortage of good places*—this supply problem "isn't going to be solved by home builders."

The nub of the issue is that such places take on the character of what Fred Hirsch (1976) identified as *positional goods*. In contrast to most goods, which are material in nature (such as the physically adequate housing Segal cites above), positional goods can be available to only some fraction of a society's population because they are "either (1) scarce in some absolute or socially imposed sense or (2) subject to congestion or crowding through more extensive use" (Hirsch, 1976, p. 27).

In the current metropolitan context, desirable places take on positional characteristics for both reasons: they are scarce due to a set of socially (and politically) imposed conditions that have led to the decline of so many places *and* they are subject to overcrowding with more extensive use. The latter applies directly to the Mobility Paradigm's effort to "open up" the relatively few "good" suburban locations. While Hirsch was talking largely about the physical attributes of such suburban locales, the same logic applies to their socioeconomic aspects. He pointed out that, if the "process of suburbanization is unimpeded by planning or other restrictions," then "excess demand for this positional good involves, in the first instance, a process of *crowding* that changes—and beyond some point, worsens—the quality of suburban characteristics" (Hirsch, 1976, p. 39; emphasis in original). This overcrowding and the decline it engenders will tend to induce flight to "new suburbs with undefiled characteristics." But since these suburbs are positional goods too, they "in time tend to attract demand that is excessive for the maintenance of maximum quality," and the process begins anew.

THE PLACEMAKING PARADIGM

There is, of course, only one way out of this positional goods dilemma: Placemaking, by which I mean the construction (or making) of more "good" (i.e., socially and economically healthy) places in metropolitan areas. Without more such places, the excessive demand for entry into the relatively few that do exist will: (1) cause them to be made inaccessible due to high cost (as we now see in both gentrifying sections of cities and desirable parts of suburbia); or, if this cost is lowered, (2) cause them to lose the very qualities that made them desirable in the first place due to the process of crowding identified by Hirsch (1976).

The problem with Liberal Urban Policy is that its proclivity for solving urban problems via population movement—as embodied in the Mobility Paradigm—causes it to give insufficient attention to the crucial endeavor of placemaking. While Liberal Urban Policy, to be sure, does not wholly neglect placemaking, its philosophical and programmatic impulses give clear priority to enhanced individual mobility (see, e.g., Downs, 1994; Hughes, 1993). Hence, the placemaking efforts of Liberal Urban Policy in the post-War era usually have been more place-destroying than place-strengthening in nature (such as Urban Renewal). Or, as O'Connor (1999, p. 79) reminds

us, such efforts have been "small-scale," "modest," and "inadequate" (in the form of a variety of tepid or short-lived community development programs), especially vis-à-vis liberal-backed public policies spurring population movement (e.g., highway building, tax policies, and a variety of subsidies for suburbanization).[12] The key emphasis of Liberal Urban Policy has always been on "how to create *access*" to the right places (Briggs, 2005a, p. 4; emphasis added), which involves exit and entry, rather than on creating the places themselves. Even when it does call for serious efforts to remake places, a necessary prerequisite to these efforts is usually a socioeconomic (and often racial) reordering of the existing population base of such places (see Briggs, 2008). This standpoint is most clearly seen in Liberal Urban Policy analysts' recent celebration of HOPE VI urban revitalization efforts (see Cisneros & Engdahl, 2009; Popkin et al., 2004), but also was clearly evident in earlier Urban Renewal efforts of the 1950s and 1960s that first required so-called "slum clearance" (and "negro removal") before renewal could germinate.[13] Established places—taken as is—command the strong attention of Liberal Urban Policy mostly in those relatively rare cases where prior residential settlement patterns have created the appropriate socioeconomic and/or racial mix in them, such as the effort to stabilize racially integrated communities (see Ellen, 2000) or keep the middle class from fleeing declining inner-ring suburbs or outer sections of central cities (see Dreier et al., 2004; Orfield, 1998). Most other times, Liberal Urban Policy development is driven by the perceived pressing need to be "deliberate" in efforts to bring about "greater spatial inclusion" (Briggs, 2008, p. 134), that is, by the need to deliberately move people about through metropolitan space as a means of addressing urban inequalities.

What is required, then, is a shift in our approach to addressing urban problems, from one emphasizing population movement to one emphasizing the construction of place; that is, a shift away from the Mobility Paradigm of Liberal Urban Policy in favor of a *Placemaking Paradigm* more consistent with a Critical Urban Policy (see Davies & Imbroscio, 2010; Brenner, Marcuse, & Mayer, 2009; or, conceivably, a Communitarian Urban Policy, see Euchner & McGovern, 2003; Williamson, Imbroscio, & Alperovitz, 2002; Barber, 2002). As demonstrated above, without a greater emphasis on creating more economically and socially healthy places, Liberal Urban Policy is a dead end, since there are not enough appropriate destinations to which relocatees can move. Furthermore, by de-emphasizing population movement, and hence avoiding the widespread residential instability the Mobility Paradigm would engender, the numerous (above described) social and political problems caused by that instability also could be mitigated.

Four Key Urban Policy Goals, Revisited

Specifying all of the conceptual attributes and policy implications of the Placemaking Paradigm is, of course, beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, the brief discussion below contrasting it with the Mobility Paradigm across the four key urban policy goals set out above is suggestive. To reiterate, those goals were: (1) enhancing the economic opportunities of the urban poor; (2) creating mixed-income communities in inner cities; (3) increasing the supply of affordable housing; and (4) redressing racial inequality.

First, rather than sending the urban poor out to distant suburbs in search of economic opportunity, the Placemaking Paradigm seeks to connect them to opportunities much closer to inner-city communities. To justify this policy shift, it challenges the notion that such opportunities are necessarily meager.

Toward this end, the Placemaking Paradigm draws support from the work of Porter (1995), who demonstrated that the locational advantages of the inner city often give it a comparative advantage over other areas as sites for regional business development (for a discussion, see Giloth, 2007). Moreover, at the neighborhood level, Pattillo (2009, p. 36) recently reported that Porter's ongoing research through his Initiative for a Competitive Inner City found that inner cities have "eight

times the amount of retail spending dollars per square mile as the rest of the metropolitan area, and that the inner city's $90 billion in purchasing power is being underserved." Rubin (2009, p. 55) similarly pointed out that future retail development in inner cities is "very promising on many levels." His analysis demonstrated that the "old reasons investors passed over the inner city are increasingly being proven outdated or wrong by advisors wielding a sophisticated array of urban market research analysis tools." In short, the "consumers are there, their spending power is greater than previously measured, and their needs are definable and waiting to be addressed." In addition, on the nonprofit side, within most inner cities there exist a number of so-called *anchor institutions*, firmly rooted in place, which are huge economic engines in their larger regional economies (see Bartik & Erickcek, 2008; Harkavy & Zuckerman, 1999). These include, most prominently, eds and meds (universities and hospitals), as well as churches, museums and other cultural facilities, public utilities, and community foundations. Such institutions spend billions of dollars each year on business activities such as procurement and real estate development, resources that can be targeted toward the creation of economic opportunities for nearby residents. One such effort is underway in Cleveland, dubbed the "Cleveland Model," where the procurement dollars of its anchor institutions are being used to build a network of employee-owned cooperatives (drawing heavy inspiration from the Mondragon experience in Spain; see Alperovitz, Williamson, & Howard, 2010).

In a broader sense, given the current patterns of regional development, the Mobility Paradigm is marked by a cruel irony: It justifies the dispersal of the urban poor as a means of enhancing their economic opportunities right at the very time when a major economic resurgence in many inner cities is rapidly expanding such opportunities in or near their midst. In contrast, a Placemaking Paradigm puts the emphasis on securing the necessary supply of affordable housing in urban neighborhoods, in order to mitigate the degree of displacement from the pressures of gentrification concomitant with this resurgence (see Lees et al., 2008).

