

# Household Mobility in America

Patterns, Processes,  
and Outcomes



Brian Joseph Gillespie



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*To Nan and Janet  
Thank you both for the love, support, and inspiration.*

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# Defining and Theorizing about Household Mobility

## OVERALL SUMMARY

*Household Mobility in America: Patterns, Processes, and Outcomes* presents a theoretically framed, interdisciplinary account of household mobility from macro and micro perspectives. Rather than a review and synthesis of the interdisciplinary literature, this book brings together seemingly divergent perspectives in order to emphasize their interconnectedness. Each chapter links key perspectives and topical research findings in various disciplines to the perspectives in other chapters, paying particular attention to the balance between academic and policy-based approaches; micro and macro perspectives; causes, correlates, and effects; and theory and application. Drawing on multiple cross-sectional and longitudinal data sets, several chapters empirically describe and explore patterns, trends, and outcomes of household mobility. Drawing on a necessarily broad theoretical framework, the life course perspective, this book explores disparate theories, methods, conceptualizations, and foci related to household mobility in America.

## INTRODUCTION

Household mobility has always been a central part of American life and is characteristic of every city in the United States. There are a number of reasons that a broad understanding of American migration is important. First, as Chap. 2 illustrates, household mobility (internal migration and

residential mobility) has long defined, and is also defined by, American culture. Early descriptions of the United States identified the peripatetic nature of the “rootless” American population (de Tocqueville [1835] 2003). While rates of moving have historically been declining in the United States (Cooke 2011), they still remain much higher than most other economically developed countries (Bell and Charles-Edwards 2013; Molloy et al. 2011). In 2014–2015, over 11 percent of the population moved to another home, more than 36 million Americans—more than the entire population of Canada.

Second, understanding characteristics of movers, including how individuals and families make decisions about moving and where to go, is important in order to uncover the links between moving and its potentially harmful effects on individuals and families. Understood to be one of life’s most stressful commonly occurring events (Holmes and Rahe 1967), household mobility affects mobile children, adults, and families in a number of important ways. For example, the economic downturn of the late 2000s destabilized housing for low- and middle-class families with the harmful effects of tighter housing budgets, refinancing, and foreclosure. As a result, evictions occurred with greater frequency, forcing some individuals and families to relocate, often locally, and often at substantial emotional cost (Coley et al. 2013). Even when moves occur because of less severe circumstances, there are important implications for individuals and families—moves often result in substantial changes in routines, behaviors, adaptive roles, social and cultural (re)adjustment, and the loss and redevelopment of community support networks (Winstanley et al. 2002). These mobility effects are a primary reason that household mobility remains a topic of concern for interdisciplinary policymakers and academics.

Additionally, household mobility can, and often does, restructure populations based on age, social class, and family size and structure (Sharkey 2012). Understanding household mobility as well as where individuals and families move can have important implications for population size and structure, as well as for the changing American demographic landscape, including changes in housing markets, labor force demand, and local and state economies (Long 1988). For example, as the US population continues to age, later-life household mobility among Baby Boomers will likely lead to significant population restructuring, which could also lead to housing concerns in the coming decades (Myers and Ryu 2008). For these reasons, researchers and policymakers must continue to explore the drivers

of household mobility and individuals' and families' relocation decisions, even in the context of historic decline.

In order to situate the study of household mobility in an interdisciplinary framework, it is necessary to present conceptual definitions of internal migration and geographic and residential mobility. These terms, their definitions, and their measurement vary across and sometimes even within disciplines, highlighting a need for a more uniform way of conceptualizing American migration across time and space (Coulter et al. 2015).

## CONCEPTUALIZING “AMERICAN MIGRATION”

### *Defining and Measuring Migration*

Along with fertility and mortality, migration is considered one of the most important demographic processes in the study of populations, and it is arguably the most social of the three key demographic processes (Weeks 2008). The term *internal migration* is usually defined as a *permanent or semipermanent change of primary residence within a given country*. As such, internal migration is characterized by a temporal dimension, based on “permanence,” and spatial dimensions, based on distance, usually requiring an individual or family to relocate across some administrative border or statistical area (King 2012). However, looser treatments of the term have been adopted (e.g., Lee 1966), and there has been debate over what is meant by “primary residence” and what classifies a move as being either permanent or semipermanent (Brown and Bean 2016). Peter Rossi, in his seminal work on residential mobility, illustrates the problem of conceptualizing residential relocation spatially (Rossi 1980:18):

A shift in address is defined as a move, involving a shift in location through space that can vary from a few feet in the case of a shift from one apartment or room to another within a structure to thousands of miles to another country or from one end of the country to the other.

At times, research has conflated *geographic* mobility (long-distance household migration across some administrative or geopolitical boundary) and *residential* mobility (short-distance household mobility), often using the terms interchangeably to mean any relocation within the United States, regardless of distance (e.g., Sturtevant 2013), or overlooking local household mobility (e.g., Molloy et al. 2014). Geographic (i.e., long-distance)

mobility *is* considered migration within its customary spatiotemporal definition; however, because no defined boundary has been crossed, local moves *are not* considered migration. Of course, in this case, some geographic mobility that occurs across very long distances is characterized as “local” if no defined boundary has been crossed, while moves that occur locally would be identified as long-distance moves so long as an administrative boundary has been crossed (Boyle et al. 1998). As a result, Coulter et al. (2015) emphasize the importance of considering short-distance residential mobility in studies of internal migration, not least because it is far more common than geographic mobility (U.S. Census Bureau 2015) but also because local moves still tend to shape individuals’ personal experiences, routines, habits, and identity (Roseman 1971; Winstanley et al. 2002).

In addition to these spatial issues, the term *permanent residence* also complicates the conceptual definition of internal migration. For example, highly mobile individuals and families, including those who leave an area and return after a period of time for seasonal employment or better weather (e.g., Smith and House 2006), may not technically be considered “migrants” given their nonpermanence in an area. As such, there has been considerable debate over what actually constitutes a migrant based on the traditional spatial and temporal dimensions of mobility.

Table 1.1 presents some of the attributes of household mobility based on spatial and temporal dimensions. This book is primarily concerned with geographic (distance) and residential (local) mobility and, to some extent, hypermobility, but other forms of internal migration are discussed below

**Table 1.1** Distance and frequency characteristics of household mobility

	<i>Spatial</i>		<i>Temporal</i>	
	<i>Distance</i>	<i>Local</i>	<i>Permanent</i>	<i>Temporary</i>
Characterization				
Household mobility	*	*	*	
Relocation distance				
Residential mobility		*	*	
Geographic mobility	*		*	
Relocation frequency				
Return migration	*		*	*
Circular migration	*	*		*
Repeat mobility and hypermobility	*	*		*



because they help form the conceptualization of household mobility used throughout the rest of the book. Following Clark and Huang (2004) and Smith and Finney (2015), this book does not assume a dualism between long-distance and short-distance moves—both contexts are discussed in the following chapters. As such, the term *distance mobility* is used to refer exclusively to a long-distance move, usually across county lines, and *local mobility* refers to local, that is, intracounty, moves. However, throughout the book, the term *household mobility* is used to denote *any* geographic or residential relocation within the United States, regardless of distance.

In addition to the terms and characteristics identified in Table 1.1, context-specific terms are also used to describe specific types of relocations being made, the individuals involved in the move, the stage of life that the move takes place, or the origin and destination of the move (e.g., *family* migration, *school* mobility, *later-life* and *retirement* migration, *urban* migration, and *interstate* migration).

As a result, concepts and measurements related to household mobility have often been treated loosely, obscuring potential differences and similarities in motivations, expectations, expressions, and consequences. Additional conceptual problems are introduced when individuals' *reasons* for moving are introduced. For example, Sell (1983) identifies three types of household mobility. *Forced mobility* involves individuals or households that must move (e.g., because of natural disasters, eviction, or dependents who move with their parents). *Imposed mobility* usually results from changes in marital status, an expanding family, or other life-cycle factors that trigger a relocation (e.g., nestleaving—leaving the parental home for work or college). *Preference-dominated* moves occur because of household and/or neighborhood dissatisfaction. Chapter 4 unpacks some of the theoretical approaches to exploring individuals' reasons for moving as well as decision-making about household mobility and location.

Before discussing each of the concepts in Table 1.1, a brief discussion of immigration is necessary in order to conceptually distinguish international migration from household mobility (i.e., internal migration and residential mobility), helping to set the tone and context of the chapters to follow.

### *Immigration*

In the past two decades, an extensive body of scholarship has explored patterns and effects of immigration, the relocation of individuals and families across a country's international border. Academic interest in household

mobility has been far less vibrant than research on international migration, which has shown scholarly growth at a much faster pace (Coulter et al. 2015). However, academic interest in household mobility seems to be more prolific in European countries (e.g., Lersch 2013; Smith et al. 2015) or when focused on internal migration in developing regions (e.g., Abbas 2016; Dai et al. 2015). For American academics and policymakers, the preferred focus on immigration may be related to the very different cultural experiences of immigrants than internal migrants (e.g., immigrants requiring assimilation into US culture). Since there are obvious cultural changes associated with immigration, research on the effects of *immigration* on labor markets and families has dominated the migration literature. The operationalization of immigration is also methodologically clearer, given that national borders are more clearly defined and identified than relocating within or across some “administrative boundary or statistical area,” which is harder to measure and standardize (Brown and Bean 2016; Long 1988).

Among American politicians and the media, there are a number of different reasons for the disproportionate emphasis on immigration. Ellis (2012) argues that it is related to the legal and political magnitude of immigration in the United States (e.g., border security, primary language, citizenship rights). The idea of undocumented “immigration and immigrants” inherently sets up an “insider/outsider” perspective based on who belongs in the United States and who does not—and this is often politically sensationalized in the media, often related to the potential for job displacement from “hardworking Americans.”

Despite academic and popular emphasis on international migration, immigration is still far less common than internal migration (Ellis 2012), with between 11 and 12 percent of American households moving *within the United States* in a given year compared to less than 1 percent immigrating *to the United States* (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). While internal migration and international migration are often seen as theoretically and empirically distinct processes, recent attempts have been made to bridge the gap between the two (Brown and Bean 2016; King and Skeldon 2010). Indeed, despite conceptual differences, some of the theoretical underpinnings of international migration research can help shed light on moving generally—so a more comprehensive theoretical framework, and standard concepts and measurement across disciplines, would greatly benefit the field.

### *Geographic and Residential Household Mobility*

As mentioned above, migration researchers often make a distinction between long-distance internal migration (i.e., geographic mobility) and local “residential” mobility (Fischer 2002). A long-distance move is usually defined as a relocation across city, county, or state lines (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). Often, researchers link this type of move to employment or job transfers and macroeconomic conditions, such as shifts in labor market demand. On the other hand, residential mobility takes place locally, within the same county or neighborhood, and is usually linked to personal preference, family changes, and other housing considerations (Frey 2003; Long 1988; Rossi [1955] 1980). Of course, these broad characterizations are only a small part of a much more complex framework that involves an interplay among housing considerations, family characteristics, and labor force prospects (Clark and Withers 2007).

The motivations for, and consequences of, geographic mobility often differ from residential mobility, although the differences between the two have diminished over time. Leaving one’s community, labor market, school district, or economic and political environment is distinctly and qualitatively different from moving locally within one’s own community. Moreover, geographic and residential mobility require different resources. Distance migration to a new environment is usually undertaken by the young and educated and those with higher-status jobs (Malamud and Wozniak 2011). These individuals are equipped with greater human capital and resources to geographically relocate—especially in a specialized and segmented labor market (Fischer 2002). Residential mobility is also selective based on social class, and this association is largely mediated by home ownership. Poor individuals are more likely to be renters and are less “tied” to their homes; as such, they are also more likely to be locally mobile than the nonpoor (Frey 2009; Geist and McManus 2008). These differences are explored in Chap. 3, which explores sociodemographic factors associated with household mobility, move type (local/distance), and individuals’ reasons for moving.

Household mobility, then, is experienced in very diverse ways and, as such, the consequences of moving are also different for those who move locally and those who move across a distance. In the context of post-relocation adjustment, for example, geographic mobility often entails a number of additional changes, including those related to employment, social networks, and community involvement. On the other hand, local

mobility, commonly thought of as easier to accomplish, has fewer employment disruptions but usually still entails significant changes in routines and habits and, for parents and children, possibly schools or even school districts. Chapters 5 and 6 are dedicated to exploring these differences in outcomes.

### *Migration Frequency*

Some individuals and households experience multiple moves over a short period of time. When considering outcomes of household mobility, the emotional effects of relocation for these individuals/families may be greater than those who move only once because of the compounded stresses of multiple relocations (Hagan et al. 1996). Household mobility, as it is based on the *number* of moves made, can be broadly categorized into four types: return migration, circular migration, repeat migration, and hypermobility. Although the first three are not discussed in this book, each is discussed below in order to identify conceptual contrasts and set the context for the chapters to follow.

#### *Return Migration*

Return migration is the migration of individuals to previous origins of residence after having left (Cadwallader 1992). In the context of household mobility, there are a number of reasons individuals may return to their origin. Often, return migration is undertaken by mobile young adults who move away for college and then “boomerang” back to the parental home (Kaplan 2009). In this case, return migration has important consequences for an individual’s entire family (South and Lei 2015). Additionally, return migration can occur many years after the original relocation, when individuals return to their origin in retirement (Lundholm 2012) or to care for aging parents (Rogerson et al. 1993).

Individuals may also return to their origin location because of “mistakes.” Some mobile individuals who engage in short-term return migration do so because of erroneous information about the labor market or other opportunities, signaling a “failed migration” (Clark and Withers 2007:596), which stimulates a return to their place of origin. Other mobile individuals may simply come to regret the decision to move, which may prompt a relocation back to their origin shortly after relocating, before any relocation effects have developed. When mobile individuals regret the move, perhaps because employment expectations did not materialize,

additional household mobility (return migration) is a “corrective action” that individuals consider based on their familiarity with the area, the amount of time that has passed, and kinship and friendship networks at the origin and destination (Cadwallader 1992).

### *Circular Migration*

Circular migration refers to “repeated migration experiences between an origin and destination involving more than one migration and return” (Hugo 2013:2). Thus, circular migrants oscillate between two locations for work, family, and/or relationship obligations. While most commonly associated with immigration for season employment, circular migration is also experienced in the context of internal migration among itinerant farm workers as a livelihood strategy, “snowbirds,” and other temporary or seasonal migrants who undergo semipermanent relocations for work (Newland 2009; Smith and House 2006).

Recent research has discussed American circular migration in both local *and* long-distance contexts, focusing on individuals who engage in “circular oscillations between multiple residences with each function as temporary centres of gravity” (Coulter et al. 2015:8). This “residential itinerancy” includes couples who compartmentalize work, family, and residential domains by “living apart together” in bilocal partnerships (van der Klis and Mulder 2008) and split-custody arrangements where children regularly spend time at multiple residences (Coulter et al. 2015).

### *Repeat Mobility*

Often, individuals move multiple times in a short period. One such way involves making additional moves after an initial relocation. Roseman (1971) was among the first to propose a “frequent mover hypothesis,” which suggests that long-distance movers are more prone than local movers to engage in additional moves after an initial move, usually over short distances. He argued that long-distance movers are likely to move locally as they become acquainted with an area and develop more informed housing and location preferences. As such, repeat movers often do so to correct for mistakes and reestablish postmove equilibrium. An extension of this notion later found that long-distance moves could prompt repeat moves over long distances (Clark and Huang 2004). Repeat moves can be corrective, where knowledge of additional locations, based on networking and knowledge of an area, may facilitate additional moves (Clark and Withers 2007). In this sense, many *international* migrants can also be considered

*internal* migrants—often migrating within and between cities and towns after immigration to the United States before permanently settling into a specific area.

### *Local and Long-Distance Hypermobility*

Hypermobility, the act of moving multiple times in a short time frame, suffers from the same conceptualization and operationalization complexity as household mobility generally. There has been no agreement on what actually constitutes hypermobility, and the frequency of moves may depend on the time span across which they occurred. Recently, Cohen and Wardrip (2011:4) provided a loose definition of the term, indicating that hypermobility usually “indicates a series of consecutive moves undertaken at a rate far greater than that experienced by the regular population.”

Local hypermobility, based on frequent *residential* mobility, is commonly considered an indicator of residential instability, which has been linked to poverty and chaotic home environments (Ziol-Guest and McKenna 2014). Residential instability encompasses a number of additional forms of housing volatility that do not entail relocation, such as difficulty paying rent, “doubling up” and living with others to save on housing expenses, and default and foreclosure (Seltzer et al. 2012; Skobba and Goetz 2013), leading to negative child and family outcomes (Burgard et al. 2012; Ziol-Guest and McKenna 2014). However, hypermobility is often considered a defining feature of residential instability.

Some individuals and families move repeatedly over long distances. Like residential and geographic mobility, the impetus for long-distance hypermobility is often markedly different from local hypermobility. Repeated long-distance migrations are often undertaken for employment reasons. In his book *Next Stop, Reloville*, Peter Kilborn (2009) details the lives of rootless, modern-day “relos,” who sacrifice friendships and a sense of community in the pursuit of professional successes. He describes their transient philosophy, “Wherever they go, they don’t belong. . . . They might value close family ties and deep friendships and keep parents’ and siblings’ pictures on their computers and refrigerators, but they see them only for the ritual week at the beach or the year-end holidays.” Kilborn depicts the social and emotional toll that the geographically hypermobile lifestyle has on individuals and their families. For these families, community ties are broken with each move—if community ties are even developed in the first

place pointing to perennial issues adjusting to a new community for some children and families.

Academic research on long-distance hypermobility has mostly focused on the experiences of military personnel and their families, given their frequent and compulsory rotation between military stations. However, results on the impact of military geographic hypermobility have been mixed. Early research pointed to negative outcomes of geographic hypermobility for military children and families, symptoms of so-called military family syndrome (Jensen et al. 1991). However, more recent research suggests no effect (Marchant and Medway 1987), some positive outcomes (Weber and Weber 2005), or the gradual development of resilience to moving over the course of several moves (Bradshaw et al. 2010).

