

1) Clampet-Lundquist and Massey

- a) Summary: study MTO housing voucher experiment; 4600 families; 4-7 years in program
 - i) MTO housing mobility studies heretofore have not provided strong evidence that moving to a better neighborhood enhances economic self-sufficiency among adults.
 - ii) C-L/M analyzes study's design and implementation, focusing on the selection issues.
 - iii) They show that selectivity matters by:
 - (1) determining who complied with the program's requirements
 - (2) affecting who entered integrated versus segregated neighborhoods
 - (3) influencing who left neighborhoods after initial relocation (duration of exposure)
 - iv) C-L/M suggests using cumulative time spent in different neighborhood environments as an alternative research design. They find evidence that improving the quality of residential neighborhood does, in fact, lead to improvement in adult self-sufficiency as measured by employment, earnings, and rates of TANF and food stamps usage.
- b) Motivation for their argument
 - i) Historically, sociology has emphasized the ecological context of social behavior,
 - ii) But attention to spatial issues waned in the 1970s and 1980s; the status- attainment model (Wisconsin) came to dominate stratification research
 - iii) This model offered a useful corrective for human capital theory's narrow emphasis on differential rewards to skills within competitive markets, showing that much inequality was inherited across the generations through non-market, family-based mechanisms
 - iv) However this model neglects the fact that human behavior necessarily occurs within (or must transcend) physical space.
 - v) This changed with William Julius Wilson's *The Truly Disadvantaged*, emphasizing a remarkable increase of spatially concentrated poverty amongst blacks in large cities in 1980s America
 - vi) Wilson argued that "neighborhood effects" were crucial to accounting for the cycle of black poverty, and in doing so he revolutionized stratification research, hearkening back to the Chicago school's original focus on social ecology.
 - vii) However, work based on survey data subject to a serious methodological weakness: it is nearly impossible to eliminate selectivity as a competing explanation for apparent neighborhood effects: the question then became, Do poor places make poor people, or do poor places attract poor people?
 - viii) Absent random assignment to neighborhoods, it is difficult to know whether living in a disadvantaged neighborhood lowers one's life chances in a *causal* way, or whether the correlation between concentrated poverty and bad individual outcomes is due to patterns of in- and out-migration, or other class-selective processes.
 - ix) Early work in this vein (*Gautreaux* study), though not definitive, showed modest gains for inner-city children and adults from moving into predominantly white suburbs.
 - x) Thus the importance of correctly interpreting the data produced by MTO experiments, since not finding strong experimental effect on adult outcomes raises doubts about a presumed causal relationship between concentrated poverty and individual SES.
- c) Content of C-L/M's argument
 - i) MTO was a 'weak treatment' (in contrast to the earlier *Gautreaux* experiment)
 - (1) For instance, neighborhood poverty rates = 30% vs. 39% (treatment vs. controls)
 - (2) Neighborhood average % minorities = 83% vs. 88% (treatment vs. controls)
 - (3) Amongst subjects in control group only 46% actually used the housing vouchers.
 - ii) Intent-to-treat (ITT) vs. treatment-on-the-treated (TOT); differ if take-up-rate < 100%. (E.g., controls who used voucher averaged 18% lower poverty neighborhoods (TOT) compared with only a 9% lower average poverty rate (ITT) for all controls.)
 - iii) "Relative to areas inhabited by middle class whites, Asians, or Latinos, those inhabited by the black middle class exhibit lower property values, higher crime rates, lower employment rates, higher levels of unwed childbearing, poorer schools, lower educational achievement, and higher rates of welfare dependency. (So) even though

middle-class black areas may not themselves display concentrated poverty, because of racial segregation they tend to be located adjacent to or very near areas of concentrated deprivation and often share common service catchment areas.”