To achieve the second urban policy goal, creating mixed-income communities in inner cities, the Placemaking Paradigm relies heavily on the success of its effort to achieve the first goal—connecting the urban poor to economic opportunities nearby, while mitigating displacement. Thus, rather than shuffling people out of and into urban neighborhoods, the Placemaking Paradigm seeks to create a better income mix in such neighborhoods via the economic uplift experienced by current residents newly connected to economic opportunities. If the fruits of these opportunities can be realized by segments of the current inner-city population base, such segments would begin to form a new urban middle class living together with poorer residents to form mixed-income communities. In fact, it is this path toward poverty deconcentration that arguably best fulfills Wilson's original vision for healing the social ills of urban America (see Wilson, 1987, 1996).

Third, in addressing the crisis in the supply of affordable housing, the Placemaking Paradigm focuses on minimizing the destabilization of both communities and families that comes with frequent moving in search of such housing and the security it fosters. This focus puts the policy emphasis squarely on the creation and maintenance of affordable housing itself, irrespective of where it might be, rather than on incessantly trying to break down the walls of exclusionary zoning (something that has proven next to impossible politically, even under the most propitious of circumstances; see Provo, 2009). In this sense, as alluded to above, it also switches the policy thrust from facilitating free *entry* to preventing forced *exit*, that is, involuntary displacement. It therefore forcefully embraces Hartman's (1984) famous notion of a "right to stay put" (also see Newman & Wyly, 2006; Imbroscio, 2004).

Finally, the Placemaking Paradigm confronts racial inequalities directly, rather than through the circuitous path of integration and the massive residential instability it demands. Efforts at racial integration often "solve," as Smith (2010, p. 230) notes, "the wrong problem," rather than dealing "head-on with the structural racism and policies that privilege the white position" (p. 242). The

key issue for the Placemaking Paradigm is why black-dominated places, even when their income levels approach that of similar whites areas, remain so economically and socially precarious. As Pattillo (2009, p. 35, emphasis in original) asks, perceptively: "must there be directed attention to the equitable provision of goods and services to black neighborhoods *as black neighborhoods* to remedy the history of race-based discrimination and disregard?" The Placemaking Paradigm answers her question, unequivocally, in the affirmative. In doing so, it understands both the urgent need to address the virulent problem of racial inequality swiftly and aggressively, as well as the need to limit residential instability and create more vibrant and healthy places (irrespective of racial composition).

TOWARD A CRITICAL URBAN POLICY

Shifting from the dominant Mobility Paradigm to the Placemaking Paradigm as the guiding force for the development of urban policy is almost surely not a panacea for tackling America's deepest urban problems. Nor does it imply that every place can be successfully remade (in its current form, at least); in a few—relatively rare—cases, degeneration has been allowed to advance to a point that revitalization is, for all practical purposes, no longer possible. Moreover, as Walzer (1998, p. 48) reminds us, mobility itself remains "the mark of a free society," and as such should not be unnecessarily hampered when it is the strongly expressed preference of individuals and families.[14] Therefore, the critique of the Mobility Paradigm and its suggested replacement with the Placemaking Paradigm is most rightly understood as a *useful corrective* to Liberal Urban Policy's misguided fixation on population movement as the key to solving social problems.

In the end, no one who has thought seriously about how to address urban social ills doubts that some combination of mobility and placemaking is in order. But given its philosophical and ontological commitments, liberalism seems incapable, or at least very unlikely, of setting the proper foundation for a normatively attractive urban policy that gets the mix between mobility and placemaking right. My aspiration has been to contribute to the nascent development of an alternative foundation—Critical Urban Policy (see Davies & Imbroscio, 2010)—that potentially strikes a more appropriate balance between the two. Toward that end, this paper adds to a growing body of recent work—rooted in this critical, insurgent perspective—that sets out the justification for a renewed emphasis on placemaking in a reinvented (and superior) urban policy for 21st-century America.[15]

ENDNOTES

1 For discussions of this consensus, see Steinberg, 2010 and Imbroscio, 2008.

2 The literature reflecting this perspective is voluminous (for a recent illustration, see Briggs, Popkin, & Goering, 2010).

3 Although this claim is highly contested (see e.g., Gans, 2010; Imbroscio, 2008; Goetz & Chapple, 2010a, 2010b.)

4 See DeFilippis and Fraser (2010) for a delineation, explication, and insightful discussion of this consensus.

5 Interestingly, liberals writing from outside the realm of urban policy also have heralded HOPE VI. For example, Steven Hill's liberal manifesto, *10 Steps to Repair American Democracy,* which seeks to "restore faith in government," cites the program as an "instructive example of smart government" (2006, p. 169, 179). "The Clinton Administration," Hill (2006, p. 180) lauds, "guided by Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Henry Cisneros . . . broke up . . . concentrated poverty by tearing down the public housing complexes . . . ."

6 A (partial) list of critics includes Goetz and Chapple (2010a, 2010b), Williams (2003), Bennett and Reed (1999), Greenbaum, Hathaway, Rodriguez, Spalding, and Ward (2008), Crump (2002), Bennett, Smith, and Wright (2006), Manzo, Kleit, and Crouch (2008), Crowley (2009), and Steinberg (2010).

7 See, for example, Hartman (1991). As Schwartz (2006, p. 37) summarizes: ". . . many suburban land use restrictions inflate the cost of housing." However, he adds: "although land use regulation can increase the cost of housing, it is not certain that the removal of such regulations would make housing affordable to the lowest income households."

8 See, e.g., Vigdor, 2009; Smith, 2010 and Feagin and Combs, 2001. For a brief review, see Maly, 2005.

9 For a notable exception, see especially the provocative essay by Smith (2010), aptly entitled "Integration: Solving the Wrong Problem." Also see essays by Steinberg (2010) and Fullilove, Hernandez-Cordero, & Fullilove (2010).

10 And, while the program itself does not inherently require it, in practice those HOPE VI families exiting public housing to the private rental market (with or without a voucher) "experienced significant rates of residential mobility, with half moving twice in two years" (Crowley, 2009, p. 231). As the title of the Urban Institute report documenting this phenomenon puts it: "Hope VI'd and on the Move" (see Comey, 2007).

11 Such a social state, it should be noted, is inherent in the Mobility Paradigm itself, with its calls for solving urban problems by shuffling people through urban space. This residential instability would only be exacerbated by the possible need for multiple moves, but it is not wholly or primarily dependent on such moves.

12 On this point, also see Imbroscio (2006).

13 On this point, Goetz (2000), for example, insightfully refers to HOPE VI as "the new slum clearance."

14 For an analogous perspective applied to the urban context, cf. Hartman (1984) and Imbroscio (2004).

15 There has been a burst of such scholarship in recent years. See, for example, the policy chapters in Davies and Imbroscio's (2010) *Critical Urban Studies*, especially essays by DeFilippis and Fraser (2010), Goetz and Chapple (2010a), and Spinner-Halev (2010). Also see the penetrating work of Greenbaum and her collaborators (e.g., Greenbaum et al., 2008). Perhaps most interesting (and potentially most subversive of the liberal orthodoxy) have been the critical ripostes in three recent and important volumes that otherwise celebrate the ostensible virtues of Liberal Urban Policy. In this regard, see especially Pattillo (2009), Kelly (2009), Crowley (2009), Smith (2010), and Steinberg (2010).

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WHAT IS THE ROLE OF HOUSING POLICY? CONSIDERING CHOICE AND SOCIAL SCIENCE EVIDENCE

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"...autonomy should refer instead to decisions reached with a full and vivid awareness of available opportunities, with reference to all relevant information and without illegitimate or excessive constraints of the process of preference formation" (Sunstein, 1991, p. 11)

I am pleased to have the chance to respond to David Imbroscio's critique of urban policy. He gives the readers of the *Journal of Urban Affairs* a chance to think about the significance of communities we often devalue and the potential costs of urban policy that favors residential mobility—specifically extra-urban "moves to opportunity." To be clear, however, he does this by implying a futuristic thought experiment that assumes the researchers who study residential mobility programs, the mobility paradigm (MP), have somehow gotten control of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and turned it inside out. In the face of this research hegemony, he advocates that we return to a placemaking paradigm (PP) that focuses on community building and bringing resources to urban neighborhoods, instead of bringing families to neighborhoods with resources. I am glad we get to talk honestly about urban policies, as we clearly have not gotten it right yet. However, I am afraid that Imbroscio's paper is part of an emerging literature that has the potential to do more harm than good by distracting us with research caricatures and a false dichotomy between policies that could be mutually beneficial. I must preface this commentary by saying that I have been implicated as part of the MP, and as such, it might be difficult to comment on Imbroscio's paper without sounding like part of the MP.