## EVOLUTION OF THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO HOUSEHOLD MOBILITY

In addition to its multidimensional conceptualization and operationalization, there are also different theoretical frameworks used to understand household mobility, and these can be thought of as a linkage between determinism and humanism (Boyle et al. 1998). Broad macrolevel theories consider mobility as a product of the economic and physical environment (*determinist*), while lower-level approaches focus on characteristics of mobile individuals and families, including their decisions and reasons for moving (*humanist*). Additionally, although it may not always lead to household mobility, some researchers have explored moving desires and expectations (Kley and Mulder 2010; Mateyka 2015), which is explored in Chap. 4.

### WHY DO PEOPLE MOVE?

Individuals decide to migrate for many different reasons—some purely economic, while others are entirely without economic motivation. Some moves are voluntary; others are involuntary. Some are based on household/family conditions, while others reflect personal preference. Drawing on the economic and sociological foundations of migration research, the following sections unpack the classical and contemporary perspectives on why individuals and families relocate. Many of these perspectives are reconsidered in the context of their relevant chapters.

Given that the decision to stay or relocate is not readily available to all, most individuals can be placed into one of four broad categories: (1) those who do not want to relocate and so do not; (2) those who want to relocate and do; (3) those who do not want to relocate but do, or must; and (4) would-be movers who want to relocate but do not or cannot. While this last group is not mobile, it is nevertheless important. The desire to move but the inability to do so is indicative of “blocked mobility,” which is often related to structural circumstances, such as racial and income barriers to accessing mobility (Coulter et al. 2015; Crowder 2001), which is discussed further in Chap. 7.

### *Early Perspectives on Migration*

Published in 1889, Ravenstein’s “Laws of Migration,” credited as one of the first systematic, statistical, and empirical analyses of migration, outlines several generalizations about internal migration in and around London in the late nineteenth century. Among his generalizations, Ravenstein observed that migration often spans only a short distance, happens in stages, and is usually based on economic motives. However, Ravenstein acknowledged that his migration laws were not as indisputable as physical laws. In fact, he noted that his laws were “continually being interfered with by human agency” (Ravenstein 1889:241). Since then, generalizations about why people move have evolved; the earliest theories, which were rooted in neoclassical economics, maintained Ravenstein’s main premise that migration is economically motivated.

The neoclassical economic perspective argues that migration is consumer driven and that geographic wage differentials underpin all rates of migration. As such, aggregate rates of migration can be predicted by measuring characteristics of socioeconomic and physical environments, such as income and unemployment (Hicks [1932] 1963). In short, this model of migration argues that migration flows to areas that are characterized by higher wage rates.

This deterministic macroeconomic perspective implies that larger social and economic forces are at work and that human capital, social networking, human agency, and family characteristics do not operate above and beyond economically determined circumstances. However, a great deal of migration takes place for reasons other than utility maximization and the pursuit of economic advancement (e.g., moving closer to one’s family or safer schools). Later adaptations of this early model account for additional



forces that promote or prohibit migration. Lee (1966:57) argued that a number of additional factors can impede migration, and either attract migrants to, or repel them from, specific places. Lee's "schema for migration" considered the positive and negative factors associated with (1) area of *origin* and (2) area of *destination* but also (3) *personal factors*, such as intelligence and knowledge of the destination that are not available to all migrants in order to make decisions about migration, and (4) *intervening obstacles* (e.g., distance, dependent children, financial barriers). This framework serves as a more humanistic extension of early migration models by identifying push and pull factors associated with household mobility in the context of obstacles and personal characteristics.

### *Institutional Perspective*

Another approach to migration takes an *institutional perspective*. This approach emphasizes the importance of social institutions as "managers" that regulate migration—organizations which, whether for profit or not, facilitate and perpetuate household mobility and potentially stimulate relocations to specific areas (Cadwallader 1992; Rossi and Shlay 1982). Cadwallader (1992) suggests that the "management" of migration is linked to broader theories about the influence of the political economy on individuals' decision-making. Legal, political, social, and economic institutions control the flow of information and the availability of commercial capital (availability and marketability of housing), location-based capital, financial capital (banking and mortgage), and industrial capital (building and developing quality housing) of a given area.

While the institutional framework is more commonly, and aptly, applied to international migration (Massey et al. 1993), institutional services and support also facilitate internal migration. In the context of household mobility, the institutional approach emphasizes the role of real estate corporations, the media, mortgage lenders, construction companies, job recruiters, and landlords in regulating household mobility. For example, research has explored the importance of job recruiters and the media in stimulating south-to-north migration during the Great Migration (Pendergrass 2013; Price-Spratlen 2008), discussed in Chap. 2.

In addition to the above perspectives that are largely deterministic explanations of how external forces shape individuals' household mobility, humanist, or behavioral, models help situate the decision-making process

within the context of how individuals and families choose between alternatives (i.e., whether or not to move and where to go).

### *Micro- and Mesoperspectives*

#### *Behavioral Perspectives: New Economic Theory and Cost-Benefit Perspectives*

Microtheoretical perspectives of migration generally argue that decision-making about relocation is tied to the perceived gains and risks associated with moving. A human capital cost-benefit model argues that individuals move if the benefits of moving are greater than the overall costs (Sjaastad 1962). This view assumes that household mobility is an investment strategy whereby individuals can move in order to generate capital (Longley et al. 1991; Sjaastad 1962). Put simply, individuals are inclined to move when the *benefits* of moving are greater than the *costs* of moving.

Despite its important theoretical insights, the cost-benefit approach has a number of shortcomings. First, this model is based on the unlikely premise that people are in a constant negotiation about the costs and benefits of moving (Cadwallader 1992). An additional criticism of the cost-benefit approach is that it does not account for the fact that many individuals are *uncertain* about the economic costs and benefits of relocation, which, in itself, can influence individuals' decision to move or not. Relatedly, much of the information pertinent to relocating is not firsthand knowledge but is gained through third-party intermediaries, such as real estate experts, the Internet, and kin and family ties (Thulin and Vilhelmson 2013; Winstanley et al. 2002). Therefore, the information on which to base a decision to move is not equally available to all people, and people with wider social networks may have access to more or better information about moving and where to move (Winstanley et al. 2002).

Perhaps most importantly, the cost-benefit approach to household mobility overlooks a central aspect of the migration decision: the family. This perspective assumes that the dominant decision-maker is the only member of the household whose judgment matters (Winstanley et al. 2002), and, as a result, the decisions, perspectives, and influence of other individuals, including coresidential family, are overlooked. However, as later chapters demonstrate, individuals' propensity to move depends upon a number of family-based factors, including family solidarity and the presence of children. Thus, by taking the individual as the unit of analysis,

early cost-benefit theories overlooked the importance of kin and network ties in the decision to move. Later theoretical developments incorporated the larger family unit into studies of migration (Mincer 1978).

### *Network and Family*

Rejecting the early cost-benefit models of migration as individualistic, Mincer (1978) argued that migration often benefits one person—or some family members but not others. This approach recognized that, despite being a collective unit, the risks and incentives associated with moving are different for each family member. As such, Mincer argued that migration is only an efficient strategy when the *net* benefits of migration for the family outweigh the *net* costs of migration.

Later research adapted Mincer's model to explore the relationship between migration decisions and kin and social networks. Massey's (1990) early review of the *international* migration literature contributes to this discussion by highlighting how networks link individual and household decisions to macrosocial structures. Following Mincer (1978) and Katz and Stark (1986), Massey argued that rather than acting as singular rational beings, individuals are linked to one another through kinship and social networks. In an economic and social context, Massey argued that network ties underpin the decision-making process. These ties can also reduce the costs of subsequent mobility for nonmigrants, encouraging additional migration. Thus, beyond the initial individual or family move, household mobility can stimulate additional mobility for two reasons: (1) moving is safer for others because of information passed along to other potentially mobile individuals and (2) kinship networks allow for the flow of capital (e.g., sending remittances home), which can spur subsequent migration.

As individuals migrate, the risks associated with mobility *decline* for their friends and family who did not move (Massey 1990). Network ties allow for mobile individuals to communicate the risks and opportunities associated with moving to their potentially mobile friends and family, causing a “circular and cumulative causation” process of migration (Massey 1990:4), especially to urban areas (Logan et al. 2002). Recent research on kin networks and relocation choice supports the idea that family ties influence geographic mobility and location choice (Gillespie and Treas 2015).

On the other hand, individuals and families may also *remain* in an area because of social and kin networks—close family ties, a form of “location-specific capital,” can deter geographic mobility (Da Vanzo 1981). Sandefur

and Scott (1981) suggest an important reason for larger households being less inclined to move: social ties are broken by the move of each individual family member. Migration, then, results in an undesirable loss of *social capital* for mobile individuals and families (Coleman 1988).

A related perspective (Katz and Stark 1986) suggests that individuals in rural areas promote migration among some family members as a risk aversion tool. For instance, a rural family might encourage some adult children to live in the city so that they can send remittances when crops fail. This alternative perspective suggests that mobility allows families to diversify and, thus, *increase* their social, human, and financial capital. At the humanistic level, the idea that the family influences mobility decisions has been linked to the life-cycle perspective.

### *The Life-Cycle Perspective*

Rossi's ([1955]1980) landmark research on why families move examined household mobility as a function of age and other status changes related to life-cycle transitions. Rossi found that individuals' desires to relocate, and their subsequent relocation, were linked to complaints about their homes and housing environments largely explained by changes in family size and household composition. The "uniform trajectory" of life-cycle changes, such as getting married, changes in labor force status, and the addition of children to the household, were, in Rossi's view, important determinants of the desire to move and subsequent relocation. Individuals moved based on needs and responses to dwelling unit accommodations for developing and growing families and for personal preference (e.g., space, noise, location).

Despite its usefulness as an organizational framework, researchers have identified a number of shortcomings with the life-cycle perspective. First, assuming transitions occur uniformly across the life course may be problematic because age thresholds (e.g., for leaving the parental home and getting married) are context dependent and largely based on cultural norms (Geist and McManus 2008). Second, the life-cycle model overlooks *structural* constraints that block mobility opportunities for would-be movers—those who, for any reason and at any life-cycle stage, want to move but are unable to do so (Coulter et al. 2015).

Third, individuals' and families' relocation cannot be predicted by a seamless transition into and out of normative social markers in adulthood (Clark and Withers 2002). Such a rigid model, depending almost entirely

on an individual's age and marital status, ignores heterogeneity among individuals and families (Geist and McManus 2012). Higher education, rates of cohabitation, and delayed marriage, coupled with family diversity (e.g., child-free households, blended families, single-parent households, dual-earner households) create a more diverse approach to life events than is assumed in the family life-cycle model (Geist and McManus 2008, 2012). As a result, the age-threshold models assumed by the life-cycle perspective overlooks social change as it occurs throughout history, across generations, and at different ages (Geist and McManus 2008; Gillespie 2012). These critiques have contributed to the growing popularity of the life course perspective in framing research on household mobility and immobility.

### *The Life Course Perspective*

A major theoretical paradigm influencing sociological research on household mobility is the life course perspective. Glen Elder (1998) has been instrumental in forming this framework that takes an integrative theoretical approach by considering the interactions between human agency and social structure or, essentially, determinism and humanism. Six central themes outline our understanding of the life course: geographic place and historical time, cumulative development variability, human agency, timing in lives, and linked lives (Elder et al. 2003).

The principle “geographic place and historical time” suggests that individuals' geographic location and historic era shape their individual experiences. In other words, our behaviors are *context dependent* and tied to the time and space in which they are enacted. The notion of cumulative, or life span, development acknowledges that individuals' decisions and behaviors are based on a cumulative process of life course experiences and are, therefore, shaped by early experiences. This principle posits that the interface between social change and human development is essential to understanding human lives and experiences. The principle “timing in lives” refers to the notion that certain life events (e.g., household mobility) affect individuals differently depending on when they occur in the course of their life. These three tenets of the life course perspective address the *spatiotemporality* of the household mobility experience.

The principle of *variability* emphasizes the heterogeneity in individuals' social status, resources, and social roles (Shanahan 2000). As a result, economic resources and other risk factors are unevenly distributed, which

influences trajectories and life outcomes. “Human agency” proposes that individuals are able to make their own decisions and choose between alternatives insofar as external, structural constraints allow for these decisions (Shanahan 2000). This principle is especially salient when exploring mobile individuals’ reasons for moving and would-be movers’ reasons for not moving despite a desire to do so. The life course perspective also emphasizes the interdependence of individuals. The concept of “linked lives” proposes that individual lives are intertwined and “typically embedded in social relationships with kin and friends across the life span” (Elder 1994:6). The concept of linked lives underscores the *relational* nature of household mobility (Coulter et al. 2015; Hopkins and Pain 2007).

The life course perspective allows for a broad treatment of household mobility patterns, trends, and outcomes. This perspective acknowledges that moving is contingent upon cultural context (geographic place and historical era), development over time (cumulative development), social and familial relationships (linked lives), the timing of life course events (timing), heterogeneity (variability), and structural constraints and opportunities (human agency). Such a holistic approach emphasizes the developmental, economic, historic, geographic, and social context of household mobility, while also accounting for individuals’ decision-making processes within the context of structural constraints.

## CONCLUSION AND OVERVIEW

The focus of this book is on internal migration and residential mobility—long- and short-distance relocation or, put more simply, *household mobility* in America. The decision to focus on household mobility in America, as opposed to including immigration or discussing internal migration in other countries, might seem restrictive in light of calls to “bridge the gap” between internal migration and immigration (Ellis 2012; King 2012). However, the scope is necessarily limited given the breadth of coverage. The following chapters integrate interdisciplinary research to explore correlates and consequences of household mobility at different levels of analysis.

Much like the field of migration studies, this book has a cross-disciplinary approach, drawing primarily on research and theory in sociology, demography, economics, psychology, and social geography. However, research on household mobility is also informed by anthropologists, epidemiologists, political scientists, and scholars in other social science fields. Ironically,

because of its cross-disciplinary nature, formulation of a unified migration theory has been difficult (Long 1988; King 2012; Warnes 1992). As Bodvarsson and Van den Berg (2013:28) point out in their discussion of international migration theory, “As with any area of research that cuts across the different social sciences, one discipline’s explanation seldom matches the explanations offered by other disciplines.”

The primary goal of this book is to provide a comprehensive look at household mobility within the United States, including its effects on individuals and families, concentrating on dominant themes in the migration and residential mobility literatures. Research on internal migration and residential mobility within other developed countries is also discussed, especially as it fills important gaps in the US migration literature and leads to inferences about American household mobility. As noted, migration and residential mobility are distinct but related processes and each is discussed in the chapters to follow in the context of its respective patterns, causes, and effects. The organization of the book is intended to address several general questions related to household mobility: How much? Who? Why? To what effect? So what? And what next?

Several common threads provide the framework for this book. Taking a life course approach to household mobility, the following chapters explore household mobility experiences as they are situated within diverse developmental trajectories and social relationships—all in the context of historic social and economic change. As such, this book is organized in three parts and the chapters bring together each of the six tenets of the life course perspective—linking theoretical, empirical, and applied perspectives on household mobility (Elder 1998; Elder et al. 2003).

Part I (Chaps. 2, 3 and 4) identifies historic and contemporary patterns and trends in household mobility from macro and micro perspectives. These chapters consider mobility as an *outcome* of different historic, social, demographic, and psychological factors. Chapter 2 introduces a brief history of migration and considers household mobility in a historic and contemporary context. Chapter 3 is a descriptive chapter that builds on patterns and trends discussed in Chap. 2 by exploring current trends in and correlates of household mobility in America. In particular, this chapter describes the influence of a number of sociodemographic characteristics on individuals’ household mobility and reported reasons for moving. Chapter 4 reviews existing research and theory on decision-making about household mobility and location, based on individuals’ motivations,

choices, and compromises, underscoring various push and pull factors associated with relocation.

Part II (Chaps. 5, 6, and 7) examines the effects of household mobility on individuals, families, and communities—shifting the focus to household mobility as a *causal force* that drives change across a number of outcome domains. Chapter 5 details the consequences of various forms of household mobility on individuals and their families, emphasizing individuals’ interconnectedness in their relocation experiences. Chapter 6 explores mechanisms behind the negative effects of household mobility on individuals and families and presents a theoretical framework for understanding mobility effects. Chapter 7 summarizes recent research on the macrolevel effects of household mobility, including social disorganization and population distribution. This chapter also explores the notion of “blocked mobility,” whereby individuals may be limited in their mobility options, including those who wish to move but cannot.

Part III (Chaps. 8 and 9) emphasizes applied academic and practical components related to household mobility, focusing on housing policy and methodological developments in migration research. Specifically, in light of the findings in Chaps. 5, 6, and 7, social policy considerations are proposed and discussed in Chap. 8. Chapter 9 concludes with an overview of methodological and data developments in the study of household mobility, highlighting directions for future research.

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PART I

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Patterns, Correlates, and Precursors

# Historical and Recent Trends in American Mobility

## INTRODUCTION

Situating household mobility in a life course framework means understanding the *historical* and *cultural* contexts within which it is undertaken. Understanding historical trends in American household mobility is important for at least three reasons. First, it provides a snapshot of the context and conditions under which mobile individuals were inclined to move—possibly foreshadowing contexts of future increases and declines. Second, it helps explain the demographic impact of relocation within the United States, particularly since it has occurred disproportionately and selectively among certain groups into and out of specific regions. Third, it helps put current trends into context, especially since current rates of household mobility reflect a decades-long downward trend. This chapter draws aggregate data from the Current Population Survey (U.S. Census Bureau 2015) to examine trends in US household mobility in a historical and contemporary context.

## THE LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE: GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION AND SOCIOHISTORICAL TIME

The life course principle “geographic place and historical time” theorizes that individuals’ lives and perspectives are shaped by their sociohistorical and geographic context (i.e., when and where people are alive). In the context of household mobility, Americans’ lived experiences are



shaped by characteristics of their location (e.g., urban areas, famine, war, and economic development), their culture, and the meanings and values associated with mobility. The relationship is also mutually reinforcing—household mobility is shaped by the historical era and geographic location in which it is experienced, but it also shapes the demographic landscape of a particular time and place (e.g., through the selective transfer of populations from one place to another).