- iv) Unlike Gautreaux, which required that most recipients of housing vouchers move to *low-minority neighborhoods* (under 30% black), MTO investigators only required households to relocate to *low-poverty neighborhoods*.
 - v) MTO neighborhoods only slightly poorer than *Gautreaux* neighborhoods initially; but poverty rates rose 5 percentage points or more 45% of MTO tracts, 1990 - 2000.
 - vi) “Previous analyses of MTO highly successful measuring effects of offering housing voucher to public housing residents, but less successful capturing the effect of living in advantaged rather than disadvantaged neighborhood.” **This is C-L/M’s key point.**
 - vii) C-L/M innovation: to introduce duration measures (how long in better neighborhood). They find significant positive effects (though not necessarily causal ones) of the time spent in non-poor neighborhoods on adult economic sufficiency outcomes.
- 2) Ludwig, Kling, Katz, Leibman, Duncan and Kessler.
- a) Summary (Basically, their article is a point-by-point rebuttal of C-L/M):
 - i) MTO estimates show no significant impacts of move to lower-poverty neighborhoods on adult economic self-sufficiency 4-7 years after random assignment.
 - ii) The authors disagree with Clampet-Lundquist and Massey about MTO being a weak intervention. Experiment is informative about (the absence of) neighborhood effects.
 - iii) MTO produced large changes in neighborhood environments
 - (1) Thus, MTO did improve adult mental health and lower adolescent violence
 - (2) It also improved many outcomes for young females.
 - iv) Clampet-Lundquist and Massey’s claim that MTO experimental estimates plagued by “selection bias” is erroneous.
 - v) Their new non-experimental estimates are uninformative about neighborhood effects, as they add back selection problems MTO’s experimental design tried to overcome.
 - b) Content of their argument
 - i) C-L/M analysis confounds *cohort* and *time* effects with *neighborhood* effects.
 - ii) Key issue: logic of ITT estimates; they ARE informative about *causal* effects.
 - iii) If program voluntary ITT effects policy relevant: non-compliance a fact of life
 - iv) Two assumptions needed for ITT estimates to identify causal program effects:
 - (1) Controls not affected by the sheer fact of not being chosen for treatment
 - (2) Treated non-compliers not affected by the sheer fact of non-compliance
 - (3) These assumptions imply average outcomes of non-compliers in treatment group and of potential non-compliers in control group are the same.
 - (4) Thus, the TOT effect can be calculated under these assumptions by simply rescaling the ITT estimate by program compliance rates (since program’s effect on non-compliers is zero by assumption.)
 - v) Perhaps involuntary mobility programs requiring Chicago public housing families all to move to suburbs like Wilmette, Illinois (89.7% white, 2.3% poor in the 2000 census), and stay to there forever might have had larger impacts than those observed in the MTO program. But perhaps not. There could be costs associated with moving away from origin neighborhoods, such as lost social networks, difficulty integrating into new community, etc., which would reduce gains relative to MTO-type moves.
 - vi) Internal vs. external validity, partial compliance and policy’s target population
 - (1) Can’t extrapolate beyond the public housing residents applying to MTO
 - (2) Period effects may matter. 1990s: low unemployment and welfare reform.

3) Sampson

a) Summary

- i) The MTO housing experiment is an important intervention not just in the lives of the poor, but in social science theories of neighborhood effects.
- ii) The author assesses the debate between Clampet-Lundquist and Massey and Ludwig et al. by clarifying a number of analytically distinction questions posed by neighborhood-level theories.
- iii) The author re-conceptualizes selection bias as a fundamental social process worthy of study in its own right rather than a statistical nuisance.
- iv) He also reconsiders the scientific method of experimentation, and hence causality, in the social world of the city.
- v) Finally, the author also analyzes MTO and independent survey data from Chicago to examine trajectories of residential attainment. Though MTO provides crucial leverage for estimating neighborhood effects on individuals, as proponents rightly claim, this study demonstrates the implications imposed by a stratified urban structure and how MTO simultaneously provides a new window on the social reproduction of concentrated inequality.

b) Content of his argument

- i) Distinguish neighborhood effects on individual outcomes from neighborhood level social process (norm formation, peer groups, social control mechanisms)
- ii) Individual outcomes orientation dominant nowadays, favoring experimental research designs at expense of observational (including ethnographic) studies.
- iii) (Consider the analogy with studying effects of change in natural environment, where can look either at impact on individual species, or at ecological effects.)
- iv) Thus Sampson's question: Is MTO really a test of Wilson (1987) hypotheses?
- v) Headline: "Improved Neighborhoods Don't Raise Academic Achievement," from a 2006 National Bureau of Economic Research report. That may well be true, Sampson says, but wonders how such a strong inference could possibly be drawn from a study that randomly assigned housing vouchers to individual families rather than improving neighborhoods!
- vi) Despite MTO's strengths as a social experimental, disagreement reigns over how to analyze and generalize from a study of individual outcomes among the extreme poor, to all of neighborhood-level theory. (This Sampson's key point)
- vii) What social theory about neighborhoods does MTO test?
- viii) Even more fundamentally, precisely what *IS* a 'neighborhood effect'?
- ix) Sampson focuses on two issues:
 - (1) the strength of MTO treatment (thinks weak); and,
 - (2) the proper analytical approach to neighborhood selection
- x) Sampson uses independent data (from Chicago) to assess the issues.
- xi) He also discusses in a critical manner differing disciplinary perspectives on "the nature of causality in a socially segregated and stratified world."