HOUSING RESEARCHERS WITH ULTERIOR MOTIVES?

Then again, maybe it is not that hard. As others have noted in already published critiques of Imbroscio's work (Briggs, 2008; Goering & Feins, 2008), no researchers believe that assisted residential mobility is the sole solution to overcoming the serious challenges faced by families in our poorest urban neighborhoods. It is unfortunate that Imbroscio's new paper once again

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implies a mobility-only agenda among a subset of housing researchers. When I gave my first talk about the long-term outcomes of Chicago's Gautreaux families, I was faced with this question from the audience: "Scaling up a program like Gautreaux will never work. Why not consider alternatives like community development programs?" Back then, as still happens now, people confuse the research interests and empirical findings of scholars with their prescriptions for how things *should* be. We housing scholars are social scientists, not evangelists. What do we have to personally gain from studying mobility programs and disseminating our results to wider audiences, relative to any other potentially successful program that might help families? Many of these mobility programs have had mixed results and none of us has lied about them. None of the social scientists I know intend to promote programs that do not work, or advocate throwing good money after bad. Imbroscio implies that there is an ulterior motive for the work we do, and I cannot see what that is.

I can say that the strongest motive I have for doing research on assisted mobility programs is that it helps me answer important policy questions like: What is possible? What works (and why)? What does not work (and why)? What do families need, and what are current policies or programs lacking? Programs like Gautreaux, Moving to Opportunity (MTO), and the more recent Baltimore Thompson program I am studying are rare and valuable opportunities to understand how families fare when presented with changes in the opportunity structure. Decades of observational social science have demonstrated an empirical relationship between concentrated poverty and diminished life outcomes, but cannot say much about what might happen if these same families escaped disadvantaged and dangerous neighborhoods (see DeLuca & Dayton, 2009). This is not about a cadre of academics promoting a narrow and limited policy option to further middle class values (Imbroscio, 2008). This is not about academics telling only the "clean" side of the story that suits their agenda. Briggs, Popkin, and Goering (2010) talk as much about the challenges and pitfalls of mobility programs as they do about any of their benefits.[1] This is about serious scholars trying to understand how policies do or do not work when they intersect with the lives of real families.

THE OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS MOBILITY PROGRAMS HAVE ACCOMPLISHED

In terms of the research output, Imbroscio has rightly pointed out that we have not cured urban poverty through assisted voucher programs, a conclusion that I have repeatedly also noted in my own work with colleagues on MTO and Gautreaux (e.g., DeLuca & Rosenblatt, 2010; DeLuca, Duncan, Mendenhall, & Keels 2010). However, as he accuses the MP of doing, Imbroscio cherry picks the findings he presents, and emphasizes those best suited for his argument (see Goetz & Chapple, 2010 for a similar angle). Although he correctly states that there were mixed results from MTO and that Gautreaux was not an experiment, he underplays key findings from both programs. I will choose two to demonstrate this. First, on Gautreaux, Imbroscio does not mention the fact that 15–20 years after getting housing assistance and counseling from the program, most African American families who moved to more affluent, safer, more integrated neighborhoods were still living in similar communities (DeLuca & Rosenbaum, 2003; Keels, Duncan, DeLuca, Mendenhall, & Rosenbaum, 2005). When their children grew up and moved on their own, they lived in nonpoor, integrated neighborhoods too (Keels, 2008). Although the design is not experimental (all families moved, so there was no control group), it is certainly stronger than traditional observational research designs. We capitalized on the variation in neighborhood locations for families who moved with Gautreaux (about half to mostly White affluent areas and about half to mixed or mostly Black neighborhoods) and found that this variation in neighborhood context strongly predicted where families lived over a decade later. If that is not convincing alone, one can consider a plausibility test, as Shadish, Cook, and Campbell (2002) advise when you

cannot rule out all potential confounds. Here goes: To believe that these long-term results are not a function of families' receiving the counseling and opportunity they got with Gautreaux, one would also have to believe that several thousand low-income Black families moved from public housing projects (or similar neighborhoods) to low-crime, mostly White suburban neighborhoods on their own in the 1970s and stayed there for almost two decades. Although possible, decades of demographic observations would suggest otherwise, as their counterparts in the Section 8 program were living in neighborhoods that were about as segregated as public housing projects.[2]

On MTO, Imbroscio correctly states that experimental movers did not reap the economic and educational benefits that the MP had hoped for. However, what he glosses over is the fact that women (both mothers and daughters) who left the housing projects for safer neighborhoods experienced improvements in their mental health on par with best practices in antidepressant medication therapies (Kling, Liebman, & Katz, 2007). When pharmaceutical companies, like Lilly or Pfizer, achieve these kinds of results, it is celebrated in the news. But because one of the only conclusive benefits of MTO was noneconomic, the program is written off as a failure and proof that neighborhoods do not matter. Imbroscio notes that "dispersal programs" have been ineffective for enhancing economic opportunity. I will add that it is also true that mobility programs did not solve the national dropout crisis for minority boys and send them to Harvard. But young men who moved to the suburbs with Gautreaux were also more likely to live longer and less likely to be murdered (Votruba & Kling, 2009). This leads me to a larger point, one that goes beyond Imbroscio's article and applies to the reception of social science research results more generally by the media, policymakers, and the public. As a society we need to think about what counts as worthwhile outcomes from any public policy investment. If we completely dismiss the empirically supported benefits of mobility efforts, we are also in danger of saying that the right to leave violent segregated neighborhoods, the safety of poor families, the mental health of low-income women, and the mortality of young men are not outcomes that meet our standards for important social change.

On the potential scope of mobility, there is another point worth making. Imbroscio is concerned that the MP are promoting mobility remedies that will cause population level instability. However, we have no idea whether a larger mobility program would result in metropolitan instability because we have never tried it. The ones we have tried have been relatively limited in scope. For example, the Baltimore metropolitan region has over 600,000 people. There were 636 families in the MTO program; 252 were given low-poverty vouchers; half of those leased up in nonpoor neighborhoods. The same small fractions obtain in other mobility programs. The irony of Imbroscio's claim that mobility programs would destabilize communities is that poor families are already moving excessively and their neighborhoods are already unstable. Poor housing quality and the decisions of landlords force families to move frequently, unpredictably, and under duress (DeLuca, Rosenblatt, & Wood, 2011). In fact, I have found that more than 80% of the relocations that low-income Black families make in the course of their lives are involuntary (DeLuca et al., 2011). Residential instability is more likely to be caused by the poor quality of existing housing stock, perverse policy incentives, delinquent landlords, and the violence that exists in these neighborhoods, than it is from mobility programs.

MOBILITY PARADIGM AS POLICY: FALSE ALARM

But let us take a step back and examine what federal housing policy actually looks like before we get worried that the MP has taken over. As it stands, HUD's stated mission is to: "Create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality, affordable homes for all." This is *not* a mission *of mobility per se*. Even HUD's strategic plan, which does include a subgoal of enhancing mobility, is mostly focused on helping homeowners, connecting families to resources in their neighborhoods,

and building communities. There is considerable focus on Choice Neighborhoods and Sustainable Community Initiatives, both in-place redevelopment strategies. If we turn specifically to the Housing Choice Voucher program, the likely target for MP influence, we see that the current policy gives little to no incentive for housing authorities to implement mobility. The Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) regulations give public housing authorities points for meeting a range of indicator standards, like maintaining a wait list and lease-up success rates. By my count, out of over 150 possible points a housing authority could earn, a mere 5 points are awarded for providing information about low-poverty areas (like pamphlets) and 5 bonus points could be given for an increase in moves to low-poverty neighborhoods. Compare this to 20 points for maintaining a wait list. There are no additional resources to implement "opportunity moves." As the policy currently stands, it *costs* a public housing authority to help a family "port out" to the suburbs. The PHA only gets paid for lease-ups, the longer search times required to find suburban housing drain their resources, and in the end the suburban PHA gets the fee. Families also have no strong incentive to move far away because they risk losing their vouchers if it takes them too long to find a place (DeLuca et al., 2011). The concern for universal mobility policy at the federal level is a red herring.