Historical circumstances, geographic contexts, and cultural schemas operate together to socialize individuals with regard to how they respond to their social environment. As such, household mobility may be viewed differentially based on prevailing cultural values and goals. For example, there are lower rates of distance mobility in collectivist and community-based cultures than in more individualistic ones (Oishi et al. 2007).

Patterns of household mobility are also historically dependent—a product of the time and space in which they occur. As the beginning of this chapter discusses, early in American history, household mobility was seen as a defining characteristic of life, and it has long been linked to upward social mobility (Winship 2015). In recent decades, a number of shifts led to overall declines in household mobility, which has the potential to shift cultural meanings of relocation. In other words, opportunity structures and historic events, coupled with value systems, produce large-scale cultural predispositions about household mobility.

This chapter is not an exhaustive historical overview of household mobility in America. Rather, the objective is to bring together some historical perspectives and large-scale patterns that influence and are influenced by household mobility in America. Later chapters build on this notion and advocate for an integration of microsocial processes with these cultural and structural perspectives.

## EARLY MIGRATION TRENDS

Americans were always seen as a rootless population, frequently relocating from house to house, within and between counties, states, and regions (Hall and Ruggles 2004). In fact, as Jacoby and Finkin (2004) pointed out, the Articles of the Confederation explicitly decreed the undeniable right for Americans to freely relocate to and from any state. Early in America's history, de Tocqueville, in *Democracy in America* ([De Tocqueville 1835] 2003:623) observed, "In the United States, a man will carefully construct

a home in which to spend his old age and sell it before the roof is on. ... He will settle in one place only to go off elsewhere shortly afterwards with a new set of desires.”

In “Why Americans Are So Restless in the Midst of Their Prosperity,” de Tocqueville ([1835] 2003) speculated that Americans’ quest for upward mobility produced a “restlessness” that led to a great deal of household mobility. Taking a mostly economic approach (akin to the early neoclassical models of migration in Chap. 1), de Tocqueville theorized that pragmatic Americans capitalized on the ability to freely relocate as necessary in order to seize available labor market and financial opportunities. Inherited wealth and land did not define America as it did in most of Europe at the time and so de Tocqueville argued that the American meritocratic ideology endorsed household mobility as a way to achieve upward social mobility. Even in its earliest seasons, American culture was defined by migration and migration shaped American culture.

Among the first to empirically analyze migration rates and considered a “starting point for work in migration theory” (Lee 1966:47), the work of Ravenstein (1889) explored early migration trends in America, comparing it with more than twenty other countries. Ravenstein, a geographer, suggested that American migration was so “striking” because of an expansive and unsettled Western territory with abundant natural resources. He predicted that household mobility, particularly long-distance mobility, would decline as the American frontier became cultivated and America “attained a [population] density commensurate with the natural resources of the country” (Ravenstein 1889:278). In this sense, Ravenstein, like de Tocqueville, implicitly argued that early Americans’ high rate of migration could be attributed to opportunity maximization and a desire for human capital and upward social mobility. Recent research has confirmed these assertions, finding that distance mobility, particularly state-to-state mobility, has been historically linked to upward social mobility (Winship 2015).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, several social, political, and economic events greased the wheels for increased rates of household mobility in America. Among them, and perhaps the most obvious, was the Industrial Revolution. The shift in mobility from preindustrial to postindustrial society was explored by Zelinsky (1971) in his mobility transition hypothesis. Drawing on earlier models of migration and the theory of demographic transition, Zelinsky argued that patterns and rates of household mobility change as a result of social and economic

**Table 2.1** Phases of Zelinsky's (1971) mobility transition hypothesis

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<i>Phase I: The premodern transitional society</i>
Pre-Industrialization with Very Little Movement
Frequency: Low
Direction: N/A
Motivation: Tradition and Culture ("Marital or Martial")
<i>Phase II: The early transitional society</i>
Early Industrialization and Massive Rural Exodus
Frequency: High
Direction: Rural to Urban
Motivation: Economic (Labor-Market)
<i>Phase III: The late transitional society</i>
Late Industrialization with Very High Movement
Frequency: Medium-High
Direction: Urban to Urban and Some Rural to Urban
Motivation: Economic and Free Exercise of Personal Preference
<i>Phase IV: The advanced society</i>
Post-Industrialization with City-to-City Movement
Frequency: Medium
Direction: Intraurban and Urban to Suburban
Motivation: Freedom to Exercise Preference
<i>Phase V: A Future superadvanced society</i>
Terminal Stage with Low Mobility and Possible Political Control
Frequency: Low
Direction: Interurban and Intraurban
Motivation: Better Communication and Transportation

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transformations and proceed through five phases (Table 2.1). His second phase, the "Early Transitional Society," pointed to a society marked by high rates of movement that parallel industrialization, characterized by a "rural exodus," with massive relocations from rural to urban areas.

The shift from agricultural to industrial labor stimulated American migration from rural areas to urban areas, helping cities increase in size and influence very rapidly. The shifts in labor market supply and demand inspired young adults (including couples without children) to migrate from rural towns toward cities and commerce in order to provide labor for factories. This widespread migration and urbanization, rooted in industrialization, shaped and defined the geographic and demographic organization of the United States. Consistent with earlier perspectives on social mobility, Steckel (1989), drawing on census records from 1850 and 1860, found that industrialization-era migration was an investment strategy.

Family households, particularly those with children, did not perceive the financial and psychic costs of migration as a “good investment.” Applying Steckel’s study to the life course perspective, American migration was dependent upon an interplay of family interdependence, timing in lives, human agency, and geographic place and historical time.

Exploring US census data from 1850–1990, Rosenbloom and Sundstrom (2004) documented post-industrialization era declines in state-to-state migration that lasted through the 1970s, albeit with substantial stagnation during the Great Depression. The Great Depression led to declines in employment opportunities as well as substantial declines in mobility (Boustan et al. 2010; Molloy et al. 2011:174). However, an important outcome of the economic uncertainty was an increase in scholarly attention to internal migration (Greenwood and Hunt 2008) and the development of new data sources on American household mobility (Long 1988).

In the period following the Great Depression, Rosenbloom and Sundstrom (2004) document increases in household mobility. Mid-twentieth-century America was characterized by two important, simultaneous, and, to some extent, interrelated migratory streams: the decentralization of core urban areas and the Great American Migration (Boustan 2009). Substantial investments in transportation system infrastructure, including the highway system, set into motion a number of demographic changes, including “suburbanization,” which decentralized urban areas and led to out-migration from central cities into peripheral suburban areas (Baum-Snow 2007; Long 1988).

Around the same time, there occurred a decades-long widespread migration from rural areas in the South to large cities in the Northeast and Midwest, primarily among African Americans (Grossman 1989). A major demographic process, the Great Migration lasted until around 1970 and led to a dramatic redistribution of the African American population in the United States (Tolnay 2003). Research has recently begun to explore the interconnectedness of these two migration trends, suggesting that, to some degree, suburbanization was a product of “white flight” from central cities as a response to the substantial in-migration of African Americans (Boustan 2009). The large-scale consequences of this selective mobility are discussed further in Chap. 7.

Since the 1980s, researchers have documented a steady decline in American household mobility (Cooke 2011; Fischer 2002; Molloy et al. 2011). At the same time, there are a number of reasons why migration researchers might have forecast *increases*—or at least a leveling off—in

household mobility in the United States since the 1970s. For example, increases in educational attainment and declines in family size can loosen financial and family constraints, which could lead to higher rates of household mobility. Additionally, advancements in communication technology allow mobile individuals to maintain contact with their families and friends over long distances (Lee 1966; Fischer 2002; Mok et al. 2010). More recently, researchers explored the potential for the aging of the Baby Boom generation to spur retirement migration (Sturtevant 2013).

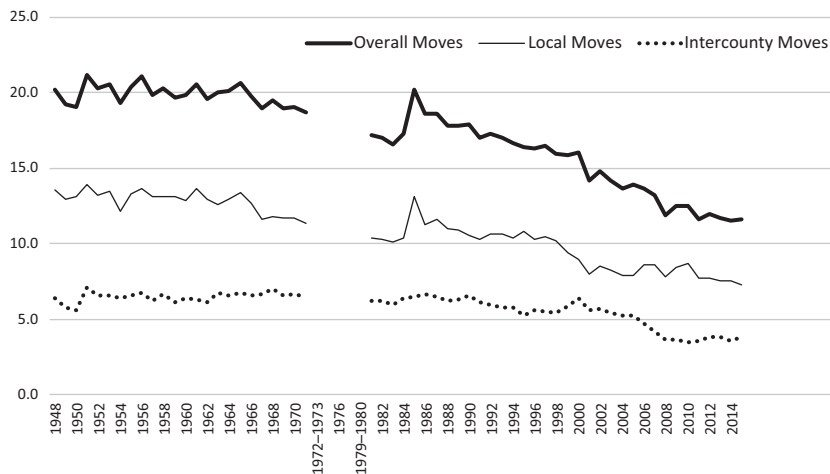
Despite the overall decline in household mobility, some have targeted extremely high rates of migration as a driving mechanism for American estrangement and anomie. However, Fischer (2002) argues that these sensationalist assertions fit a convenient “grand narrative” about alienation and disengagement in fast-paced, modernized American society. One reason the overall decline in migration may seem counterintuitive is that it is probably *more salient* than ever before. Long and Boertlein (1976:38) hypothesized that improvements in transportation and communication may only seem to accentuate migration because Americans are better able to interact with their highly mobile kin and social networks—creating the misguided impression that mobility is ever present and on the rise:

In an earlier time, neighbors who moved away were simply removed from our lives. Today, it is easier to keep in touch and visit persons who have moved, and because such friendships can be sustained over long distances we know about subsequent moves. If friendships could not be maintained over long distances, we would know of only one move—the initial move out of the neighborhood.

Nevertheless, most research supports that American household mobility has declined dramatically over time (Cooke 2011, 2013). Figure 2.1 illustrates this downward trend, drawing on data starting in 1948, when the CPS began collecting information on Americans’ household mobility. The following section identifies some of the explanations researchers have proposed for the historic decline in American household mobility.

## THE HISTORIC DECLINE IN AMERICAN HOUSEHOLD MOBILITY

The overall decline in American household mobility has persisted for over thirty years, starting in the 1980s, when about one in five Americans moved in a given year. This figure dropped to 11.6 percent, almost half, by 2014–2015.



**Fig. 2.1** American household mobility in America, 1948–2015. *Note:* The spike in the US migration rate in 1986 is because of a change in the methodology used by the census to sample households (Hansen 1995). The CPS did not collect data on migration between 1972–75 and 1976–79.

However, the downward trend has been in place much longer for local moves (within the same county), which has shown declines since 1948, the year the CPS started collecting data on American household mobility (Frey 2009). In the last decade, the percentage of Americans moving locally has remained between 7 and 8 percent (Fig. 2.1) down from almost 14 percent in 1948. The deceleration in rates of long-distance (intercounty) household mobility also began around the 1980s (Molloy et al. 2011), when about 6 percent of individuals relocated across county lines. Between 2014 and 2015, less than 4 percent of Americans relocated across county lines—2.1 percent relocated within the same state and 1.6 percent relocated to a different state.

While the decline in American household mobility over time is noteworthy, it should not be overstated; Americans are still much more mobile than most other developed countries (Bell and Charles-Edwards 2013; Molloy et al. 2011), and a considerable number of Americans are still mobile in a given year. As noted in Chap. 1, in 2014–2015, more than 36 million Americans moved (U.S. Census Bureau 2015)—a figure greater than the current population of Canada (Statistics Canada 2015). A great deal of

research has explored reasons for the long-term decline in American household mobility, focusing largely on economic changes and shifts in the supply and demand of labor (e.g., Molloy et al. 2011, 2014).

In order to situate household mobility in an interdisciplinary and historic context, this section describes some of the dominant perspectives on which factors might have led to the “Great American Migration Slowdown” (Frey 2009:1) that began in the later part of the twentieth century—although when the decline truly began has been subject to debate (Cooke 2011, 2013; Molloy et al. 2011; Partridge et al. 2012; Winship 2015). Among the economic reasons, researchers have hypothesized that financial security, including increases in homeownership, may have tied people to their locations, inspiring them to remain in place (Frey 2009). However, Molloy et al. (2014) found that migration rates fell for both homeowners and renters from the 1980s to the 2000s. Others have argued that economic insecurity and uncertainty lead to declines in job-related migration (Ludwig and Raphael 2010), and risky housing markets deter individuals from making potentially risky investments (Ferreira et al. 2010; Frey 2009). However, Cooke (2011), exploring data from the CPS, found that unemployment during the recession led to *increases* in intercounty mobility.

Additional economic explanations also tied declines in mobility to less-salient income differentials across cities, states, and regions. The convergence of regional income disparities might discourage distance migration as an investment strategy (Cadwallader 1992; Cooke 2011). Also, less-segmented job markets may deter relocation for specialized employment (Frey 2009). For the most part, economic explanations tend to suggest that the returns to investment in household mobility have become more risky and uncertain, which deters Americans from relocating. However, Molloy et al. (2011) found that income, housing tenure, and labor force participation played only small roles in the overall decline in American migration. Moreover, household mobility was much higher at a time when the economic costs, risks, and uncertainty associated with moving were likely much higher than they are now (Long 1988). Indeed, in his recent study of household and social mobility, Winship (2015:40) contemplates, “How many of us today would consider the sorts of risks taken by Westward-migrating pioneers—in their covered wagons—to improve our opportunities?”

In an update to their 2011 research, drawing on data from multiple nationally representative data sets, Molloy et al. (2014) explored several unexplored factors that contributed to the overall migration slowdown. They argue that declines in internal migration can be explained, at least

in part, by changes in the employer-employee relationship over time. In particular, the benefits of switching employers have weakened, leading to a diminished need for job-related relocations among already-employed Americans. The authors speculate that this may be the result of improvements in how individuals are matched with their jobs and residential locations, leading to a more “efficient allocation of workers across the US” (Molloy et al. 2014:1).

Taking a different approach, some have explored social, demographic, and sociohistorical explanations for the secular decline in American migration. Researchers have suggested that life-cycle and family changes among Americans have contributed to the household mobility slowdown, including greater intergenerational and family solidarity that ties people to their locations. Later departure from the parental home, declining fertility, later marriage, and smaller family size may have altered the “traditional” life-cycle migration trajectory. As such, changes in young adult mobility behaviors have contributed substantially to the overall decline (Sturtevant 2013), especially because young adults are the most mobile age group (Benetsky et al. 2015). Along the same lines, the growing population of older adults is less mobile than previous generations of older adults (Sturtevant 2013), many choosing to “age in place” (Bradley and Longino 2009). Age-selective migration, and its implications for migration trends, is discussed further in Chaps. 3 and 7.

Changes in household structure, including high levels of divorce, may deter parents with shared custody arrangements from migrating over a long distance (Feijten and van Ham 2007), leading to declines in long-distance mobility—although Cooke (2011) found only modest effects of household structure on the migration decline. Others have suggested that the rise in dual-earner households and female participation in the labor force have contributed to the decline (Cadwallader 1992; Cooke 2013; Costa and Kahn 2000)—but others have found otherwise, noting that dual-earner households have remained stable over the last 30 years (Molloy et al. 2011). Overall, research has concluded that many of the commonly explored demographic and socioeconomic characteristics (income, gender, educational attainment, race, marital status, the presence of children, employment status, and geographic context) have contributed very little to the overall decline in distance mobility (Molloy et al. 2014).

Additional hypotheses situate the household mobility decline in a sociohistorical context, trailing on the ideas presented earlier in the chapter: historical migration processes that marked the eighteenth through mid-twentieth centuries have simply come to an end. First, the



frontier settlement migration that defined Americans as the United States expanded westward has slowed (Hall and Ruggles 2004). Second, urban development may have led to significant declines in household mobility—attractive metropolitan areas with improved housing conditions (and fewer more-attractive alternatives) reduced the need for relocation within and between cities (Long 1988; Molloy et al. 2011). Relatedly, higher numbers of urban-born Americans may have led to a reduced need to relocate for educational and employment purposes. Third, the slowdown of the Great Migration, which lasted until the 1970s, led to initial declines in American migration, a subsequent reversal (Hunt et al. 2008), and a possible return to equilibrium (Molloy et al. 2011). Additionally, Fischer (2002:182) proposed that in modern times, the “intense and uncontrollable shocks to family life, such as deaths of breadwinners, farm failures, natural disasters, and catastrophic depressions, became less common,” resulting in a diminished need to relocate.

Also linked to sociohistorical development, suggested by researchers starting in the 1960s (although with very different expectations and outcomes), is the proliferation of, and rapid advancements in, information and communication technologies (ICT) (Cooke 2013). As discussed above, early researchers (e.g., Litwak 1960:386) argued that technological advancements would lead to *increases* in migration because it allowed for the maintenance of family and social relationships over long distances, suggesting that “modern advances in communication techniques have minimized the socially disruptive effects of geographic distance.” Similarly, Lee (1966) argued that advances in technology would lead to increases in household mobility because of easier communication and the availability of cheaper transportation options. On the contrary, however, advances in ICT may have led to *declines* in household mobility.

In support of the technology-decline hypothesis, Molloy et al. (2014) point to ICT as one possible reason for better employer-employee matching, leading to less employment mobility. Kaplan and Schulhofer-Wohl (2015) also support this notion. They conclude that information technology is partly responsible for declines in migration because workers also have more information about alternative locations. If, as discussed in Chap. 1, repeat and return mobility is sometimes undertaken to correct for “mistakes” made in the original move (Da Vanzo 1981; Roseman 1971), then access to more and better information could lead to better matching between mobile individuals and potential employers and/or destinations.

In terms of the effects of ICT on single moves, easier work commutes (Fischer 2002; Cooke 2011) and the decentralization of the American workplace mean that individuals can more easily telecommute (Molloy et al. 2011), leading to declines in employment-related household mobility. As suggested by Cooke (2011), these declines in household mobility may be suggestive of the fifth stage of Zelinsky's (1971) mobility transition model (Table 2.1), a "future superadvanced society," characterized by declines in migration resulting from "better communications, as travel is rendered redundant by more efficient transmission of messages for business, social, and educational purposes" (Zelinsky 1971:232).

