Upward Mobility and Pathways to the Middle Class
Combining Big Data with Local Insights
David A. Williams
The Fading American Dream

Percent of Children Earning More than Their Parents, by Year of Birth

Source: Chetty, Grusky, Hell, Hendren, Manduca, Narang (Science 2017)
Upward Mobility vs. Job Growth in the 30 Largest Metro Areas

Average Income at Age 35 of Children who Grew up in Low-Income Families

Job Growth Rate (%) from 1990-2010

High mobility, low growth

Low mobility, low growth

High mobility, high growth

Low mobility, high growth
The Geography of Upward Mobility in the United States

Average Income at Age 35 for Children whose Parents Earned $25,000 (25th percentile)

Note: Blue = More Upward Mobility, Red = Less Upward Mobility

Source: Chetty, Friedman, Hendren, Jones, Porter 2018
Two Americas: The Geography of Upward Mobility For Black vs. White Men
Average Income at Age 35 For Men Whose Parents Earned $25,000 (25th percentile)

Note: Blue = More Upward Mobility, Red = Less Upward Mobility
Source: Chetty, Hendren, Jones, Porter 2018
Significant Differences Exist for Black Boys Growing Up Just Miles Apart
Mean Individual Income for Black Men in Detroit with Low-Income Parents

Goldberg
Mean Individual Income for Black Men: $14,000

Aviation Subdivision
Mean Individual Income for Black Men: $29,000
Significant Differences Exist for Black Boys Growing Up Just Miles Apart
Incarceration Rate for Black Men in Detroit with Low-Income Parents

Goldberg
Incarceration Rate for Black Men: 17%

Aviation Subdivision
Incarceration Rate for Black Men: 4.3%
Every Year of Exposure to a Good Neighborhood Pays Off
Potential Income Gained from Moving to a Better Neighborhood, by Age
From Research to Local Solutions: Three Pillars

- **Reducing Segregation**
  - Help Low-Income Families Move to High-Opportunity Areas

- **Place-Based Investments**
  - Increase Upward Mobility in Low-Opportunity Areas

- **Improving Higher Education**
  - Amplify Impacts of Colleges on Mobility
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Improving Higher Education
Amplify Impacts of Colleges on Mobility
Pilot study to help families with housing vouchers move to high-opportunity areas in Seattle using three approaches:

- Providing information to tenants
- Recruiting landlords
- Offering housing search assistance

Creating Moves to Opportunity

Bergman, Chetty, DeLuca, Hendren, Katz, Palmer 2019
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Characteristics of High-Mobility Neighborhoods

- Lower Poverty Rates
- More stable family structure
- Greater social capital
- Better school quality
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Increase Upward Mobility in Low-Opportunity Areas

Improving Higher Education
Amplify Impacts of Colleges on Mobility
Upward Mobility vs. Low-Income Access by College

Source: Chetty, Friedman, Saez, Turner, Yagan 2017
Collegiate Leaders in Increasing Mobility

Partnership between Opportunity Insights and 400 colleges across the U.S. that seeks to help colleges:

- Increase access to qualified low-income students
- Maximize the success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds
Web: www.opportunityinsights.org

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Email: policy@opportunityinsights.org