WHAT ABOUT SCHOOLS?

The crux of Imbroscio's piece is a call for a switch from the MP to the PP. He argues that many suburbs are fragile and that there are significant resources in the city. This is certainly true. However, there is one significant "locational advantage" that many cities do not have: good public schools. Imbroscio says nothing about this, despite the fact that to provide the kinds of communities families would choose to stay in and benefit from, the schools have to be good. Most of them are not and there is no provision for education in the PP. I suspect that magnet or charter schools could be invoked, but there is no conclusive evidence that these institutions significantly improve academic achievement (and some suggest that they exacerbate segregation). You can create desirable resource-rich neighborhoods in cities all you want, but middle- and working-class families of any race will not stay there if the schools are not of high quality. It is also worth mentioning that housing mobility can be an effective education policy lever to open up school opportunities (DeLuca & Rosenblatt, 2011; Rubinowitz & Rosenbaum, 2000).

THE EVIDENCE PARADIGM

Imbroscio concludes by recommending more investment in placemaking and community development. If done effectively, there could be significant benefits to such interventions, because they give all residents a chance to benefit from added resources and the choice to stay. Plus, unlike mobility programs (which may or may not facilitate relationships), community interventions present an opportunity to infuse resources into the existing networks and endogenous social interactions among family members and neighbors.[3] However, by my reading of the literature, if the history of community development programs (model cities, empowerment zones (EZs), comprehensive community initiatives, etc.) were held to the same empirical scrutiny as mobility programs are, they would look even less effective. Although some initiatives have been linked to improvements in housing prices and have brought new institutional supports to poor communities, none has been shown to improve any indicators of family and child well-being, nor have they reduced poverty levels or substantially stimulated economic development (see Galster, Temkin, Walker, & Sawyer, 2004; Galster, Tatian, & Accordino, 2006; Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, & Dewar, 2010). However, many of these programs were poorly designed or underfunded. Even

more were never properly evaluated and as such, their lessons go unknown. What is clear is that more social scientists need to gather systematic evidence from neighborhood-level initiatives and study them rigorously, much like George Galster and his colleagues have been doing (see Galster et al., 2004, 2006). Let us try for an evidence paradigm for all of our programs and policies.

LIBERALISM REVISITED: TRADEOFFS, FREE CHOICES, AND REAL OPPORTUNITIES

However, we cannot deny that people are often quite attached to their communities, whether these places are deemed unacceptable by policymakers or not. We saw this up close last summer when interviewing young adults who were children when their parents signed up for MTO. A young woman told us about growing up in the Murphy Homes and going to a school where people got shot. Kimberly recalled that the project was "fun . . . like being with family growing up there," even though it was "tough," As a remembrance, she and her mom kept a few bricks from the Murphy Homes when they were demolished; in fact, several of our families had such bricks from other razed projects. After the demolition, Kimberly's mom moved the family out to the county with a voucher. She excitedly told us about what it was like to go to a better school back then and how she is now finishing community college, and preparing for an accounting test. Families should certainly not be forced to move and we should recognize the value of people's communities as they do. However, we must also realize that there are different kinds of families—some willing to make the tradeoff between what they are attached to and what might help, others who would lament the loss of more than just bricks. Either way, they should certainly have real options to stay or go. Preserving these options is what I want to turn to next.

I need to repeat a point that other scholars have made in previous commentaries on Imbroscio's work. Mobility is about the offer to move and the choice to take it. Mobility programs are not forced dispersals like early stages of HOPE VI. Imbroscio's article lumps these programs together and it clouds our ability to understand anything. For some, HOPE VI might look like urban renewal efforts of the past in terms of displacement in the name of revitalization, but Gautreaux, MTO, and Thompson are completely voluntary programs. No one has to move (especially not "excessively"). No one has to sign up. No one has to stay anywhere they are not comfortable. Two out of three of these programs were developed as remedies in desegregation cases, where the courts found housing authorities and the federal government guilty of segregation and the limiting of housing opportunities and free choice. In the face of that kind of a legacy, families did not have real options. Imbroscio (2004) has previously and rightly noted that it is not a choice if a family has to decide between a far-flung suburb and a violent housing project. However, it is equally true that because of the legacy of segregation and discrimination, many families could never really "choose" neighborhoods in the middle class suburbs because they have never seen one and have no way of understanding the potential cost-benefit tradeoffs. Instead, they learn to accept the status quo, even though they know it poses risks, because it is "what they know" and it's possible. The courts and legal scholarship speak about this "tainted choice" as an obstacle to free choice and a compelling reason to intervene (Gerwitz, 1986).

All of this is to say that the main problem I have with Imbroscio's piece is not whether mobility or community development, or some combination of both will eradicate economic hardships for our urban families. It is that by focusing on whether the specifics of MP are the problem, the reader is distracted from thinking about larger issues of freedom and choice, and how we get there. Imbroscio invokes notions of liberalism at the beginning of his paper, and I will end mine that way. Many might argue that a free society is one that abides by the expressed preferences of families and individuals; however, we need to think about how those preferences get formed in the first place. Preferences are based on existing contexts. Choices are not free if individuals

do not have access to information, and as many great supporters of liberalism have emphasized, freedom requires that people should not face unjustifiable constraints on the free development of their preferences and beliefs (e.g., Gerwitz, 1986; Mill, 1953/1861; Sunstein, 1991). I have spent the last 3 years talking to poor families about what they want, instead of assuming I know. When asked where they would like to live if they "could live anywhere," many of these families told me that they would stay in the same neighborhood they have already lived in (supporting Imbroscio's critique that the mobility families were being blocked from, was, in fact, "supposed"). However, others said they wanted to live in a far-flung White suburb or move to states like California or Rhode Island (as one woman told me, "Rhode Island sounds as far away as you can get!"). When I asked whether families had been to the White suburbs or Rhode Island, they almost always said no. How can one argue that they really *prefer* the right to stay when they have never realized any other experiences? It is about more than just the right to stay, and more than the provision of safe communities. It is about crafting policies that present options for families to learn about, access, and experience all kinds of communities and neighbors so that they can truly make free and informed choices.

This works both ways, for poor minority families who might want to leave segregated neighborhoods and for the White families who live in the neighborhoods they might move into. I agree with Imbroscio that the very resources that make neighborhoods desirable might change if more and different people moved in, either because of depleted resources or White flight (cf. Oakes, 2004). Social programs are often met with resistance, as we learned with busing and even MTO. Part of the problem is that Whites often "prefer" not to live next to Blacks or fear the economic and social consequences of such proximity. But how many Whites have ever lived with Black neighbors or attended schools with Black peers? The irony is that the very forces that cause White flight can certainly never be attenuated if people continue to be separated, creating a false dichotomy of "us" and the "other," the space between filled with lack of exposure and experience.[4] We cannot ever know each other if we give up working to provide opportunities to integrate by race and class. I think I can speak for most social scientists when I say that I support any combination of policies that have empirically demonstrated results showing us how to fill that space between and improve the general well being of most (even *some*) of our cities' families and children.

ENDNOTES

1 Many other MP researchers, myself included, have also extensively documented the faulty assumptions of mobility programs, their implementation challenges, and their limitations (alongside any positive findings that were empirically supported). See DeLuca and Rosenblatt (2010); Rosenblatt and DeLuca (2011); DeLuca, Duncan, Mendenhall, and Keels (forthcoming); Clampet-Lundquist and Massey (2008); Clampet-Lundquist, Edin, Kling, and Duncan (2011); and Turney, Clampet-Lundquist, Edin, Kling, and Duncan (2006).

2 Other research we have conducted also documents the benefits families enjoyed as a result of the program, even after they overcame some of the initial challenges of the transition (Rosenbaum, DeLuca, & Tuck, 2005; Rosenbaum, Reynolds, & DeLuca, 2002; Rubinowitz & Rosenbaum, 2000).