Adopting the principle of geographic place and historical time in the life course perspective, geographic location and historic era have shaped and informed overall household mobility patterns. Patterns and trends vary based on time and location, historic events, and technological advancements—all of which no doubt contribute to our present-day household mobility attitudes and behaviors. However, household mobility rates have also vacillated in light of *recent* historical events. Accordingly, the next section reports on recent trends in household mobility, particularly emphasizing mobility during the Great Recession. Contemporary trends in household mobility (postrecession) are discussed further in Chap. 7, especially as they relate to selective mobility patterns.

## RECENT MIGRATION TRENDS

The economic recession that began in late 2007 and ended in mid-2009 led to a host of housing problems for working-class and middle-class Americans. Job loss and pay cuts limited Americans' financial resources, compromising the residential stability of the most economically vulnerable (Lerman and Zhang 2012). Reductions in credit and devaluation of homes associated with the recession also made it difficult to obtain realistic mortgages, made it harder to find steady employment, and made employment-related relocation socially and economically impractical for many (Hoynes et al. 2012). Some researchers suggest that the result was a slowdown in household mobility (Sturtevant 2013), possibly akin to the declines experienced during the Great Depression (Rosenbloom and Sundstrom 2004).

In the course of the recession, long-distance household mobility was lower than any point since World War II (Frey 2009). The economic impact of the Great Recession appears to have influenced most of this

decline. Examining changes in migration between 1999 and 2009, Cooke (2011) found that most of the recession-era decline (63 percent) was attributable to the economic effects of recession. A modest 17 percent was explained by changes in the age and household structure of the population, and the other 20 percent was attributed to the steady, long-term downward trend in American migration.

Considering the effects of the recession on local mobility, Stoll (2013:24) found that the lure of greener pastures was in decline during the recession. Americans were less likely to relocate to a newly purchased home or to live in a better neighborhood and somewhat more likely to relocate in order to find more affordable housing arrangements. Thus, contrary to early formulations about American household and social mobility, during the recession, some household mobility was undertaken in the context of *downward* social mobility. Rather than shifting from apartments to homes, those most affected by the downturn relocated from homes to apartments, apartments to cheaper apartments, and doubled up with friends and family to save on housing costs (Seltzer et al. 2012; Stoll 2013).

Figure 2.2 illustrates the modest trend in local and distance mobility around the time of the Great Recession. Local mobility increased somewhat between 2008 and 2010, accompanied by a slight drop in geographic mobility. The trends are consistent with household mobility during other times of economic recession (Pandit 1997; Sturtevant 2013). However, as Cooke (2011) stressed, overall, Americans are a more rooted population than ever before. The economic recession seems simply to have been a continuation—or temporary amplification—of an ongoing trend.

## INTERNATIONAL AND COMPARATIVE TRENDS IN INTERNAL MIGRATION

Data limitations, including problems with consistent measurement, have made rigorous cross-national comparisons of internal migration difficult. Unlike data on other demographic processes, such as fertility and mortality, comparable international data on migration trends are less available. As a result, researchers often only compare rates of migration within two to three developed countries. For many years, Long (1991, 1992b) and Greenwood (1997) served as the few existing cross-national comparisons, citing the United States as having significantly higher internal migration than most other developed countries. Reminiscent of Ravenstein's (1889)

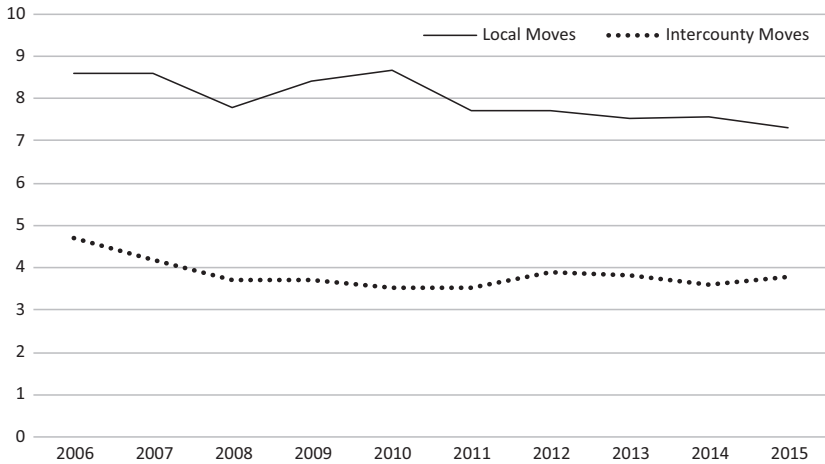


Fig. 2.2 Household mobility around the recession period (2006–2015)

early assertion, Long (1991) speculated that one reason for these differences could be attributed to the expansive American landscape that provides more options for long-distance migration than in other countries.

Recent cross-national research using the Eurobarometer has updated and extended these early findings. Molloy et al. (2011) found that the United States does indeed have significantly higher rates of internal migration than most European countries—almost twice as high in most cases, except for northern Europe. These comparisons were recently supported by Bell and colleagues (Bell and Charles-Edwards 2013), showing the United States among the most mobile countries using data from *Comparing Internal Migration around the Globe* (for information on the data, see Bell et al. 2014).

Overall, despite the secular decline, household mobility remains a distinguishing characteristic of American culture. Americans continue to relocate within and between neighborhoods, counties, states, and regions. As suggested by the World Bank (Iwulka 2012:100), all things considered, “the United States remains the global leader in internal mobility.” The evidence supports Ravenstein’s (1889:280) late-nineteenth-century observation: “They [Americans] are greater wanderers, less tied to home associations, than are the inhabitants of Europe,” albeit to a lesser degree than ever before.

## EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

A number of migration researchers have forecast what bodes for the future, most suggesting postrecession increases in household mobility in the short term (Cooke 2011; Frey 2009; Sturtevant 2013). Frey (2009) argues that household mobility will probably never be as high as it was immediately following World War II but points to potential increases once the postrecession housing market fully recovers. Sturtevant (2013) argues that as the housing market and economy continue to improve, mobility rates will likely rise, linking the trends to young adults' preference to rent rather than own in a potentially risky, still-impaired housing market. She also suggests that household mobility should increase in the coming years because of life-cycle changes among the Echo Boom generation (e.g., childbirth, marriage) and Baby Boom generation (e.g., retirement mobility). Cooke (2011) predicts much the same trend, adding that in the long view, population aging and Americans' "secular rootedness" will continue to exert downward influence on internal migration rates.

With regard to the direction of distance mobility, as noted above, there was a population retraction into the suburbs that decentralized American metropolitan areas. Some of the reasons for this "urban sprawl" have focused on overcrowding, housing costs, and the presence of immigrants (Davies Withers et al. 2008). Recently, some have suggested that a reversal is on the horizon and that American core metropolitan areas will become recentralized. However, data from the Current Population Survey does not support this projection. In 2013–2014 (the most recent year for which these data are available), there were *declines* in core metropolitan areas and *growth* in suburban areas—suggesting that population centralization is not reversing. There is some reason to believe this trend could persist; recent media has pointed to a trend in suburban living among Millennials (Hudson 2015).

## CONCLUSION

Household mobility has long been an enduring theme in the United States. Because American migration is such a strong part of the "American narrative," the study of household mobility has a long tradition, to which geographers, economists, demographers, and sociologists have contributed extensively. As this chapter has shown, trends in household

mobility are dependent upon developments from earlier historical periods—government policies, economic cycles, and large-scale cultural movements from one region to another all frame individuals' experiences and residential histories by supporting or constraining household mobility at various times in various places.

As the life course perspective suggests, individuals' choices, behaviors, and experiences are shaped and transformed by the geographic place and historical period in which they occur (Elder et al. 2003). At the same time, geographic location and sociohistorical context play important parts in defining the American migration experience. Large-scale social, demographic, and economic trends in any given period will impact later mobility trends in those same areas. For example, urbanization increased the number of individuals being born in cities, thereby affecting individuals' need and desire to relocate very far for educational or occupational employment opportunities. Other important historical events, like the Great Recession, also have the potential to influence trends in household mobility. The waning of decades-long historic demographic processes, like the Great Migration, has influenced some of the declines in household mobility over time.

Another historically dependent explanation for changes in migration trends is modernization and the proliferation of information and communication technology, which led Long and Boertlein (1976:36) to accurately predict, almost forty years ago, that “rates of internal migration in the United States are more likely to decline than to rise. By international standards, the United States will continue to have high rates of geographical mobility, but it is likely to become less distinctive in this regard.” Continued advancements in ICT and the continued decentralization of the labor force may lead to even more declines in job transfers and other employment-related mobility. In this case, and consistent with Zelinsky's fifth phase of the migration transition, household *immobility*, not mobility, might be the defining feature of modern society. However, it is unlikely that household mobility will ever slow to a halt. As Zelinsky (1971:249) concluded: “barring a truly major catastrophe, neither the world as a whole nor any single region can ever revert to anything resembling its pristine, modern condition.”

This chapter has outlined how some aspects of history and geography have shaped contemporary experiences with household mobility. Since large-scale trends in household mobility tend to vary over time, “time and place” is a useful principle for understanding household mobility at

the macro level. However, in any given historical period and in any given geographic place, there is still heterogeneity among those who move and those who do not. The next chapter explores characteristics of movers based on local versus distance moving and reasons for doing so.

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## Characteristics of the Mobile Population

### INTRODUCTION

Age is a strong correlate of one's propensity to move, regardless of the distance moved—and household mobility occurs most frequently among young adults (Benetsky et al. 2015; Geist and McManus 2012). Beyond young adulthood, individuals' likelihood of moving tapers off, possibly until older adulthood when some individuals tend to relocate for retirement (Bradley 2011; Lovegreen et al. 2010). As such, the propensity to relocate has been linked to a schedule of life-cycle transitions, often using age and/or family structure as a proxy for these transitions (Rossi [1955] 1980). The first section of this chapter discusses early theories about relocation propensities across the life cycle. Then, drawing on the principle of variability in the life course perspective, the chapter details the heterogeneity in American household mobility based on sociodemographic characteristics of the population.

It is important to understand who moves, why individuals report doing so, and how these reasons vary based on sociodemographic characteristics because these realities help inform policies related to housing consumption and other population processes (Coulter and Scott 2015; Sturtevant 2013). Additionally, long-term sociodemographic trends in individuals' reasons for moving might reflect larger-scale historical and geographic contexts discussed in Chap. 2, such as economic recession, demographic changes in the population (e.g., increases or declines in family size), and fluctuations in housing market prices.

## AGE AND THE LIFE-CYCLE MODEL OF HOUSEHOLD MOBILITY

### *Early Perspectives on Age and the Family*

The early work of Ravenstein (1876, 1885, 1889) outlined a number of “laws of migration.” One of his earliest general assumptions, that *most migrants are adults* and that *families rarely migrate long distances* (Ravenstein 1876:36), pointed to age and family characteristics in migration—although he did not explore these topics in his subsequent, more prominent studies (Grigg 1977). Updating Ravenstein’s early work, Lee (1966:54) detailed common characteristics of migrants and referred to age transitions in predicting migration propensities. He argued that, for many young adults, relocation is a rite of passage associated with nestleaving, entrance into the labor force, marriage, and divorce. However, neither of these early theoretical treatments *explicitly* adopted a life-cycle approach to household mobility.

The formal life-cycle model of household mobility has its conceptual roots in the work of Rossi ([1955] 1980). Drawing on interviews with families in four Philadelphia neighborhoods, Rossi found that life-cycle transitions, the family’s disposition toward renting or owning, housing dissatisfaction, and residential stress precipitate relocations. In particular, Rossi argued that household mobility occurred as a response to disequilibrium associated with changing residential needs and preferences over the life cycle (e.g., marriage, having children, widowhood), which often occur in predictable life stages. In this sense, chronological age serves as a proxy for household mobility since it occurs in synchronicity with other life transitions. Since Rossi, a number of influential studies have adopted this life-cycle approach to explore household mobility (e.g., Long 1991, 1992). In fact, recently, Sturtevant (2013:1) concluded that “Life-cycle theory provides a good, though not perfect, framework for analyzing residential mobility trends.”

Recent theoretical developments have argued that such a deterministic approach to household mobility, where mobility behaviors are based on age and family structure, loses sight of changes in the timing of life course transitions and shifts in family structure (Geist and McManus 2008). For example, the age at which young adults leave home is culturally dependent (Bernard et al. 2014)—and the timing of these transitions has changed over time, as more young adults choose to cohabit before marriage and have fewer children, starting at later ages. As a result, researchers have

argued that migration behaviors may not be as clearly defined as the life-cycle model suggests, since it overlooks variation in demographic processes over time and across cultures and geographic locations (Geist and McManus 2008). As a broad starting point, using the life-cycle perspective and life transitions as an organizational framework, the following section discusses household mobility in the context of age profiles as household mobility “triggers”.

### *Age Profiles of Household Mobility*

Life events influence individuals’ intentions to move (de Groot et al. 2011). Decisions about education, nestleaving, cohabitation, marriage, employment, childbirth, divorce, and retirement are strong drivers of household mobility and occur with some regularity among certain age groups (Warnes 1992; Bernard et al. 2014). Thus, exploring trends in relocation by age groups helps to frame the context of larger-scale household mobility patterns. As a starting point, age profiles provide organizational framework for understanding characteristics of the mobile population since it acknowledges that some individuals and households have a higher propensity to move than others. Moreover, as Rossi ([1955]1980) argued, family life-cycle transitions (e.g., changes in employment, parental status, and marital status) were also associated with different *reasons* for moving. Table 3.1 presents the sequence of life stages and household mobility propensities of these broad age categories based on existing research.

The demographic characteristics of household mobility that are discussed in the following sections are based on aggregate data and microdata from the 2014–2015 Current Population Survey (CPS). Since children and adolescents are usually tied movers, typically relocating with their parents, later discussion explores the age profiles of household mobility in three stages of the adult life cycle: young adulthood, adulthood and midlife, and later-life.

## THE CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY INTEGRATED PUBLIC USE MICRODATA SERIES (IPUMS-CPS)

The US Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics conduct a monthly survey of US households, the Current Population Survey. Each March, in an Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC), the CPS collects data on Americans’ household mobility. Respondents are asked whether they

**Table 3.1** Research on the age sequence of household mobility

<i>Life-cycle stage</i>	<i>Propensity</i>	<i>Life-cycle correlates</i>	<i>Research</i>
Young adulthood	*** +++	Employment and education Cohabitation and marriage “Boomerang” mobility Having children Establishing independence	Benetsky and Fields (2015), Benetsky et al. (2015), Chen and Rosenthal (2008), Clark and Mulder (2000), Copen et al. (2012), Garasky (2002) Gillespie and Treas (2015), Kaplan (2009), Kley and Mulder (2010)†, Rosenfeld and Kim (2005), Sage et al. (2013)†, Sandberg-Thoma et al. (2015), Settersten (1998), Ward and Spitze (2007)
Adulthood	* +	Marital disruption (Divorce/separation) Employment changes Preference moves to less Urban areas	Boyle et al. (2008)†, Bures (2009), Feijten and van Ham (2007)†, Geist and McManus (2008), Geist and McManus (2012), Mulder and Wagner (2010)†, Plane et al. (2005), Stockdale et al. (2013)†, Wulff et al. (2010)†.
Older adulthood	** ++	Retirement Widowhood Housing and location Preference (amenities) Return migration “Empty nest” mobility	Bonnet et al. (2010)†; Bradley and Van Willigen (2010), Lovegreen et al. (2010), Lundholm (2012)†, Robinson and Moen (2000), Sander and Bell (2013), Walters (2002a), Walters (2002b).
Later-life (fourth age)	** +	Formal and informal care	Bradley and Longino (2009), Clark and Davies (1990), Litwak and Longino (1987), Longino et al. (1991), Walters (2002a), Wilmoth (2010).

† = International or comparative research

\* = Local mobility; + = distance mobility

\*/+ = Low; \*\*/++ = medium; \*\*\*/+++ = high

lived at the same residence 1 year prior—those who were living in the same residence at both dates are categorized as *nonmovers*. Those who reported moving are asked additional questions about the location of their previous residence in order to classify the type of household mobility (e.g., local, intercounty, interstate). The CPS also asks those who moved to report their reason for doing so. The CPS provides four collapsed categories for individuals' reasons for moving: family related, employment related, housing related, and "other," along with more detailed reasons within each category.

The CPS annually produces aggregate data based on characteristics of the mobile population—figures based on these aggregate tables were presented in Chap. 2. This chapter utilizes the IPUMS-CPS microdata, which are based on the individual-level data collected by the CPS (Flood et al. 2015). The microdata use household and person replicate weights to ensure a representative sample of the entire civilian, noninstitutionalized American population. While the descriptive data and figures reported in the following sections draw from CPS data for 2014–2015, they are consistent with trends in household mobility and reasons for moving since at least 2006 and almost identical to trends reported in 2013–2014.

The CPS also releases semifrequent reports on household mobility that detail trends in moving (Schachter 2004) and reasons for moving (Ihrke 2014) among the US population. The research presented in this chapter updates and extends these reports in the context of existing social science research on who moves and why.

### *Subsample*

Because many of the characteristics of movers discussed in this chapter are more commonly experienced in adulthood (e.g., home ownership, changes in marital status) statistical analyses are limited to the adult (18+) population of the United States. Following Schachter (2004), in order to compare across different theoretically meaningful age groups, individuals are categorized into three broad categories: young adulthood (age 18–34), adulthood/midlife (35–49), and older adulthood and later life (50+). Since the primary focus is on household mobility in America, those individuals who moved *to* the United States from another country in 2014–2015 were excluded from the sample.

As noted in Chap. 1, geographic boundary markers (e.g., county lines, state lines) are often used as a proxy measure for distance. The descriptive research presented in this chapter categorizes intracounty moves, those

that take place within the same county, as local moves. Intercounty moves, those that cross city, county, or state boundaries, are considered distance moves. Of course, some intercounty moves can still be local; however, Schachter (2004) found that the majority of intercounty moves reported in the CPS (2002–2003) occurred over 100 miles.

### *Overall Sample Characteristics*

Demographic characteristics of the population, based on those who did not move, moved locally, or moved to another city, county, or state distance moving in 2014–2015 are presented in Table 3.2. In 2014–2015, almost 11 percent of the adult population moved within the United States. Of those who moved, 7 percent moved locally (intracounty) and 4 percent moved to another city, county, or state. This is mostly consistent with recent CPS figures that estimated 11.7 percent of the population 1 year old and over moved between 2012 and 2013 (Ihrke 2014). The slight difference between these estimates can be partly explained by sample differences since the population universe in this chapter is restricted to adults and those who have moved *within* the United States.

Table 3.3 presents percentages for broad and detailed reported reasons for moving among the mobile population in 2014–2015. The most common reason for moving was for housing-related reasons (46 percent), 31 percent of households moved for family-related reasons, 21 percent moved for job-related reasons, and about 2 percent moved for some other reason. Among the detailed reasons for moving, the most commonly reported reason is “wanted new or better home/apartment.” These broad trends are consistent with recent research using the CPS data (Ihrke 2014) and are also comparable to full-population estimates since 2006. In any given year in the past decade, most movers relocated for housing-related reasons, followed by family-related reasons, employment-related reasons, and reasons characterized as other.

In 2014–2015, among adults who moved for *housing-related reasons*, 32 percent wanted a new or better house/apartment and 32 percent moved for an uncategorized (“other”) housing-related reason. An additional 17 percent wanted cheaper housing, 12 percent wanted to own their home and/or stop renting, 6 percent wanted a better neighborhood and/or less crime, and 2 percent moved because of a foreclosure or eviction. For those who moved for a *family-related reason* in 2014–2015, 42 percent did so for an uncategorized (“other”) family reason, 39 percent did so



**Table 3.2** Demographic frequencies by move type

<i>Row percentages reported</i>	<i>No move (89.2%)</i>	<i>Local mobility (7.0%)</i>	<i>Distance mobility (3.8%)</i>
Age category			
Young adult: 18–34	79.9	13.3	6.9
Midlife: 35–49	89.8	6.9	3.4
Older adult: 50+	94.8	3.2	2.0
Owner-occupied housing unit	95.3	2.9	1.8
Renter-occupied housing unit	76.7	15.5	7.8
Labor force status			
Employed	88.3	7.8	3.9
Unemployed	82.1	11.2	6.7
Not in labor force	91.5	5.3	3.2
Above poverty level	90.3	6.2	3.5
Below poverty level	81.9	12.6	5.5
Education level			
Less than high school	89.4	7.7	2.9
High school diploma	89.8	6.9	3.3
Some college or AA	88.2	7.8	4.0
College degree	89.1	6.6	4.3
Graduate degree	90.4	5.2	4.4
Native born	89.1	6.9	3.9
Foreign born	89.6	7.5	2.9
Race/ethnicity			
White only	89.9	6.2	3.9
Hispanic only	88.6	8.6	2.8
Asian and Pacific Islander	89.5	6.9	3.6
Black only	86.9	8.9	4.2
Additional races or multiracial	83.5	11.5	5.0
Male	89.1	7.0	3.9
Female	89.3	7.0	3.7
Marital status			
Married	92.3	4.8	2.9
Separated	81.8	12.8	5.4
Divorced	87.9	8.1	4.0
Widowed	94.6	3.6	1.9
Never married	82.9	11.4	5.7
No children	88.6	7.4	4.1
Children	90.3	6.5	3.2

*Note:* Row percentages reported. Weighted data. Subpopulation  $N = 235,535,583$

**Table 3.3** CPS reasons for moving (percentages reported for CPS 2014–2015)

Housing reasons (46.1%)	
Better house/apartment (31.8%)	Those who wanted to move from their current home/apartment to a new, bigger/better house/apartment.
Cheaper housing (17.1%)	Those who moved to cheaper/less-expensive house/apartment.
Own home/stop renting (12.2%)	Those who wanted to own their own home and not rent a house or apartment.
Better neighborhood (5.8%)	Those who wanted to move to a better neighborhood and/or a neighborhood with less crime.
Foreclosure/eviction (1.5%)	Those who moved because of a foreclosure or eviction.
Other housing reason (31.6%)	All other reasons not listed above that are housing related.
Family reasons (31.1%)	
Change in marital status (20.0%)	Those who moved because of family formation or dissolution resulting in a change in marital status classification to one of the following categories: married, widowed, separated or divorced.
To establish own household (38.6%)	Those who moved out of an existing household in order to establish a separate one.
Other family reasons (41.5%)	All other reasons not listed above that are family related.
Employment reasons (20.7%)	
New job or job transfer (48.3%)	Those who moved because of a new job or relocation of existing job. This also included military transfers.
Lost job/looking for work (7.6%)	Those who moved in order to find work.
Closer to work (27.2%)	Those who moved to be closer to their work and/or cut their commuting time.
Retired (6.6%)	Those who, after retirement from a job, have changed their place of residence.
Other job-related reason (10.3%)	All other reasons not listed above that are job related.
Other reasons (2.2%)	
Attend/leave college (15.2%)	Those who leave a place of residence to attend college or who leave college to return to previous place of residence or move elsewhere.
Change of climate (10%)	Those who moved to a better climate.
Health reasons (14.3%)	Any change of residence based on the health of the individual or another person.
Other reasons (60.5%)	All other reasons not listed.

*Note:* Reasons for moving are collected from the individuals who reported living in different living quarters 1 year prior to the March ASEC supplement. Percentages reported are based on individuals 18 and over who moved within the United States between 2014 and 2015. Those who moved *with* the “householder” are assigned the reason of the householder.

because they wanted to establish their own household, and 20 percent did so because of a change in marital status. Regarding individuals who reported moving for an *employment-related reason*, 48 percent moved for a new job or a job transfer, 27 percent moved to be closer to work or for an easier commute, and 10 percent relocated for an uncategorized employment reason. Almost 8 percent moved because the household head lost his or her job or wanted to look for work and about 7 percent moved because of retirement. For those individuals who reported a reason for moving listed in the “*other*” category, 61 percent relocated for an unidentified and uncategorized reason, 15 percent moved in order to attend or leave college, 14 percent moved for health reasons, and 10 percent moved for a change of climate. Sociodemographic correlates of individuals’ reasons for moving are presented in Table 3.4.

### *Analysis*

The following sections describe household mobility and reported reasons for moving in CPS ASEC 2014–2015 using logistic regression models for whether an individual moved or not among the full adult population and the type of move made (local or distance) among the subpopulation of movers. Baseline bivariate models for demographic characteristics are discussed in the context of previous research and theory. Additional information about data collection, including study limitations, is presented in the appendix.

## DESCRIPTIVE FINDINGS

### *Young Adulthood (Age 18–34)*

As suggested by the life-cycle model of household mobility, recent estimates suggest that rates of household mobility are highest among the young adult population—a trend that has persisted over time, despite declines from earlier generations (Cooke 2011; Sturtevant 2013). Drawing on aggregate CPS data, Fig. 3.1 illustrates household mobility by type of move among the entire US population. Nearly a quarter of individuals in their twenties change residences in a given year, which is much higher than individuals in other age categories.

To explore the effects of age on individuals’ propensity to move, model 1 in Table 3.5 presents a baseline logistic regression model for age

**Table 3.4** Demographic frequencies by collapsed reasons for moving

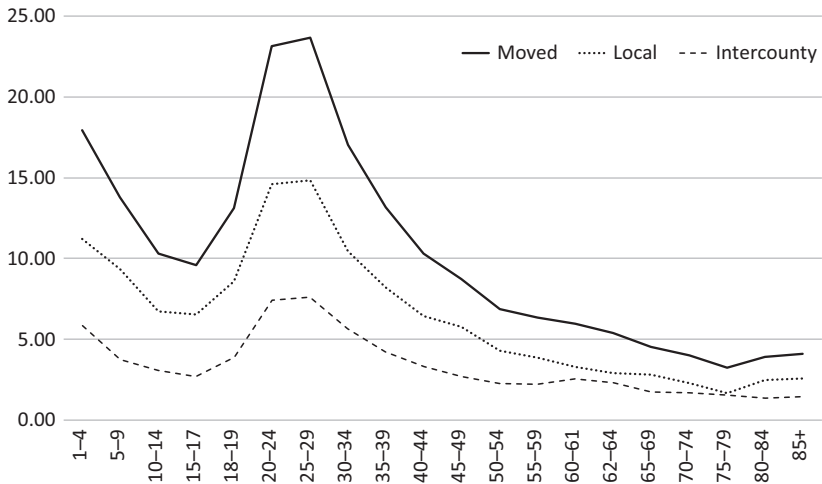
	<i>Family</i> (31.1%)	<i>Economic</i> (20.7%)	<i>Housing</i> (46.1%)	<i>Other</i> (2.2%)
Local move	32.2	12.5	53.5	1.7
Distance move	28.9	36.0	32.1	3.0
Age category				
Young adult: 18–34	32.5	22.3	43.3	1.9
Midlife: 35–49	27.5	20.3	49.8	2.4
Older adult: 50+	31.3	17.3	48.7	2.7
Owner-occupied housing unit	32.8	17.0	47.0	3.1
Renter-occupied housing unit	30.3	22.3	45.7	1.8
Labor force status				
Employed	30.7	22.8	44.6	1.9
Unemployed	37.0	18.6	41.3	3.1
Not in labor force	30.7	16.2	50.4	2.7
Above poverty level	30.5	22.4	45.0	2.1
Below poverty level	33.2	14.5	49.9	2.5
Education level				
Less than high school	33.4	13.2	51.9	1.5
High school diploma	35.9	15.9	46.3	1.9
Some college or AA	30.8	19.3	47.6	2.3
College degree	26.2	28.3	42.6	2.9
Graduate degree	24.6	33.0	40.6	1.8
Native born	31.8	20.5	45.5	2.3
Foreign born	27.7	21.7	49.0	1.6
Race/ethnicity				
White only	31.2	21.1	45.1	2.6
Hispanic only	34.1	18.6	46.0	1.3
Asian and Pacific Islander	19.5	26.4	51.2	2.9
Black only	31.1	18.4	49.6	1.0
Additional races or multiracial	36.2	23.7	38.9	1.2
Male	30.1	22.0	45.7	2.3
Female	32.0	19.5	46.5	2.1
Marital status				
Married	27.2	22.6	47.9	2.4
Separated	47.0	13.2	38.3	1.6
Divorced	36.8	15.2	46.0	2.0
Widowed	36.4	14.4	47.0	2.2
Never married	31.2	21.6	45.1	2.1
No children	31.2	21.9	44.6	2.3

*(continued)*

**Table 3.4** (continued)

	<i>Family</i> (31.1%)	<i>Economic</i> (20.7%)	<i>Housing</i> (46.1%)	<i>Other</i> (2.2%)
Children	30.8	18.4	48.9	2.0

*Note:* Row percentages reported. Weighted data. Subpopulation  $N = 25,407,003$



**Fig. 3.1** Household mobility by age: 2014–2015 (age 1+). *Source:* Current Population Survey, March Supplement (2015)

differentials in moving (any move or no move) among US adults using the IPUMS-CPS. Consistent with a large body of research that finds that the highest rates of household mobility occur among young adults (e.g., Geist and McManus 2008), the results indicate that midlife individuals and older adults are significantly less likely to move than young adults. This finding is perhaps unsurprising given that young adulthood is a time marked with many life transitions (Rossi [1955] 1980; Benetsky et al. 2015). However, the results of model 1 in Table 3.6 suggest that young adults are somewhat less likely to move to another city, county, or state when compared to older adults ( $p < 0.001$ ). This finding is discussed in more detail below.

**Table 3.5** Odds ratios for household mobility in 2014–2015 for the US adult population

<i>Model</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
Age category							
Young adult:							
18–34							
(omitted)							
Midlife: 35–49	0.5***						0.6***
Older adult:	0.2***						0.3***
50+							
Renter-occupied housing unit		4.9***					5.1***
Labor force status							
Employed							
(omitted)							
Unemployed			1.1*				1.2**
Not in labor force			0.8***				0.9***
Poverty			1.3***				1.4***
Education level							
Less than high school							
(omitted)							
High school diploma				1.2***			1.1*
Some college or AA				1.3***			1.2***
College degree				1.4***			1.3***
Graduate degree				1.5***			1.4***
Foreign born					0.9**		0.9**
Race/ethnicity							
White only							
(omitted)							
Hispanic only					0.7***		0.7***
Asian and Pacific Islander					0.8**		0.8**
Black only					0.8***		0.8***
Additional races or multiracial					1.0		1.0

*(continued)*

**Table 3.5** (continued)

<i>Model</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
Female						1.0	1.0
Marital status							
Married (omitted)							
Separated						1.4***	1.5***
Divorced						1.4***	1.3***
Widowed						0.9	1.0
Never married						0.9*	0.9*
Children						0.8***	0.9***
Unweighted model $N = 141,825$						Weighted model $N = 233,545,093$	

*Note:* Models 3.3–3.7 include controls for age and housing tenure (not shown)

### *Young Adults' Reasons for Moving*

Young adults often leave home to attend college, leave college for employment or graduate school, enlist in and leave the armed forces, change jobs, and get married and have children. All of these transitions are, to some extent, associated with changing residences (Rossi [1955] 1980; Kley and Mulder 2010). After moving away for work or school, young adults are also prone to relocating back to their origin and/or “boomeranging” back into the parental home (Kaplan 2009; Sage et al. 2013).

Table 3.7 presents multinomial logistic regression models using data from CPS 2014–2015. The results suggest that age group is significantly associated with different reasons for moving. Young adults are more likely to report moving for employment as opposed to family-related reasons ( $p < 0.01$ ). Young adults are also more likely than midlife and older adults to move for family and employment than for housing-related reasons ( $p < 0.05$ ). These results are consistent with previous research findings from the United States and the United Kingdom that housing characteristics are less important in young adulthood, when individuals are apt to relocate for family formation and entrance into the labor force rather than changes in housing needs and preferences (Ihrke 2014; Coulter and Scott 2015).

**Table 3.6** Odds ratios for local/distance move in 2014–2015 for the US mobile population

<i>Model</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
Age category							
Young adult:							
18–34							
(omitted)							
Midlife: 35–49	1.0						1.0
Older adult:	1.2***						1.1
50+							
Renter-occupied housing unit		0.8**					1.0
Labor force status							
Employed							
(omitted)							
Unemployed			1.3**				1.5***
Not in labor force			1.3***				1.4***
Poverty			0.7***				0.8*
Education level							
Less than high school							
(omitted)							
High school diploma				1.3**			1.2
Some college or AA				1.4***			1.3**
College degree				1.8***			1.6***
Graduate degree				2.3***			2.1***
Foreign born					0.8*		0.8**
Race/ethnicity							
White only							
(omitted)							
Hispanic only					0.6***		0.7***
Asian and Pacific Islander					1.0		0.9
Black only					0.8**		0.9
Additional races or multiracial					0.8		0.8
Female						1.0	0.9*
Marital status							

*(continued)*



**Table 3.6** (continued)

<i>Model</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Married (omitted)							
Separated						0.7**	0.8
Divorced						0.8**	0.8*
Widowed						0.8*	0.8*
Never married						0.8**	0.9
Children						0.9**	0.9
Unweighted model $N = 13,694$							Weighted model $N = 25,124,714$

*Note:* Models 3.3–3.7 include controls for age and housing tenure (not shown)

### *Adulthood and Midlife (Age 35–49)*

For the most part, research on household mobility in midlife is less common than research on household mobility at other age groups. Migration research has tended to center on the “social-chronological margins” of the life course continuum, the young and old (Hopkins and Pain 2007:287), often ignoring trends in household mobility among the middle aged. This may be related to the perceived relative residential stability of people in midlife. The aggregate CPS data presented in Fig. 3.1 illustrates how local and distance mobility rates trend downward for individuals beginning around midlife—household mobility declines to 13 percent among individuals 35–39 and to 8–10 percent among individuals in their forties.

However, this age group does have significantly higher rates of mobility than older adults. Bures (2009) found that midlife adults without coresidential children were more likely to move, and move farther, than those with coresidential children, suggesting that an “empty nest” in midlife can lead to an increased propensity to move. Analysis of the IPUMS-CPS using midlife as the reference group (not shown) suggests that individuals 35–49 are still more than twice as likely to move than older adults ( $p < 0.001$ ).

#### *Midlife Adults’ Reasons for Moving*

Among the reasons that individuals move at midlife, researchers have explored the effects of marital dissolution and employment change (Mulder and Malmberg 2011; Mulder and Wagner 2012). Others have identified relocation to care for aging parents as a potential reason for

**Table 3.7** Relative risk ratios for reasons for moving in 2014–2015 for the mobile population

<i>Omitted: housing-related reason</i>	<i>Family-related reason</i>	<i>Job-related reason</i>	<i>Other reason</i>	<i>Job-reason (family omitted)</i>
Distance move	1.55***	4.85***	2.67***	3.12***
Age category				
Young adult: 18–34 (omitted)				
Midlife: 35–49	0.68***	0.85	1.36	1.26*
Older adult: 50+	0.75***	0.74**	1.27	0.99
Renter-occupied housing unit	0.89	1.63***	0.65*	1.84***
Labor force status				
Employed (omitted)				
Unemployed	1.19	1.02	1.99**	0.85
Not in labor force	0.85*	0.73***	1.18	0.86
Poverty	0.95	0.74**	1.37	0.78**
Education level				
Less than high school (omitted)				
High school diploma	1.13	1.21	1.26	1.08
Some college or AA	0.93	1.37*	1.49	1.47**
College degree	0.90	2.06***	2.05*	2.29***
Graduate degree	0.94	2.48***	1.16	2.64***
Foreign born	0.92	1.07	0.78	1.16
Race/ethnicity				
White only (omitted)				
Hispanic only	1.17	1.21	0.76	1.03
Asian and Pacific Islander	0.64**	0.96	1.3	1.49*
Black only	0.93	0.93	0.38**	1.0
Additional races or multiracial	1.4	1.58	0.64	1.13
Female	1.05	0.94	0.90	0.90*
Marital status				
Married (omitted)				
Separated	2.29***	0.89	1.04	0.39***
Divorced	1.53***	0.82	0.87	0.53***
Widowed	1.56**	0.99	0.93	0.63*
Never married	1.07	0.88	1.17	0.82*

*(continued)*

**Table 3.7** (continued)

<i>Omitted: housing-related reason</i>	<i>Family-related reason</i>	<i>Job-related reason</i>	<i>Other reason</i>	<i>Job-reason (family omitted)</i>
Children	0.95	0.77**	0.88	0.81*
Unweighted model $N = 13,694$		Weighted Model $N = 25,124,714$		

*Note:* Models not included: Family versus other and employment versus other

household mobility at midlife (Michielin et al. 2008; Rogerson et al. 1993). While family-related circumstances may inspire some household mobility in midlife adulthood, family-related moves do not appear to be significantly more common among this age group than others (Table 3.7).