3 The extent to which social networks benefit or drain poor families has been the topic of much debate in the social capital literature, (e.g., Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993) and especially around mobility programs (Briggs, 1998). In my fieldwork with hundreds of families, I have seen evidence of mothers wanting to escape the risks of family ties via mobility programs and others fearing such a loss of connections. Stack (1974) talks at length about these tradeoffs, as does the more recent work on MTO (Briggs et al., 2010).

4 See Elizabeth Anderson's (2010) recent book on the *Imperative of Integration* on the costs of segregation, and Wells's book (2009) on the long-term benefits for those who graduated from integrated schools.

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BEYOND THE MOBILITY VERSUS PLACE DEBATE

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David Imbroscio has once again offered provocative ideas for effectively addressing urban poverty in metropolitan areas across the country. But in "Beyond Mobility" he has developed an incomplete and misleading portrait of the "mobility paradigm" and the broader "liberal urban policy" umbrella of which he claims it is a part. This is a picture that minimizes if not dismisses altogether legitimate issues raised by those who have studied the ecology of poverty, racial segregation, and the consequences. And while several of the recommendations that flow from the "placemaking paradigm" offer promise, many of these and related ideas have actually been proposed by those he criticizes for focusing on mobility. But there are serious problems associated with some of the specifics offered here. Perhaps most importantly, "Beyond Mobility" offers a far more one-sided vision than the liberal urban policy advocates he criticizes for being so focused on mobility. It is time to move beyond the mobility versus place debate.

The primary target here is what Imbroscio sees as the almost single-minded focus on mobility in the liberal urban policy paradigm. But there is a straw man dimension to this critique. It is the case that those who support mobility initiatives do believe that the opportunity to relocate is a key part of any set of policies to ameliorate the serious consequences of persistent racial segregation and the increasing concentration of poor families. And there is plenty of social science evidence that these phenomena are critical barriers to economic opportunity and the amelioration of poverty, some of which Imbroscio cites (Anderson, 2010; Carr & Kutty, 2008; Cashin, 2004; Charles, 2006; Massey & Denton, 1993; Meyer, 2000; powell & Reece, 2009). But, strangely, he criticizes those who claim that part of the "remedy for addressing the problem of racial inequality remains residential integration" (p. 5). In critiquing the mobility paradigm, he notes Ingrid Ellen's observation which "suggests racial segregation is in fact linked to greater social and economic isolation and adverse outcomes for blacks" (p. 5). As further evidence for the shortcomings of this perspective he then points to an Urban Institute report that concludes "very few predominantly African American communities fully meet the definition of an opportunity community" (p. 5–6). Are these statements not true? It is striking that it even needs to be noted today that segregation and the concentration of non-white and poor people in restricted neighborhoods might be a serious problem to be addressed, or that efforts to help people move to neighborhoods traditionally inaccessible to them would be a key part of that effort.

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In developing his critique of the mobility paradigm and liberal urban policy Imbroscio notes the many benefits that often result from neighborhood stability and some of the costs to instability and the movement of families from neighborhood to neighborhood. But totally ignored are the costs of "stability" in at least certain neighborhoods. The Chicago public housing complex that Alex Kotlowitz (1991) immortalized is the kind of community that almost any family would want to escape. The desire to participate in Chicago's Gautreaux program where the demand was so great that in the later years of the program new applications were accepted only one day during the year because the staff could not handle the large number of inquiries it would otherwise receive illustrates the desire of many to move out (Polikoff, 2006; Rubinowitz & Rosenbaum, 2000). Clearly, this is not the situation of all or most public housing complexes. But Chicago is not unique. There are places where staying put is simply not a viable option.

Imbroscio also criticizes mobility advocates for pointing to land-use regulations that restrict what he claims they view as the "natural" relocation to the suburbs. He argues, "Once again, there is an underlying but questionable assumption that a great deal of desired (and even *natural*) mobility that would otherwise occur is being arbitrarily blocked, in this case by racially discriminatory practices" (p. 6). There may or may not be a natural rate of movement to the suburbs, but there certainly is nothing natural about the widely varying rates at which whites and non-whites have moved to the suburbs. Again, is he suggesting that this is not true, that movement to the suburbs has not been blocked primarily by discriminatory practices? The point is not that everyone should prefer to live in the suburbs, the city or in any other particular location but rather (and again it is striking to have to point this out today) the point is that anything but natural forces have shaped the demography of urban America and these forces have significantly shaped the opportunities available to diverse populations.

Moving to Opportunity (MTO) and other voluntary mobility initiatives have yielded disappointing results in some cases. In light of these results (which are not as negative as he implies; see DeLuca & Rosenbaum, 2010) Imbroscio ridicules mobility proponents for calling for even more mobility (p. 4). But why should it be so strange to suggest that if neighborhood matters, moves to a nearby and similar neighborhood would not have the impact of a move to another more dissimilar neighborhood that might be farther away?

The fundamental issue, however, is not mobility per se but one of choice and the pros and cons associated with the options available to various groups. Overall patterns of mobility, the frequency and distance of moves, the general consequences of stability, and related issues all circumvent the meaning of place particularly as it differs for all too many whites and non-whites as well as poor and non-poor families. Who has the opportunity to stay put in a stable neighborhood or to move to another if they so desire is what matters. These are all questions that Imbroscio skirts or ignores entirely in his commentary on mobility.

An additional problem related to choice is the conflation of two voluntary programs—Gautreaux and MTO—with a program in which some families were simply displaced, HOPE VI. Mandatory relocation under the latter has often taken a form reminiscent of long discredited urban renewal programs of the 1950s and 1960s. But this does not justify condemnation of all or even most mobility programs. In an ideal world, of course, all families would have the right to stay put in neighborhoods with good schools, safe streets, abundant employment opportunities, a range of recreational facilities and other amenities. It is unfortunate, for example, that so many Gautreaux families had to choose between a ghetto and a distant suburb. But in the world we live in today mobility provides one option that can enable some of those who choose to do so to fairly quickly find a community that is more desirable than the one in which they currently reside, in some cases considerably better.

Throughout this discussion Imbroscio overstates the extent to which the so-called mobility paradigm proponents focus on mobility and ignores the other strategies they have long endorsed

to directly confront individual, institutional, and structural causes of poverty and racial inequality. Many of these same scholars, activists, and elected officials have been the leading proponents for more effective enforcement of civil rights laws and not just in housing but in related areas including employment, education, public accommodations, criminal justice, and elsewhere. They have nurtured and developed a community reinvestment movement precisely for the purposes of improving all neighborhoods including the traditionally most distressed areas. They may well have placed more emphasis on mobility than Imbroscio would choose, but they are hardly as focused on this one strategy as he suggests. Myron Orfield (2002) and David Rusk (1999) may be best known for their calls for a regional agenda aimed at ameliorating concentrated poverty and racial segregation, but these former elected officials and policy scholars have been among the strongest advocates of fair housing law enforcement and related strategies to directly reduce poverty and racial inequality and build stronger neighborhoods within the nation's cities and throughout metropolitan areas.

The "placemaking paradigm" offered by Imbroscio, however, is a critical, if not the leading principle that should guide anti-poverty and urban redevelopment initiatives. Mobility alone will not address the adverse consequences of uneven development that has characterized urban and metropolitan development for decades, if not generations. But the compilation of specific placemaking proposals feels more like a laundry list of eclectic experiments than a thought-out strategy. And some of the specifics are problematic.

For example, Imbroscio looks favorably on the proposals of Michael Porter. But Porter's prescriptions are basically neoliberal calls for a "realistic economic strategy focused on for-profit business and job development" (Porter, 1997, p. 11). Porter points to inner cities and particularly inner city work forces as potentially advantageous for business if only the right public policies were implemented. But as Merrill Goozner observed, "His assertions about the attractiveness of the inner-city workforce contradicts everything business leaders have said in recent years about what they look for in new employees" (Goozner, 1998, p. 59). And while Porter rejects tax incentives and related subsidies for private businesses, he does argue "that mainstream financial institutions must be engaged through direct incentives" (Porter, 1997, p. 21). Have we not seen enough privileged treatment of banks in recent years and the damage that has resulted in skyrocketing foreclosures, rising unemployment, and economic crises generally? (Engel & McCoy, 2011; Harvey, 2010; Immergluck, 2009; Stiglitz, 2010).