Research on the reasons for moving at midlife have also emphasized the importance of housing preference and geographic context, particularly as it relates to moving from the city to the suburbs. Plane et al. (2005) show that midlife household mobility accounts for a substantial amount of urban to suburban migration, due to increased freedom to move outside of the city based on personal preference. Consistent with these findings, multinomial logistic regression models indicate that midlife individuals were significantly more likely than young adults ( $p < 0.001$ ) and older adults ( $p < 0.05$ ) to move for housing than for family-related reasons. Midlife adults are also significantly less likely than young adults to move for employment than for housing reasons ( $p < 0.01$ ).

### *Older Adulthood and Later Life (Age 50+)*

Studies on older adult migration tend to focus on life transitions, such as retirement and widowhood that can facilitate household mobility. However, trends toward delayed retirement and aging in place may have led to shifts in older adult household mobility patterns—although, as Sturtevant (2013) pointed out, adequate data are not available to compare the postretirement household mobility patterns of older adults to past generations of older adults. Figure 3.1 illustrates that, among older adult men and women, overall migration rates decline from about 5–6 percent in the fifties and sixties to about 3–4 percent for individuals 65 and over. In addition to declines in overall household mobility, differences between rates of local and distance migration also diminish after age 50.

For example, 1.7 percent of individuals aged 75–79 move locally and 1.6 percent of individuals in this age group move to another city, county, or state. However, as a result of the CPS sampling strategy, these data may underestimate the household mobility of later-life individuals. Relocations into nursing homes are not counted given that individuals living in “institutional” formal care settings are not included in their sampling frame.

Older adults, especially long-term residents of a given area, may have built location-specific capital (e.g., community ties, social networks, job security, clientele, family relations) that tie them to their location. This may be why older adults are less likely to move overall than young adults and midlife individuals ( $p < 0.001$ ). However, among the population of older adults who do move, housing factors and other amenities tend to replace employment-related reasons for moving, making them prone to distance mobility compared to local mobility (Geist and McManus 2008; Millington 2000). Consistent with this research, the baseline results of model 1 in Table 3.6 indicate that mobile older adults are somewhat more likely than mobile young adults to move to another city, county, or state rather than locally ( $p < 0.001$ ).

#### *Older Adults’ Reasons for Moving*

Since older adults have fewer remaining years in the labor force, they may be less inclined to move for work. Research has consistently found that older adults are less likely to move for employment reasons than are individuals at other ages (e.g., Geist and McManus 2008). There is some support for this assertion in the multinomial logistic regression with older adults as the reference group (not shown). Older adults are significantly more likely than young and midlife adults to move for family rather than employment-related reasons ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Older adults are also “amenity migrants, retiring to communities with leisure activities, favorable climates, and other amenities” (Litwak and Longino 1987). The CPS provides some tentative support for this assertion. Possibly related to health- and climate-based reasons for moving (both categorized as “other”), older adults are significantly more likely than young ( $p < 0.001$ ) and midlife adults ( $p < 0.05$ ) to move for a rather characterized as “other” reason than for employment.

In later life, physical and mental frailty and limitations in functional status, sometimes in conjunction with widowhood, prompt relocation to (or within proximity to) an adult child or formal care provider. As such, the household mobility decisions of “assistance migrants” are informed

by place characteristics, economic concerns, and a desire to remain close to kin (Walters 2002a). Later life moves have also been linked to severe disability that prompts a transition to long-term care facilities. The household mobility decisions of “severely disabled migrants” are linked to greater need for assistance with activities of daily living, such as bathing, shopping, and transportation (Walters 2002b). However, as noted above, because later-life care facilities and nursing homes are not included in the CPS sampling frame, moves to nursing homes and other institutional settings are not counted. As a result, CPS data may underestimate household mobility among the oldest Americans.

Overall, the results in Tables 3.5–3.7 are consistent with the notion that age is an influential factor in household mobility propensities and individuals’ reasons for moving. The results of Table 3.7 indicate that young adults move for family and employment reasons, midlife adults move for housing-related reasons, and older adults move for housing and other reasons—with some variation depending on the comparison group considered. Figure 3.2 illustrates variation in reasons for moving for the broad age categories.

Because these models identify the propensity to move across a rigid sequence of life stages, they tend to ignore the great variability in individuals’ resources, family situation, and personal characteristics. For example, many retirees in poor health without adequate income or resources do not move and instead choose to “age in place” (Bradley and Longino 2009), while others have the resources to relocate to formal care

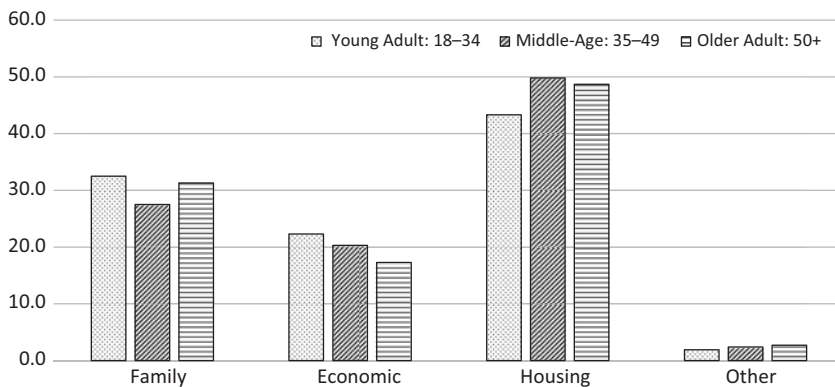


Fig. 3.2 Reason for moving by age group (18+): 2014–2015

facilities and other living arrangements based on amenities and accommodations (Plane and Jurjevich 2009; Walters 2002a). While conventional life-cycle models of household mobility are helpful for understanding general age-related trends in moving, the life course perspective emphasizes heterogeneity in demographic characteristics of movers, such as income, employment, and education (Geist and McManus 2008; Shanahan 2000). The next section explores some additional variability in Americans' household mobility and reported reasons for moving.

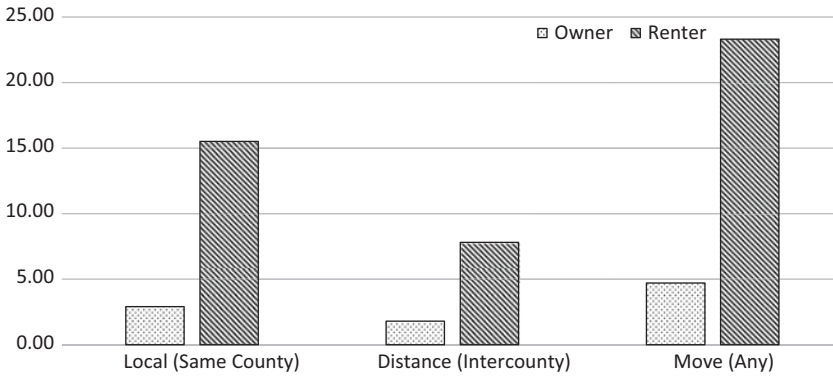
## ADDITIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MOBILE POPULATION

In addition to age, there is still wide demographic variation among those who move, those who do not, the type of move made, and why a move was undertaken. A number of additional demographic characteristics are known to influence household mobility and individuals' reasons for moving. The next section explores the effects of housing tenure, employment and economic variables, education, race/ethnicity, nativity, and family size/structure on household mobility and reasons for moving. All baseline models describe the direct effects of each characteristic *when controlling for age and housing tenure*, often considered the two strongest predictors of household mobility.

### *Housing Tenure*

Housing tenure is an important factor in the propensity to relocate, and research has consistently shown that homeowners have substantially lower rates of household mobility than renters (Schachter 2004). The purchase of a home grants a sense of housing security, establishes an "economic bond" between individuals and their residence as well as a "social connection" between individuals and a specific location. Transaction costs associated with moving from one mortgaged residence to another (or from a mortgaged residence to a rental situation) are also high, which might deter owner-occupiers from moving (Frey 2009).

Analysis of the IPUMS-CPS data supports the notion that homeowners are less mobile than renters. The results of a baseline logistic regression without controls for age (not shown) indicates that renters are more than six times more likely to move than homeowners ( $p < 0.001$ ). Figure



**Fig. 3.3** Household mobility by housing tenure: 2014–2015 (18+)

3.3 illustrates this variation, showing clear differences in the mobility propensities of renters and homeowners. Among the entire population of adult renters in the United States, almost a quarter (23.2 percent) moved between 2014 and 2015, while less than 5 percent of homeowners moved. When controlling for age (Table 3.5, model 2), renters are still almost five times more likely to move than are homeowners ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Regarding the type of move, model 2 in Table 3.6 shows that, among the population of adult movers, renters are significantly less likely than homeowners to move to a new city, county, or state. This may be associated with renters' ability—or need—to relocate locally in order to resolve housing issues. Homeowners have greater freedom than renters to renovate, maintain, and improve their residence as necessary; therefore, homeowners may be better able to resolve residential dissatisfaction without needing to move to a new home in the same area (Coulombel 2010; Hubert 2006). As Table 3.7 indicates, renters are more likely than homeowners to move for employment than for either housing or family-related reasons ( $p < 0.001$ ).

It is important to note that these results may be somewhat inaccurate since the data reflect housing tenure only *after the move has taken place*. However, as Fischer (2002:187) reasoned, it may be safe to assume that “most current renters were renters before their move and the same for owners.” Recent longitudinal research using the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) has substantiated this claim, showing that the over-

whelming majority of American moves are among renters relocating within the rental market (Cooper and Bachmann 2012).

### *Employment, Poverty, and Education*

#### *Economic Variables: Labor Force Status and Poverty*

There is a well-established relationship between social mobility and household mobility (Hall and Ruggles 2004; Lewis and Sinha 2007; Winship 2015). As Chap. 2 discussed, individuals may move, particularly across long distances, to improve their lot in life, secure better employment, or search for a job after losing one. As the descriptive frequencies in Table 3.2 show, unemployed adults are most mobile, with 18 percent relocating between 2014 and 2015. Individuals not in the labor force (i.e., those who are not looking or available for employment) were least mobile.

Analysis of baseline logistic regression models of economic factors using the IPUMS-CPS data supports this notion (Table 3.5, model 3). Compared with employed individuals, the unemployed are somewhat more likely to move ( $p < 0.001$ ). Those not in the labor force (NILF) are slightly less likely to move than employed individuals ( $p < 0.05$ ). Among the mobile population, the results of model 3 in Table 3.6 indicate that unemployed individuals and those not in the labor force are somewhat more likely than employed individuals to move to another county than locally ( $p < 0.01$ ). However, as with housing tenure, the CPS measurements capture labor force status *after* the move has occurred.

Poor adults move locally more than nonpoor adults (Geist and McManus 2008; Schachter 2004). One reason for these differences has been linked to housing tenure. Lower-income households are more often renters, and renters are less tied to their homes, making them prone to moving more frequently than homeowners (Frey 2009). Even when controlling for age and housing tenure, mobile adults living below the poverty level are still significantly more likely to move than the nonpoor ( $p < 0.001$ ). However, this is primarily related to local moves. As model 3 in Table 3.6 indicates, nonpoor individuals are significantly more likely than those living in poverty to move across a distance ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Table 3.7 explores how economic variables are associated with individuals' reasons for moving when controlling for age and housing tenure. Possibly linked to retirement, those not in the labor force are more likely than employed individuals to report housing-related rather than family



( $p < 0.05$ ) or employment ( $p < 0.001$ ) reasons for moving. This is consistent with previous findings that employment-related moves are more common among the employed than the unemployed and those not in the labor force (Ihrke 2014). Unemployed individuals are two times more likely than the employed to report an “other” reason for moving rather than a housing reason ( $p < 0.01$ ). Additionally, those living below the poverty line are less likely to move for employment than housing or family-related reasons ( $p < 0.001$ ).

### *Education Level*

Contrary to earlier research using CPS data (Schachter 2004), the baseline logistic regression results in model 4 of Table 3.5 point to a relationship between level of education and overall household mobility. There is an incremental increase in the odds of moving with increasing levels of education. Individuals with a high school degree, some college or an AA degree, a college degree, or a graduate degree are all significantly more likely to move than those with less than a high school education ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Level of education has also been linked to the type of move made. Researchers have shown that those with higher levels of education are more likely to make distance moves than those with lower levels of education (Coulombel 2010; Fischer 2002; Schachter 2004). The results of model 4 (Table 3.6) confirm these findings. Controlling for age and housing tenure among the entire population of adult movers, all levels of education are more likely than those with less than a high school degree to move to another city, county, or state. Individuals with a graduate degree are over two times more likely to make a distance move than those with less than a high school degree ( $p < 0.001$ ).

The spatial dispersion of specialized employment may also lead individuals with higher levels of education, particularly those with advanced degrees, to relocate for employment. Consistent with earlier research (Ihrke 2014), the results in Table 3.7 show that individuals with some college, a college degree, and a graduate degree are all more likely than those with less than a high school degree to move for employment rather than family- or housing-related reasons ( $p < 0.05$ ). These results should be taken as preliminary support for this relationship since these models include *all individuals 18 and over*—meaning that individuals at the youngest ages have likely not yet completed their education. However, the results were similar when restricting the sample to individuals 25+.

Consistent with prior findings on educational differences in household mobility (Fischer 2002; Malamud and Wozniak 2011), there are some differences in educational attainment and overall household mobility. Within each educational category, relocation also varies by move type. The likelihood of moving locally declines with increasing levels of education while the likelihood of distance mobility increases with higher levels of education.

### *Race/Ethnicity and Nativity*

With regard to race, the main racial groups discussed in this section are Hispanic, White, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Black. A fifth category includes individuals of additional races/ethnicities and also includes biracial and multiracial individuals. While the use of a single-race classification method loses sight of more nuanced differences, disaggregation of individuals into extremely small racial and ethnic categories could lead to less reliable results.

Past research found that interstate migration is slightly lower for Black, Hispanic, and foreign-born individuals (Molloy et al. 2011). Model 5 in Table 3.5 supports these findings. The results suggest that Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Black individuals are significantly less likely to move than whites ( $p < 0.01$ ). Additionally, foreign-born individuals are less likely to move than native-born individuals ( $p < 0.01$ ). Consistent with earlier results using CPS data on type of move made (Schachter 2004), model 5 in Table 3.6 also indicates that Hispanic and Black individuals were less likely than Whites to move to another county rather than locally ( $p < 0.01$ ).

The results of Table 3.7 do not indicate that there are any significant differences in the reasons for moving reported by foreign-born and native-born Americans. However, the findings do point to several racial differences. Asian/Pacific Islanders are less likely than Whites to move for family than for housing ( $p < 0.001$ ). Black ( $p < 0.01$ ) and Hispanic ( $p < 0.05$ ) individuals are less likely than Whites to move for employment than for housing-related reasons. Some of the reasons for these racial discrepancies in household mobility, type of move, and reasons for moving are discussed further in Chap. 7.

## GENDER AND FAMILY

### *Gender*

Consistent with previous research that shows no gender differences in household mobility or move type (Fischer 2002; Schachter 2004), there were null results for gender in the baseline logistic regression models (model 6 in Tables 3.5 and 3.6). However, recent research found that females are less likely to move for employment than are males (Ihrke 2014), and some have linked this discrepancy to females' greater likelihood to relocate after the birth of a child (Coulter and Scott 2015). Consistent with these results, the results of Table 3.7 indicate that females are somewhat less likely than are males to move for employment than for family-related reasons ( $p < 0.05$ ).

### *Marital Status*

Research has been consistent in showing that married individuals are less likely to move than are the unmarried (Ihrke 2014). Never-married individuals are freer to relocate—and divorce and separation almost always lead to the relocation of one partner (Fischer 2002). The baseline logistic regression model in Table 3.5 (model 6) indicates that divorced and separated individuals are significantly more likely than married individuals to move ( $p < 0.001$ ). However, never-married individuals are somewhat *less* likely to move than the married ( $p < 0.05$ ). One reason for this inconsistency may be the variation in age and housing tenure. In models that do not control for age and housing tenure, all marital groups are almost twice as likely as married individuals to move, except widows, who are less likely than married individuals to move ( $p < 0.001$ ). With regard to the distance of the move, among the population of adult movers, all marital statuses are less likely than the married to move across a distance rather than locally ( $p < 0.05$ ).

In multinomial logistic models for reason for moving, separated ( $p < 0.001$ ), divorced ( $p < 0.001$ ), and widowed ( $p < 0.01$ ) individuals are significantly more likely than married individuals to move for family than for housing-related reasons. Separated ( $p < 0.05$ ), divorced ( $p < 0.001$ ), widowed ( $p < 0.05$ ), and never married ( $p < 0.001$ ) are less likely than married individuals to move for employment than for family. All marital statuses are less likely than the married to move for employment than

for family reasons ( $p < 0.001$ ). As with housing tenure and employment, because the CPS is cross-sectional in nature, demographic information is collected *after* the move has taken place. Therefore, these results could either reflect changes in marital status that instigated a relocation or vice versa. However, the results are consistent with other CPS research findings that married individuals are less likely than the unmarried to move for family-related reasons (Ihrke 2014).

### *Parental Status*

Since Rossi ([1955] 1980), a substantial literature has explored the complex relationship between household mobility and household size and structure. Most family-based household mobility research has found that households with dependent-age children are less likely to move (e.g., Geist and McManus 2012). Consistent with this research, the baseline results of model 6 in Table 3.5 indicate that, controlling for age and housing tenure, individuals with dependent-age coresidential children are less likely to move than those without children ( $p < 0.001$ ). Moreover, with regard to the type of move, model 6 in Table 3.6 shows that, compared with individuals without children, those with children are also less likely to make a distance move than a local move ( $p < 0.01$ ). Table 3.7 indicates that individuals with children are less likely to move for employment than for housing- ( $p < 0.01$ ) or family-related reasons ( $p < 0.05$ ). Some of the reasons behind these differences are explored in Chap. 4.

### *Move Type and Reason for Moving*

A number of studies have found that local moves tend to occur for housing considerations, while distance moves are more often employment related (Clark and Withers 2007; Clark and Huang 2003; Coulombel 2010; Ihrke 2014; Niedomysl 2011; Schachter 2004). As the next chapter suggests, long-distance moves tend to be more disruptive than local moves, so individuals may only be willing to do so when they lead to the attainment of important goals, such as higher wages or better employment (Kley 2011). Local moves, on the other hand, can be an easy way to resolve complaints about housing and space, and so housing-related moves are often linked with local mobility (Clark and Ledwith 2006).

Figure 3.4 illustrates the differences in reason for moving by move type. Between 2014 and 2015, a sizeable amount, 54 percent, of those who

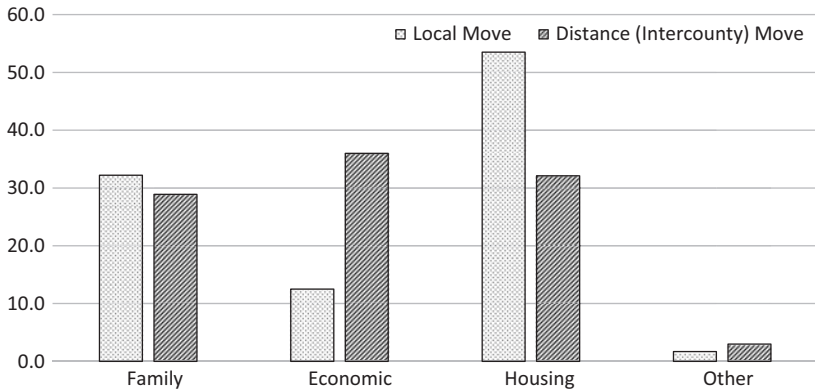


Fig. 3.4 Reason for moving by move type: 2014–2015 (18+)

moved *within the same county* did so for housing-related reasons, while 32 percent moved for family reasons. About 13 percent moved locally for job-related reasons and 2 percent for other reasons. Among those who made a long-distance move, 36 percent moved for employment-related reasons, 32 percent for housing-related reasons, 29 percent for family-related reasons, and 3 percent moved for other reasons. Consistent with the previous research discussed above, the results of Table 3.7 indicate that distance movers were over three times more likely than local movers to relocate for employment than for family reasons ( $p < 0.001$ ). The results also indicate that distance movers were more likely than local movers to move for family ( $p < 0.001$ ), employment ( $p < 0.001$ ), or “other” reasons ( $p < 0.001$ ) than for housing-related reasons.

### FULL LOGISTIC MODELS FOR HOUSEHOLD MOBILITY, TYPE OF MOVE, AND REASON FOR MOVING

Full logistic models that include each of the demographic variables from the baseline models are presented for each model. Given that the baseline models included controls for age and housing tenure, two characteristics known to explain a great deal of variation in household mobility, the odds ratios and significance in the full model are similar to those in the baseline models discussed above. To review the findings in this chapter, the results of the full models will be briefly summarized.

The results of model 7 in Table 3.5 point to a number of factors that influence individuals' likelihood of making a move of any type. Midlife and older adults are less likely to move than young adults. Renters are significantly more likely to move than those who own their homes. Compared with employed individuals, the unemployed and those not in the labor force are less likely to move. Individuals living at or below the poverty line are more likely to move than nonpoor individuals. Those with a high school degree or higher have a higher likelihood of moving than those with less than a high school degree. Foreign-born individuals are less likely to move than the native born. In contrast to the baseline model for race, Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islanders are *less* likely to move than Whites. Compared to married individuals, separated and divorced individuals are more likely to move, and never-married individuals are less likely to do so. Those who have children are less likely to move than those who do not.

Different factors influence individuals' propensity to relocate locally versus over a distance (Table 3.6, model 7). Compared with mobile individuals who are employed, the unemployed and those not in the labor force are more likely to make an intercounty than a local move. Individuals living at or below the poverty line are less likely than nonpoor individuals to move across a distance than locally. Movers with some college and graduate degrees are more likely than those with less than a high school degree to relocate across county lines than locally. Compared with native-born Americans, foreign-born individuals are less likely to move across county lines than locally. Hispanic individuals are less likely than Whites to move to another county rather than locally. Separated and divorced individuals are less likely than married individuals to move across a distance than locally.

The results of the baseline and full models were mostly consistent with previous research on predictors of household mobility, move type, and reasons for moving in the United States as well as in other developed countries (Schachter 2004; Ihrke 2014; Niedomysl 2011).

## REPEAT MOBILITY AND HYPERMOBILITY

In addition to moving and the type of move, move frequency also differs across a number of demographic characteristics. Early research argued that some Americans are "mobility-prone" repeat movers (Tucker and Urton 1987:265) and suggested that hypermobility accounts for a substantial

proportion of American household mobility (DaVanzo and Morrison 1981). However, because of the design of the CPS questionnaire, household mobility estimates do not include multiple moves made by an individual or household within a single year. As such, the CPS data do not capture repeat moves and hypermobility.

Hypermobility, the act of moving several times in a short time frame, is often linked to poverty and chaotic home environments (Cohen and Wardrip 2011); however, perhaps because of data limitations discussed above, research on characteristics of frequent movers has been limited. Speare and Goldscheider (1987) found that children who move frequently are less likely to live with both biological parents and more likely to be poor. Using the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), Tucker and Urton (1987) found that females are less likely to be frequent movers than males, young adults are more likely to be “mobility-prone” multiple movers, and whites (when compared only to blacks) had a higher tendency to be frequent movers. They also found that state-to-state movers moved more often than in-state movers. However, they conceded that it was “impossible to conclude anything more definitive about that relationship” (269). As noted in Chap. 1, researchers have used diverse conceptualizations and measurements for hypermobility, which has made research on the correlates of frequent moving difficult to pinpoint.

Repeat mobility (or repeat migration) is a characteristic of those individuals who make additional moves after an initial relocation. Given the discussion of information and communication technology in Chapter 2, there is some reason to believe that repeat migration, and perhaps even hypermobility, has declined since Tucker and Urton’s descriptive research in the 1980s. Individuals may be less prone to repeat migration now that movers have more and better information about labor demand, housing markets, and neighborhoods at their destination. As a result, there may be less likelihood of “failed migration,” where a relocation is unsuccessful and leads to additional household mobility (Clark and Withers 2007:596).

## CONCLUSION

This chapter described a number of defining features of the mobile population, helping to identify “who moves.” Documenting trends in who moves and why helps inform housing and migration-based policies and target vulnerable families for intervention, which are discussed further in Chap. 8. Starting with age profiles of household mobility and the life-cycle

model as a guiding framework, this chapter explored household mobility as it occurs for different age groups and in the context of homeownership, social class, race, nativity, and the family. Young adults, those with higher levels of education, renters, and those who do not have children tend to be the most mobile. Of course, this is largely a product of individuals' *ability* to relocate. For instance, people who are better educated may have more resources (i.e., human and financial capital) to move themselves, and possibly their families, across long distances to realize the advantages of long-distance migration (Fischer 2002; Malamud and Wozniak 2011); this is discussed in more depth in Chap. 7.

Household mobility is a dynamic process, and individuals respond to life events and residential circumstances differently based on their various needs, preferences, resources, and past experiences. Moreover, individuals are linked to one another in complex networks that can also facilitate or block household mobility decisions. The next chapter takes a more microlevel approach and explores individuals' and families' motivations, expectations, and decisions about household mobility and locations. As later chapters argue, these microlevel decisions are also important for policymakers and practitioners since they highlight individuals' rationale for moving or not moving. In fact, an early discussion of microsocial and macrosocial policy orientations (De Jong and Fawcett 1981:51) argues that while a "macro-approach probably has more policy pay-offs than the micro-approach for the simple reason that policy makers would probably rather have information on actual gross flows than on individual propensities ... from the viewpoint of advancing our understanding of who moves and why, the micro propensity approach is more informative."

## APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL DATA AND ANALYSIS DETAILS FOR CHAP. 3

### *IPUMS-CPS ASEC Sample and Measures*

The CPS is a monthly household survey sponsored by the US Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The sample universe includes noninstitutionalized Americans, including individuals in armed forces but not stationed or living on a military base. An Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the monthly CPS collects data on household and family characteristics, migration, and employment.



## *Measures*

### *Dependent Variables*

Household mobility, also referred to as *geographic mobility* or *migration* in the CPS, refers to any change of residence of any distance. The CPS measure is derived from a question about respondent's residence 1 year prior to the survey date and the respondent's current residence. This information is collected from all members of the survey household who were 1-year old or over on the date of the survey. Movers are categorized as any individual who reported a different residence in the period between the survey date and 1 year prior. Additional data are collected on whether the relocation took place across county, state, or regional boundaries.

The ASEC also includes information on individuals' reasons for moving. These reasons are based on the householder's reported reason for moving, which are assigned to other individuals in the mobile household. In order to look for general differences in why people move, individuals' reasons for moving are often collapsed into four broad categories: family related, employment related, housing related, and other reasons. Each of the detailed and collapsed reasons for moving used by the CPS are provided in Table 3.3. For a detailed description of the methodological details regarding data collection for this variable, including the history of the measurement and some limitations, see Ihrke (2014:2013–2015). In addition to the aggregate data presented and discussed in Chap. 2, the CPS also provide Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS-CPS), which are the individual-level data collected by the CPS in the ASEC each year.

### *Independent Variables*

The models in Chap. 3 explored correlates of household mobility, type of move, and reasons for moving based on a number of sociodemographic variables. *Respondent's age* was characterized as young adult (age 18–34), which was the omitted reference; midlife adult (age 35–49); or older adult (age 50+). A dichotomous variable categorized an individual's *housing tenure* as either (1) renter occupied or (2) owner occupied. A measure for *employment status* indicated whether the respondent was employed, which was the omitted reference; unemployed; or not in the labor force.

Respondents' *poverty status* was a dichotomous measure for whether their household income was (1) above the poverty line or (0) at or below the poverty line. A variable for *level of education* indicated whether an

individual had less than a high school education, which was the omitted reference category; a high school diploma, some college or an AA degree; a college degree; or a graduate degree.

Gender was assessed with a dichotomous variable for whether the respondent was (1) male or (2) female. Additionally, a dichotomous variable for respondents' *nativity* marked whether an individual was (1) native born or (2) foreign born. The *race/ethnicity* categories indicated whether respondents were White only, which was the omitted category; Hispanic only; Asian/Pacific Islander; Black only; and/or additional races/ethnicities, including multiracial individuals. Marital status was measured as married, which was the omitted category; separated; divorced; widowed; or never married, which includes never-married cohabitators. A dichotomous variable indicated whether an individual had *coresidential children* or not.

### *Analysis Details*

The models in Chap. 3 are based on IPUMS-CPS data on household mobility between 2014 and 2015. The CPS is unable to account for the household mobility of approximately 10–12 percent of their ASEC respondents each year. As such, in order to account for this missingness, the CPS imputes data for these cases based on the individuals' predicted propensity to move based on characteristics that match a data profile (for more information, see Kaplan and Schulhofer-Wohl 2012). Additionally, the analyses incorporate replicate weights provided by the CPS in order to account for the complex sample design and provide reliable estimates of standard errors.

For each of the models discussed below, collinearity diagnostics revealed that multicollinearity was low (average VIFs < 1.5). Analysis of the correlation matrices (not shown) indicated that none of the observed relationships between the independent variables in the models were very strong. Tables 3.5 and 3.6 in Chap. 3 present the results of logistic regressions on household mobility (no move or any move) and household mobility type (local or distance move) between 2014 and 2015. Table 3.7 in Chap. 3 presents the results of multinomial logistic regression to explore sociodemographic correlates of reasons for moving. Descriptive statistics for the sample are provided in Tables 3.2 and 3.4. In Table 3.2, percentages are provided separately for nonmovers, local movers, and distance movers. In Table 3.4, percentages are provided separately based on individuals' reported reasons for moving.

### *Limitations*

Following the rationale of Cooke (2011), the CPS was preferred over other data sources because (a) it is nationally representative and (b) the data set contains county-based measures of household mobility that are not available in other national surveys. There are, however, a number of data limitations that warrant discussion. First, the analyses included individuals in the household who were not the household head, which may have inflated estimates for individuals' reasons for moving since reasons for moving are based on the householder. Others who have used the CPS to examine reasons for moving have restricted their sample to householders in order to avoid assigning the householders reason for moving to other individuals in the household (Ihrke 2014). However, in order to adequately assess how sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., marital status) influence household mobility and reasons for moving, isolating household heads alone could also bias the results. Additionally, including non-householders allowed for comparable models for the household mobility (Tables 3.5 and 3.6) and reason for moving (Table 3.7) analyses.

Another limitation is that the study of household mobility is complicated by the relative distance of a move. Kivisto and Faist (2010:3) emphasized this problem in terms of international migration, pointing out that "a move from Boston to Los Angeles is, in terms of distance, farther than the move from Puebla, Mexico to Los Angeles." Along the same lines, the conceptualization of short- and long-distance mobility in this study is imperfect since the distance of a move, when based on county boundaries depends on the size of the county and a household's proximity to the county line. For example, an intercounty move could be undertaken over a relatively short distance, while a move considered here as occurring "locally" could, in comparison, be undertaken across a relatively greater geographic distance.

An additional and important data limitation is that respondents can only choose a single reason for moving, which is often described as their "primary reason for moving." Often, individuals have a number of reasons for moving that influence their ultimate decision to do so. Also, as indicated in the chapter, the cross-sectional nature of the data makes it difficult to make causal statements about housing tenure, employment, and other variables since they may have occurred before or after the data were collected. Lastly, only the civilian and uninstitutionalized population is included in the CPS sampling frame. As such, individuals who reside in, or

have recently relocated to, formal residential care facilities are not included in the population universe. As a result, these analyses may underestimate the household mobility of later-life individuals who transition into these institutionalized settings.

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# Household Mobility Decisions and Location Choice

## INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters considered individuals as actors in a system of migration, moving in response to sociodemographic factors and large social and economic forces. When viewed exclusively in this context, individuals' mobility experiences are informed by history, geography, culture, and economic and other demographic forces. However, the cognitive pathways that lead to household mobility also depend upon life circumstances, personal preferences, and resources. Of course, people do not form preferences, values, and opinions in a vacuum—and some micro-level values are closely linked to large-scale patterns. For example, in early America, land availability spurred westward migration—but personal values for land ownership were likely the important motivating mechanisms for whether or not someone moved. Insofar as macrosocial structures can create a cultural tendency toward household mobility, individuals also situate their decisions within the context of their own needs, values, personal preferences, and goals.

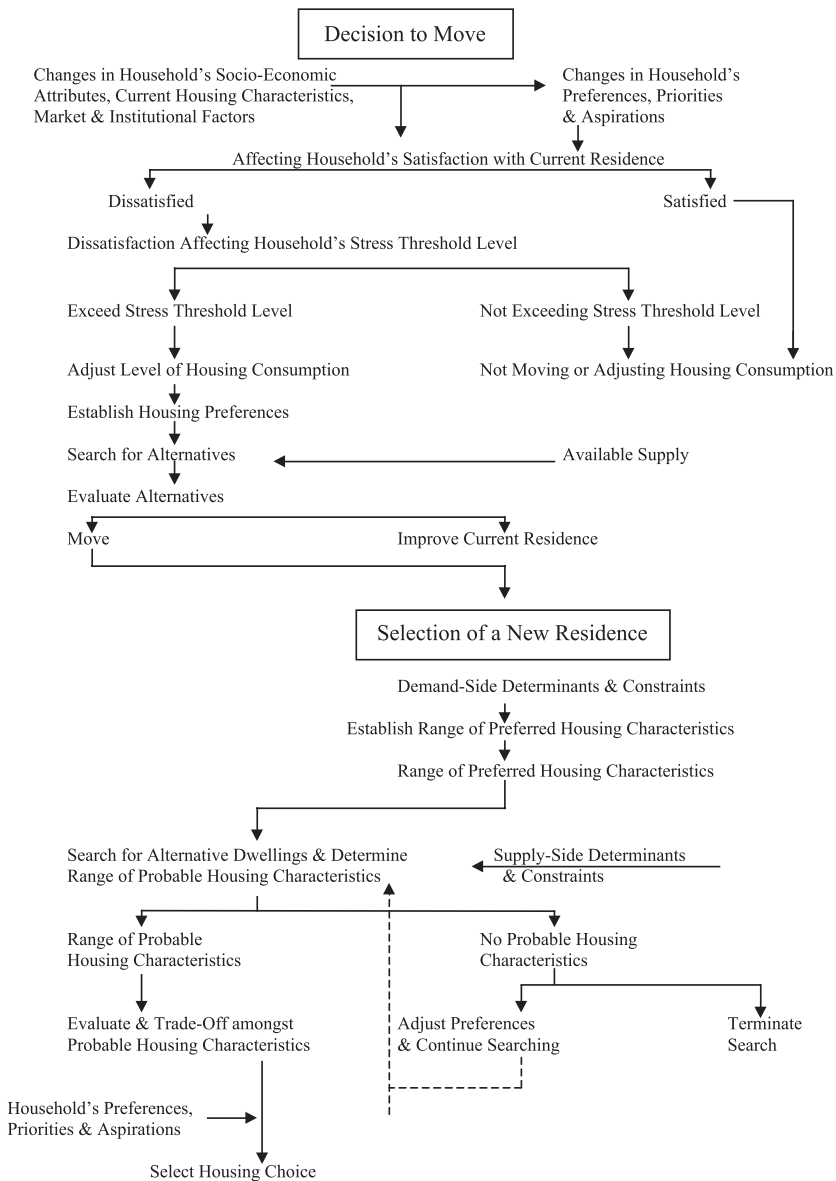
Taking a more humanistic, microsocial approach, Chap. 4 shifts the unit of analysis to the individual and focuses on household mobility choices and decisions. Even in a large sociohistorical context, it is important to understand the different *motivations* behind household mobility. The research presented in this chapter links to the life course concepts of cumulative development and human agency, which argue that housing and location-based needs and preferences, cumulative experiences,

and structural forces shape individuals' and families' household mobility behaviors, choices, experiences, and the options available to them. Even though large-scale moving patterns are shaped by culture and sociohistorical context, household mobility is also undertaken as an expression of individuals' control over their lives and living situations.