More conceptually confusing is the assumption that placemaking can resolve the positional goods issue that he raises. He argues that the mobility paradigm creates the assumption that there is a scarcity of goods defined not by the shortage of physically adequate spaces but by the limited number of relatively good places. As he notes, positional goods are available only to some fraction of a society's population because, in part, they are scarce in some absolute or socially imposed sense. That is, such goods are attractive largely because of their value relative to others. But rather than providing a "way out of this positional goods dilemma" (p. 11), placemaking compounds it. As more good places are developed, some will still be seen as relatively more attractive than others. The positional nature of these goods will persist. This is not an argument for not improving places, but simply to note that if relative status is an issue, placemaking will not resolve it.

Of course placemaking and mobility are not mutually exclusive options in efforts to create more integrated and equitable communities. In fact they are mutually reinforcing. As Elizabeth Anderson (2010) has persuasively argued, absent meaningful integration we will not develop the competence to create effective democratic communities in our increasingly multicultural world. After endorsing mobility initiatives such as Gautreaux and MTO along with other integration policies she concludes, "Functioning in integrated, diverse groups enhances individuals'

democratic competencies, especially with respect to exercising the primary demand of democratic institutions, to treat all citizens as equals" (Anderson, 2010, p. 131).

Imbroscio is engaging in and has become a partisan to a battle on the left. While offering what amounts to basically a few throwaway lines about the reality of racial and economic segregation and the role of mobility, this is a one-sided argument which distracts from the range of policy tools that are essential to make any meaningful progress toward the elimination of urban poverty and racial inequality. Ironically, those he criticizes for advocating mobility programs in light of the increasing concentration of poverty and persistent racial segregation that characterize the nation's metropolitan areas are also among the most ardent progressive proponents for the creation of better places. Scholarly works like *Place Matters*, policy reports of organizations like Policylink, and the advocacy work of fair housing and fair lending groups like the National Community Reinvestment Coalition call for aggressive steps to bring more resources to troubled neighborhoods (that is placemaking), help vulnerable citizens access neighborhoods to which they have long been denied (mobility), and pursue equitable development and economic justice generally. Polarizing discussions that emphasize only the merits of placemaking while virtually dismissing efforts to dismantle longstanding traditions of segregation are not all that helpful. It is time for progressives to move beyond the mobility versus place debate.

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THE END OF (URBAN) LIBERALISM

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REJOINDER TO PROFESSOR SQUIRES

Liberal urban policy has, in a word, failed. It has proved neither politically popular nor programmatically effective. And, upon careful analysis, it turns out to not even be normatively desirable. As I discussed in my original article (Imbroscio, this issue), the political, programmatic, and normative failures of liberal urban policy stem in large part from the mobility paradigm that lies at its heart.

More than a half-century along this path has engendered countless disappointments, continual frustration, and crippling popular discontent, as well as the needless perpetuation of urban miseries of various sorts—chronic economic and social deprivation and egregious levels of racial inequality chief among them. Nevertheless, the assumptions, tenets, and prescriptions of liberal urban policy continue to be clung to by a plethora of academics, researchers, and policy entrepreneurs. As I have discussed in previous work (see Imbroscio, 2006, 2008a), this curious phenomenon is best explained by ideology rather than any appeal to empirical evidence or objective analysis. Understood from a sociology of knowledge perspective, much of the liberal ideological bias of urban policy discourse in the academy and related institutions can be traced to the dominance of values embraced by those who came of age during the heyday of liberalism in the "1960s" (1963–1972). This is an era now more than four decades behind us.

I greatly appreciate Professor Squires's spirited defense of, and advocacy for, liberal urban policy, a cause to which he has dedicated his long and productive career. Over the years I have found his work to be both insightful and edifying, while the indefatigable passion for social justice it radiates has been, and continues to be, an inspiration.

Nevertheless, his apologia for the long-standing traditional liberal approach is problematic in various ways. As a result, I strongly believe it is time, at last, to move on—by rejecting liberalism as the foundation for urban policy. The situation we face is simply too dire to continue along this misguided path. New, fresh thinking and action is required—thinking and action that moves beyond ideological blinders and liberal shibboleths toward a more critical project that is as catholic in orientating philosophy as it is innovative in program.

This larger project[1] involves two key undertakings: critique and (re)construction. It is first necessary to develop a critique of the dominant liberal perspective and, based on this critique, engage in the constructive enterprise of redesigning institutional arrangements and specific policy initiatives. My original article involved mostly the former, with some quick and suggestive notes on the latter.[2] Its primary aim was to elucidate how liberal urban policy relies heavily on

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moving people through metropolitan space as a means of addressing social problems, something itself rooted in the deep pro-mobility inclination of all liberal thought (whether in the form of neoliberalism or its more left-leaning version). My article further showed that the prescriptions of this agenda, if followed, would generate a level of residential instability that would tend to corrode democracy, weaken community, fetter autonomy, and exacerbate the plight of already vulnerable children and families. It also demonstrated how liberal urban policy with its mobility paradigm cannot possibly work, even on its own terms, except on a marginal scale because there simply are not enough appropriate places to which people can move. Therefore, I argued, the principal focus needs to be on creating more desirable places (placemaking) rather than on residential mobility, and this likely requires the development of an alterative, non-liberal foundation for urban policy (such as critical or communitarian thought).

In his reply to my article, Professor Squires defends the mobility paradigm in the usual ways (also see Briggs, 2008; Goering & Feins, 2008). As such, he trots out the extreme example of some Chicago public housing projects and decontextualizes the conditions under which residential decisions are made (thus drawing unwarranted distinctions between voluntary and involuntary choices). These are arguments to which I have responded before (see Imbroscio, 2008a, 2008b) and will again do so in my rebuttal to Professor DeLuca below.

Yet Professor Squires's main concern seems to be not with making the case for the prescriptions of the mobility paradigm *per se*. Rather, he wants to advance a broader defense of liberal urban policy on the grounds that some of its champions advocate selected placemaking initiatives as supplements to the mobility agenda.

My response to this observation is to say that it is no doubt true, something I clearly acknowledged. As I wrote, liberal urban policy "to be sure, does not wholly neglect placemaking." But, as I added: "its philosophical and programmatic impulses give clear priority to enhanced individual mobility." The simple fact, as I summarily expressed at a key crescendo in my original article, is that

> from the vantage point of this perspective, relatively few people in a given metropolitan area actually live in the place *where they are supposed to*. The urban poor do not live in "opportunity areas," the middle (and upper middle) classes do not live in inner cities (or at least not in the right, non-gentrified, parts of inner cities), the less affluent segments of the working classes do not live in exclusive suburbs, and – in the most extreme manifestation – many whites and nearly all blacks do not live in racially integrated neighborhoods.

Hence, the prescriptions of liberal urban policy demand, as I pointed out, that "you [or many people, at least] gotta move."

To his credit, and in contrast to many of his fellow liberal urban policy analysts, Professor Squires *himself* understands the value of, and crucial need for, placemaking. But, in the end, his preferred policy agenda, if implemented, would still require lots and lots of people to be shuffled around metropolitan space.

Even more troubling is that this agenda amounts to a seemingly unreflective endorsement of virtually anything that correctly fits with the political ideology of mid-twentieth century Great Society/Warren Court liberalism (Dreier, Mollenkopf, & Swanstrom, 2004 take a similar position). For Professor Squires, "progressive" urban policy analysts and organizations favor all things conventionally left-liberal: "fair housing law enforcement," "a regional agenda," "community reinvestment," "fair lending," "more effective enforcement of civil rights laws," "mobility initiatives like Gautreaux and MTO," "aggressive steps to bring more resources to troubled neighborhoods," "equitable development," "help [for] vulnerable citizens [to] access neighborhoods to which they have been denied," and "economic justice generally." While there is much to like

in this left-liberal agenda—who after all can be against economic justice—this approach not only clearly reveals the aforementioned liberal ideological biases but also a great deal of intellectual and analytic flaccidity as well. Rather than beginning with a dominant ideology and deriving a set of policy prescriptions from it, urban policy must be developed from a critical perspective that questions orthodoxies and seeks the most appropriate means to address urban problems irrespective of ideological correctness (see, for example, Davies and Imbroscio, 2010).

A related problem is Professor Squires's assertion that all of the items of his preferred policy agenda can be pursued as a package. Placemaking and mobility, he exhorts, "are not mutually exclusive options" and "in fact they mutually reinforcing." As evidence for this claim, he offers a Kumbaya-sounding statement from the liberal philosopher Elizabeth Anderson[3] about the benefits of diversity for democratic competencies "in our increasingly multicultural world." It turns out, however, that this mutuality is highly dubious. More rigorous analysis demonstrates the logical and practical contradictions between the mobility and placemaking paradigms. The policy prescriptions of the mobility paradigm not only waste valuable resources and, given their widespread unpopularity among the broader populace, an enormous amount of political capital as well. They also tend to undermine any serious efforts at placemaking: Dispersal programs exacerbate the struggles of marginal communities, HOPE VI–like efforts to create mixed-income neighborhoods spawn gentrification and displacement, fair housing dictates undercut efforts to build affordable (and mass transit-friendly) housing in minority neighborhoods,[4] regional governance schemes dilute minority political power, and so on. Hence Professor Squires's concluding plea "for progressives to move beyond the mobility versus place debate" not only reveals a soft and naive understanding of the brutal class and race dynamics in contemporary urban America.[5] Worse, it is largely inimical to the very goals progressives should be fighting for.

We have to get serious about facing up to reality and the deep challenges confronting us. We also must understand that the old school, effete liberalism of the 1960s provides an inadequate foundation from which to proceed. What is needed, instead, is what political economist Gar Alperovitz (2005, pp. 259 and 226) has called a "tough-minded populism," updated for "the 21st century." Professor Squires' impressive body of work has, intriguingly, shown flashes of this populism. A prime example is his recent piece in the *Huffington Post*, where he questions the standard liberal solution to the financial crisis (stronger regulation), while suggesting the need to consider "alternative structural approaches to prosperity" with "lessons" being drawn from the state-owned Bank of North Dakota (Squires, 2011, p. 1; also see Squires, 1994; on the Bank of North Dakota, see Alperovitz, 2005; Williamson, Imbroscio, & Alperovitz, 2002). But Professor Squires's more general perspective, as evinced in his reply to my article, remains mired in the politically debilitating, normatively problematic, and programmatically ineffectual framework of liberalism.

Finally, as I have alluded to above, the task ahead also inescapably demands a move away from ideological correctness and rigidity. As the venerable progressive-populist journalist William Greider (2011, p. 1) has recently written, we (the progressive-populist left) need to "start listening and learning" from "ordinary Americans, including people who are not obvious allies." Progressive-populists "should look for viable connections with those who are alienated and unorganized, maybe even ideologically hostile." And, as he astutely concludes:

> the Tea Party crowd [early on, at least] got one big thing right: the political divide is not Republicans against Democrats but governing elites against the people. A similar division exists within business and banking, where the real hostages are the smaller, community-scale firms imperiled by the big boys getting the gravy from Washington. We have more in common with small-business owners and Tea Party insurgents than the top-down commentary [and, I would add, the liberal academy] suggests.

REJOINDER TO PROFESSOR DELUCA

I also greatly appreciate Professor DeLuca's response to my article. It is clear she is a dedicated and meticulous researcher who cares passionately about the urban poor. That she has engaged my work so carefully and expansively is a true privilege.

While Professor DeLuca makes many of the same points as Professor Squires, her general perspective is different. Professor Squires challenges my article largely from the political stance of an advocate for liberal urban policy and a defender of its devotees. Professor DeLuca writes her response from the standpoint of a positivist social scientist immersed in data collection and empiricism. As such, she at times confounds my theoretic critique (of a broad paradigm of policy responses advocated for decades by liberals) with what one government agency like HUD happens to be doing at a given time. Despite this and similar confusions, Professor DeLuca does nonetheless raise some interesting broader points I shall attempt to address below.

Much of her critique flows from her defense of one aspect of the mobility paradigm—the dispersal programs (like Gautreaux and MTO) she has studied so assiduously over the last decade. But despite the interpretation offered by Professor DeLuca to mount this defense, the only valid way to summarize the research on these programs is to conclude that MTO failed (something no one disputes) and the results from Gautreaux were inconclusive (notwithstanding the exaggerated claims of its vast cheering section among liberal urban policy analysts).

The most devastating assessment of the latter program comes from within the ranks of liberal urban policy analysis itself. Although I have highlighted this assessment before, given Professor DeLuca's tenacious defense of the Gautreaux results as robust and decidedly consequential, it bears repeating. By the account of Susan Popkin and colleagues (e.g., Popkin, Buron, Levy, & Cunningham, 2000, pp. 929–930) at the Urban Institute:

> Gautreaux participants were self-selected, heavily screened, and "many participants were not [even] current public housing residents" but instead were on the waiting list or were merely "related to people who had lived in public housing during the . . . [relevant] period." Moreover, 80 percent of families coming through the program did not even relocate, meaning that those who did "were likely the most determined and motivated." And the research design itself had limitations as well. It was not a random experiment and people were not tracked from pre- to postmove but surveyed postmove only. Given this retrospective research design and the problems involved with locating past Gautreaux families, "only a handful of participants who had either moved back to the city or lost their Section 8 assistance were included in these samples," making it probable that "many unsuccessful movers were excluded." The exclusion of these unsuccessful movers thus likely inflated the observed positive effects of the program . . . (Imbroscio, 2008a, p. 120).

What is more interesting than continuing to belabor the empirics is to probe into *why* the true record of dispersal is so hard to accept for (ostensibly) objective, value-neutral social scientists. That is, why do they remain wrapped in a cocoon of such heavy denial, where the failure of MTO gets explained away while the Gautreaux results are treated as something they are clearly not? The answer I believe lies in the liberal value biases of many housing researchers themselves, who so much want dispersal to work because it comports so closely with their normative image of the Good Society. Put more precisely, what they desperately want to believe is this: *Poor people of color, with the aid of an activist/positive state, can achieve social mobility in contemporary America (the so-called American Dream), by escaping from "bad" (urban) environments to "good" (suburban) ones.*

There are copious normative values packed into this single proposition. These include but are not limited to: (1) the privileging of individuals over collectivities, (2) a view of the state as

benign, (3) the belief that social mobility is key to human flourishing, (4) the presumed superiority of exit over voice as a response to decline, and so on.[6] These may or may not be desirable values (something best determined by political philosophy), but they are, indeed, *values*.

This proposition is highly value-laden in a more general way as well. It strongly reflects what critic Daniel Lazare (2005, p. 2) refers to as a "narrow middle class moralism" that "avoids the sort of bold, sweeping critique that might call into question the terms of its own [middle-class] success." Instead of "attacking society as a whole" (as, for example, the tough-minded populism I invoke above is inclined to do), this perspective "limits itself to specific wrongs or grievances." So, when the liberal legal and policy scholar Owen Fiss (2003, p. 3) of Yale pleads for a nationwide, Gautreaux-like dispersal program, it is because we must do something (suburban dispersal) for those unfortunate ones among us who have somehow—to quote the title of his manifesto— been "left behind" in American society. Structural racism, the irrationalities and inequities of suburban sprawl, the attenuation of democracy in the face of corporate power, and the enormous concentration of wealth in the hands of a few remain unchallenged in this normative world view.

This said, it is true, as Professor DeLuca claims, that housing researchers like herself may not have "an ulterior motive for the work [they] do" (though significant grant funding from corporate-liberal foundations and government agencies may be at stake). But their work is nonetheless infused with value biases that shape both the design of studies and interpretation of results. By mistaking what is indeed their own ideology for reality (or fact), these biases remain largely unrecognized by liberal researchers like Professor DeLuca who continue to see themselves as purely value-neutral social scientists seeking only Truth.

When in a similar vein Professor DeLuca declares "we housing scholars are social scientists, not evangelists," I immediately thought of the writings of her mentor, James Rosenbaum (e.g., 2003, p. 80). Besotted by Gautreaux, he proclaims: "This program had *amazing* results. Housing policy is usually narrowly viewed as providing shelter, but housing policy can *radically* improve people's lives" (emphases added). The infamous Katrina "move to opportunity" petition (Briggs 2005) that I have written about before (Imbroscio, 2008a) also came to mind. In it, many of these non-evangelizing social scientists touted "careful studies" with "significant positive effects" showing the "sizable" benefits of dispersal policies in order to advocate passionately (and in line with neoconservative pundit David Brooks) that policymakers should seize the "historic opportunity" provided by the storm to disperse the urban poor of New Orleans (also see Reed & Steinberg, 2006). Finally, as Professor DeLuca points out, it is indeed true that Briggs et al. (2010) "talk as much [in their recent book-length assessment of MTO] about the challenges and pitfalls of mobility programs as they do about any of their benefits." Yet, as I pointed out in my original article, their *response* to these challenges and pitfalls is to imply that what is therefore needed are dispersal programs that require *even more mobility*.

Professor DeLuca further advocates we adopt an "evidence paradigm" and sees herself as speaking "for most social scientists" when she recommends the pursuit of policies "that have empirically demonstrated results." This principle sounds prudent on first glance, yet to anyone who has thought seriously about the philosophy of social science it, in actuality, betrays an unwarranted faith in the independent efficacy of positivist research. The epistemology of the social world is simply not so simple.

As a case study take, again, the research on dispersal. What would her suggested "evidence paradigm" prescribe we do? The short answer is that, after decades and scores of studies, we still really don't have much of a clue. Most liberal urban policy analysts look at the empirical results and enthusiastically advocate an expansion of dispersal efforts; other more critical scholars examine the same results, especially the failure of MTO, and see the need to pursue alternative strategies. The same can be said for HOPE VI. While a gaggle of liberal social scientists from the Urban Institute/Brookings axis concluded "the *evidence* strongly supports [the program's]

continuation" (Popkin et al., 2004, p. 5, emphasis added; also see Cisneros and Engdahl, 2009), many other social scientists have reached vastly different conclusions from this same evidence. This is not to say a reliance on empirical research is not crucial in policy formation—it is. Rather, the point is that, in many cases of social policy, relying merely on "the evidence" does not get us very far.

To return to Professor DeLuca's defense of the record of dispersal, I found it curious that she accuses me of cherry picking the relevant research findings. If that is indeed the case, I would ask her to point to the dispersal studies I have overlooked. In several hostile peer reviews of my journal submissions (some six to eight single-spaced pages long!), I have yet to be presented with one study that contradicts the basic conclusions about Gautreaux/MTO I draw above.[7] Moreover, it is one thing to accuse *me* of cherry picking. As an urban theorist, I cannot claim to be aware of the totality of germane empirical research on the subject. It is quite another to implicate careful researchers like Ed Goetz and Karen Chapple (see Goetz & Chapple, 2010), as Professor DeLuca does in her reply. Finally, Professor DeLuca's defense of Gautreaux using a "plausibility test" also seems curious. Is it not the case that tens of thousands of similarly situated African American families have suburbanized, to use her words, "on their own" since the 1970s and, in many cases, have achieved gains mirroring those of Gautreaux participants?

Let us accept for a moment Professor DeLuca's central claim that Gautreaux did what it was supposed to—namely, it moved a few thousand poor African American families to affluent white suburbs and, as a result, many (or their children) achieved a better life. The problem is that this anti-poverty strategy can only work on a marginal scale. As I pointed out in my original article, there are simply not enough "opportunity areas" for substantial numbers of people to go to without triggering the crowding and flight dynamics identified by Hirsch (1976). Professor DeLuca's own interpretation of the dispersal record (see DeLuca & Rosenbaum, 2010) highlights that it is not enough to put people in less affluent suburbs, as MTO largely did (and failed). They must instead go to (what I called) "good places." Yet such places are increasingly scarce and, as I noted, "already sites of intense bidding wars to enter." Therefore, more of them need to be created, and the placemaking paradigm is designed to do just that.

Professor DeLuca's critique also engages the contested issue of what constitutes a free (residential) choice. We both agree that the urban poor should have, as she writes, "real options to stay or go" (see Imbroscio, 2004). But like Professor Squires in his reply (as well as many other liberal urban policy analysts; see Imbroscio, 2008a), she decontextualizes the conditions under which choice is made and hence misunderstands the nature of autonomy. In her liberal ontology, programs like Gautreaux and MTO are "completely voluntary programs. No one has to move . . . ." Yet, how can this possibly be reconciled with the horrendous conditions of Chicago public housing that, as Professor Squires notes, was "immortalized" by Alex Kotlowitz's *There are No Children Here*? Or, likewise, how can it similarly be reconciled with Professor DeLuca's own observation that a key advantage of Gautreaux was that young men who moved to suburbs were "less likely to be murdered"? It is simply logically impossible for *both* of these things to be true (complete voluntarism and horrendous conditions of choice). Professor DeLuca quotes the liberal legal philosopher Cass Sunstein arguing, correctly, that for choices to be free, no "illegitimate or excessive constraint on the process of preference formation" can occur. Yet, if the likelihood of being murdered is not such a constraint, I cannot imagine what might be!

Professor DeLuca also correctly sees the need for choices to be made—put again in Sunstein's words—"with a full and vivid awareness of available opportunities, with reference to all relevant information . . . ." Once again, no one can deny that truly free choice requires such awareness and reference. Yet pro-mobility bias rears its head in the way this requirement is applied. As I have pointed out before (Imbroscio, 2008a, p. 119), liberal urban policy analysts see the need for more

complete information to be supplied to housing voucher recipients via "mobility education" only when potential relocatees resist decamping to far-flung suburbs.

There is another, even larger, problem with how this requirement is applied. Recall that, as Professor DeLuca describes, her interviews with poor black families reveal that many want to "stay in the same neighborhood they had already lived in." But rather than take this at face value, she questions whether it is a truly informed choice: How, she asks, "can one argue that they really *prefer* the right to stay when they have never realized any other experiences?" If this is correct, however, cannot we say the same of suburban whites? That is, to quote Professor DeLuca, "how can one argue that they [in this case, whites] really *prefer* the right to stay [in overwhelmingly white suburbs] when they have never realized any other experiences?" Why don't liberal housing researchers recommend that white suburbanites receive "mobility education" to help them—again to quote Professor DeLuca—"learn about, access and experience all kinds of communities [such as majority black neighborhoods in cities] . . . so that they [suburban whites] can truly make free and informed choices?" Is to not do so racist? (cf. Smith, 2010).

Once again, I am sincerely grateful for the criticism of my work Professors Squires and DeLuca have so generously offered. Yet, after reading and reflecting upon their rebuttals—and perhaps needless to say—I stand more firmly than ever behind my original article and the related research I have published on this topic over the years.

ENDNOTES

1 On which I am currently engaged, under the tentative title "The Limits of Liberal Urban Policy: A New Agenda for America's Cities."

2 But see Williamson, Imbroscio, and Alperovitz (2002), Alperovitz (2005), and Imbroscio (2010) for more developed efforts at appropriate policy and institutional redesign.

3 Both Professors Squires and DeLuca highlight Anderson's (2010) recent book on integration to support their arguments. It is worth noting, however, that rather than being "persuasively argued" as Professor Squires claims, this book instead merely provides a highly polemical restatement of old 1960s style liberal orthodoxy adorned with conventional (and highly contested) liberal philosophical tenets and assumptions. For a more compelling philosophic statement on this issue, see Young (2000).

4 I thank an astute anonymous reviewer of my original article for this insight.

5 See Reed and Steinberg (2006) for a more realistic understanding of these dynamics as they relate to dispersal.

6 In addition, there are many contested empirical assertions embedded in this proposition as well. Most notable among them are claims regarding the power of agency (versus structure or culture) as a determining social force.

7 Also see the responses to my work by Briggs (2008) and Goering and Feins (2008).

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