As discussed in Chap. 1, early migration theories situated household mobility in a deterministic, macroeconomic context, whereby wage differentials and the supply and demand for labor influenced large-scale patterns mobility. Later theoretical developments took a somewhat more individualistic approach by applying a human capital model that emphasized utility maximization based on the costs and benefits associated with moving. Other models included life-cycle transitions and family and social networks in decisions to relocate. These early perspectives are reviewed in the following sections to establish the humanist and cognitive, as opposed to determinist, focus of this chapter.

Following a discussion of the early perspectives, the chapter explores some of the decisions involved in developing desires and intentions to move as well as realizing a move. When discussing household mobility decisions, there are a number of factors that influence individuals' decisions to move and about where to go. The cognitive processes behind moving are multilayered and dynamic, often consisting of a series of desires, intentions, and decisions about when and where to move (Lu 1999). A number of characteristics influence household mobility at the planning stages and beyond, which can also influence whether or not a desired or expected move is realized. Figure 4.1 illustrates this complex network of decisions, based on an economic approach to household mobility choices and decisions, which progresses from decisions about moving to decisions about where to move (Coulombel 2010; Wong 2002).

The following sections detail a number of important perspectives on the decision to relocate and the simultaneous or subsequent decisions about where to go. Accordingly, this chapter focuses on considerations and decisions made *before and during* the household mobility event, whereas later chapters (Chaps. 5, 6 and 7) focus on the aftereffects of moving. Insofar as it helps fill gaps in knowledge about American household mobility, some of the research presented is based on international migration or internal migration within other developed countries.



**Fig. 4.1** Conceptual model of the household's housing decision-making process. *Source:* Wong (2002). Used with permission.

## EARLY PERSPECTIVES ON HOUSEHOLD MOBILITY DECISIONS

Early neoclassical economic models of migration were concerned with equilibrium based on labor market forces, including the demand for labor and income differentials. In other words, these early models argued that patterns of migration were linked to large-scale reactions to economic forces. One major criticism of these early models is that they ignored the importance of human agency—individuals' choices and decisions within the larger system of migration. These criticisms eventually led to the development of individualistic, human capital (i.e., cost-benefit) models that consider individuals' motivations and investments in household mobility.

The earliest human capital models argued that individuals act as purposeful and rational agents, basing their motivations to move on rational calculations of opportunities at their current location relative to opportunities at various destinations (Sjaastad 1962). Thus, individuals will move if the benefits of household mobility outweigh the costs of household mobility. A later development of the human capital model, the Harris-Todaro Model, argued that perceived *expected* gains would inspire urban-rural household mobility in developing countries. Harris and Todaro (1970) hypothesized that the perceived net gains of household mobility were based on perceived income differentials, the expected probability of obtaining a job, as well as the anticipated income, at a given destination.

These early human capital frameworks were restricted by an overly individualistic approach, focusing only on the perceived costs and benefits, or the perceived *expectation* of costs and benefits, of household mobility for the primary decision-maker in the household. As such, the early models had an important limitation. These approaches ignored the motives, input, and influences of other individuals in the potentially mobile household—especially since household mobility choices can, and often do, result in conflicts of interest among family members (Boyle et al. 2008).

Later advancements on these theoretical models incorporated the entire household into the human capital model of household mobility. Mincer (1978) argued that migration theories needed to reframe household mobility as a family process by accounting for the different costs and benefits of moving for all members of the family unit. Mincer's model of household mobility expanded the earlier human capital models to include differentials in family members' gains and losses by considering the *net* gains of household mobility for all household members (Mincer 1978).

In other words, the difference between the *net* gains of moving must be greater than the *net* losses in order for a move to be economically resourceful. If the gains outweigh the costs for all household members, then household mobility is a practical, or efficient, decision (Bodvarsson and van den Berg 2013).

The human capital framework emphasizes the costs and benefits involved in moving but overlooks the factors that motivate thoughts about moving in the first place. Therefore, most researchers agree that a precursor to an actual move is the development of a desire to do so (Kley and Mulder 2010; Mateyka 2015). Individuals must first have an event that triggers the decision-making process—which then leads to the appraisal of whether or not to move. Early research explored the effects of disequilibrium and housing stress as a catalyst for individuals’ and families’ development of a desire to move.

## HOUSEHOLD MOBILITY DECISIONS

### *Developing the Desire to Move*

#### *Disequilibrium Model of Household Mobility*

As discussed in Chaps. 1 and 3, Rossi ([1955] 1980) shifted the focus of household mobility research from human capital, or utility maximization, models to a wider range of reasons based on an individual’s stage of life. Rossi explored Philadelphian families’ connections to their homes and found that local residential shifts were often a part of larger family life-cycle and structural changes (e.g., job relocation, an increased need for additional space and storage capacity at the birth of the first child, subjective assessment of neighborhood safety for raising children). Insofar as individuals could afford to move, life-cycle factors often prompted desires, intentions, and a concentrated decision to do so. In this model, household mobility is an investment strategy that varies with some regularity across different stages of the life cycle.

A main premise in Rossi’s *Why Families Move* was that families moved in response to disequilibrium linked to inadequate space or other housing concerns; therefore, for many, moving was an adjustment process undertaken to establish equilibrium commensurate with life-cycle transitions. As a person transitions across different life-cycle stages, his or her household needs change, which can “trigger” the desire to move elsewhere.

Essentially, families' complaints about their living arrangements often led to a modification of their living situation.

### *Housing Stress and Dissatisfaction*

Early research argued that compounded grievances about housing and location led to household mobility once a certain "stress threshold" based on the housing environment was reached (Wolpert 1965). Household stressors, such as issues with neighborhood safety, school quality, and residence issues led to residential dissatisfaction. Once these stressors reached a certain threshold, they would stimulate household mobility. Consistent with what Petersen (1958) [paraphrasing Fairchild] asserted, "Man is everywhere sedentary, remaining fixed until he is impelled to move by some force." Along these lines, Brown and Moore (1970) identified three phases of the moving process, rooted in adjustment to stressors related to housing and environmental grievances. The decision to seek a new residence is based on disruptions (or perceived threats to disruptions) in household functioning that lead to a desire to move. Once the desire to move has been formulated, individuals must search for feasible alternatives to their living situation and adjust their expectations accordingly—either deciding to move, and then ultimately moving, or abandoning the decision to move and making residential adjustments without relocation.

Speare (1974) advanced the early stress-threshold models by arguing that life-cycle changes facilitate household mobility but residential satisfaction mediates the relationship—and a number of other factors influenced individuals' stress threshold and levels of residential satisfaction. Individuals are tied to their homes and locations through a series of bonds to their kin, friends, community, culture, and jobs. The strength of these ties corresponds to their level of *satisfaction* with their residential location. Speare argued that when individuals begin to experience residential *dissatisfaction*, associated with household and environmental stressors, they would consider moving. In other words, Speare (1974) argued that environmental factors create "stressors," leading to residential dissatisfaction—and only when people cross a certain threshold of dissatisfaction will they consider moving. Thus, the first stage in the housing decision-making process is evaluating the residential situation (dwelling and neighborhood) in order to develop a sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction—and dissatisfaction above a certain threshold leads to a desire to move.

The residential dissatisfaction framework also accounts for individuals' tendency to move multiple times over their life course. Given that housing

satisfaction can be a response to household- and location-based changes, individuals who reach their threshold of dissatisfaction at their residence will consider moving. Since these environmental changes occur over time, individuals' desire to move will fluctuate accordingly. Research on household mobility in Great Britain has confirmed this general idea, showing that life-cycle transitions and their associated "triggers" (e.g., marriage and childbirth), coupled with residential stress about housing space, are significant predictors of household mobility (Clark and Huang 2003).

Of course, a distinction must be made between those with grievances about their housing and those with grievances about their overall housing environment, especially because it can influence decisions about the *type* of move made (Clark et al. 2006). People relocate because they want to achieve specific goals; therefore, different types of moves will be more or less suitable for individuals with different goals (De Jong and Fawcett 1981; Lu 1999). While grievances about dwelling characteristics usually factor into the decision to move, a local move is usually apt to resolve those issues (Clark and Ledwith 2006). On the other hand, employment, or the prospect of employment, is more likely to facilitate longer-distance moves. Because these moves are considered more "disruptive," they are often only undertaken when individuals expect to achieve highly valued goals (Lu 1999; De Jong and Fawcett 1981).

Other life events can prompt a distance move. For example, having a first child leads some individuals to reevaluate how child friendly their locations are, based on factors such as neighborhood safety and school quality, which can lead to dissatisfaction and prompt a relocation (Lee et al. 1994). Individuals who are dissatisfied with their neighborhoods, or perceive that their neighborhood has a bad reputation, are also more likely to express a desire to leave (Clark and Ledwith 2006; Galster 1987). Additionally, negative personal experiences, such as victimization, can lead to reevaluation of a location, potentially leading to desires and intentions to relocate (Xie and McDowall 2014).

Overall, the dissatisfaction framework argues that individuals desire to move in order to resolve their housing grievances (e.g., quality, spaciousness, quietness, distinctiveness, and privacy) or location-based factors (e.g., neighborhood safety). One similarity between the dissatisfaction and disequilibrium frameworks is that both suggest that the desire to move is based on discrepancies between actual and desired housing conditions (Coulter and Scott 2015). However, as the next section demonstrates, a



desire to move does not necessarily mean an individual has an intention to move.

### *Developing Intentions to Move*

Speare's (1974:187) stress-threshold model argued that those who develop a desire to move but do not do so have simply not passed beyond their stress threshold: "Movers can be seen as persons who are dissatisfied and the stayers are those who are satisfied." Of course, this is likely an oversimplification of actual mobility behavior since many dissatisfied individuals may not be able to move for a number of reasons. Thoughts about household mobility are based not only on perceived residential satisfaction elsewhere but also on "perceived opportunity differentials" elsewhere (Kley and Mulder 2010:76). Individuals can make decisions about the efficiency of a move only if reasonable, feasible, attractive alternatives exist—which requires searching and planning. The desire to move may not materialize if there are legitimate constraints on an individual's ability to do so or substantial costs associated with relocation (Coulter 2013).

Kley and Mulder (2010) identified planning household mobility as an important stage in the mobility process, characterized by explorations of job opportunities and housing options in order to align the decision to move with the potential for success after the move. Thus, an individual may want to move but does not intend to do so because of perceived opportunity differentials, such as the cost of moving. Those who develop a desire to move must account for constraints and adjust their expectations accordingly (de Groot et al. 2011). Individuals' residential philosophy—their preference for renting versus owning—must also be taken into account. When individuals report an *intention* to move, they either want to move, are willing to move, or are resigned to the fact that they will or must move (de Groot et al. 2011; Kley and Mulder 2010). Thus, expectations to move depend on personal characteristics, including health, resource availability, and previous household mobility experiences.

### *Cognitive, Emotional, and Financial Deterrents*

A number of deterrents to household mobility have been explored in the literature. For example, limited knowledge of destination places leaves individuals unable to effectively calculate the costs and benefits of moving. Therefore, moving, particularly across a long distance, can entail substantial search and information costs, which can be especially high for

homeowners and individuals looking to purchase a home. The psychic costs and stress associated with relocation may also factor into the decision to move or not. Stress associated with selling and packing one's belongings, the stress added to one's and/or one's family's quality of life based on the prospect of moving, and the decision-making process involved in doing so, can also be a deterrent to household mobility (Oishi and Talhelm 2012).

In support of this, using data in the German Socio-Economic Panel, Bauernschuster et al. (2014) concluded that “risk-friendly” individuals are more likely to move, potentially as a result of lower perceived psychic costs of household mobility. Similarly, Kan (2003) found that those who were averse to risk were somewhat less likely to move than those who were risk takers. Psychological research has linked a number of other personal factors to household mobility. Jokela (2009) found that less agreeable people and those with neurotic tendencies were more inclined to move than their counterparts. Thus, individuals weigh not just the financial costs but also the social and emotional costs of household mobility. Additional costs, particularly as they relate to specific places, are discussed in more detail below.

There are also various direct and indirect financial *costs* incurred by household mobility that factor into the decision-making process. These costs can be economic, where the direct financial costs incurred by moving influences the decision to move, potentially acting as a barrier to mobility. Goodman (1981:143) identified two types of search costs: (1) direct search expenses, such as real estate agents, and (2) opportunity costs, which are associated with the loss of time and energy during searches. In support of this notion, Cooke (2013a:667) speculates that startup costs (immediate financial expenses associated with the move) may deter individuals, particularly those with mounting debt, from moving. For homeowners, transaction costs associated with selling a home or purchasing a new home are also potential deterrents—especially in weak or risky housing markets (Ferreira et al. 2010; Modestino and Dennett 2013).

### *Previous Mobility Experiences*

In addition to—and sometimes related to—the reasons for moving discussed above, another factor known to contribute to household mobility decisions is previous experience, including previous household mobility. Individuals' experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors are

informed not only by their sociohistorical context and expectations for the future but also on past experiences. This notion has recently been explored in the context of the life course perspective, which emphasizes the diversity of individuals' life experiences and developmental trajectories.

Elder and colleagues proposed that “transitions early in life may also have lifelong implications for trajectories, by shaping later events, experiences, and transitions” (Elder et al. 2003:8). In this sense, development is a *cumulative* process and lived experiences, especially “turning points,” have the potential to shape individuals' later adaptation, aspirations, and life experiences (see Oishi and Schimmack 2010). Household mobility can be considered a “turning point” for some—and can therefore directly and indirectly affect later decisions, relocation aspirations, and household mobility behaviors.

The importance of developmental processes has been supported in research that found that mobile children are more likely to be mobile adults (Clark and Huang 2004; DaVanzo 1981) and that household mobility can influence later mobility (Stockdale et al. 2013). The relationship between early household mobility and subsequent mobility behaviors may be related to mobile individuals' prior successes with relocation, leading to more confidence about subsequent household mobility, resilience to the negative effects of moving, or more ambiguous views about the importance of social ties (Gillath and Keefer 2016). Additionally, mobile individuals may also have a greater awareness of plausible, attractive locations on which to base additional relocation decisions (Speare et al. 1975). To some extent, the cumulative developmental process can also be applied to the stress-threshold models (Wolpert 1965), which argue that cumulative residential and other location-based grievances over time lead to compounded stressors that culminate in the decision to move.

### *Cumulative Inertia*

Another cumulative process that can inform household mobility decisions and behaviors is linked to the duration that an individual has spent in their household and/or location—their residential duration. Research has found that duration of residence in a given area can influence individuals' household mobility behaviors. The longer an individual or family resides in the same house, the less likely they are to move (Morrison and Clark 2015). Therefore, those who do not want to move and do not are, to some extent, expressing agency by basing their decisions and behaviors on their cumulative residential experiences.

One reason that individuals may not move is that the move itself is simply not a priority or life events have posed challenges to relocation (e.g., widowhood or unemployment). Additionally, employed partners in two-worker households may also create problems for individuals' decisions to move. Cooke (2013b:819) identified tied stayers as "an individual in a family that decided not to move but if single would have moved." Using propensity score matching with the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), he found that tied staying is more common than tied migration—and men and women are both more likely to stay than to move.

A related theoretical premise, the cumulative inertia theorem (Myers et al. 1967), suggests that the longer an individual or family resides in a particular location, the less likely they are to move elsewhere. Close ties nearby can also deter migration. Closely linked to housing tenure, research has explored how duration of residence in a given area influences migration decisions, and those who have lived in an area longer will be more likely to exhibit household stability. As discussed earlier in the context of residential duration, the cumulative inertia theorem is conceptually linked to the cumulative development principle of the life course perspective and the development of kin network ties over time that keep people rooted in an area. This perspective could also help explain some older adults' preference to age in place (Bradley and Longino 2009).

### *Realizing Household Mobility*

As discussed above, even when individuals have developed a desire to move and have a stated intention to do so, they still may not actually do so (Coulter 2013; Lu 1999). Others may not expect to move but ultimately do (de Groot et al. 2011). A number of factors at the individual, family, and neighborhood levels influence individuals' decision to move. Expressed intentions to move are based on life events, dissatisfaction with housing and environmental circumstances, and the existence of practical and affordable alternatives. However, even stated expectations to move can be abandoned based on potentially unforeseen changes in employment and family structure. Recent longitudinal research from the British Household Panel Survey found that economic stressors (in particular, job loss) prevented those who intended to move from actually doing so. Among those with no intention to move, life events (e.g., childbirth, union formation and dissolution) stimulated household mobility (de Groot et al. 2011). Following from the literature above, the next section uses data

from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016a) to explore predictors of household mobility expectations and subsequent household mobility among young adults.

## NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL SURVEY OF YOUTH 1997 (NLSY97)

Data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 ( $N = 6493$ ) provide preliminary support for the assertions above among the young adult population. Additional information about the NLSY97 data, including information on the sample, measurement, and analyses, is presented in the appendix to this chapter. Although these analyses are limited to young adults (age 25–33 in 2011), they do provide some preliminary support for whether and how several of the factors discussed above influence individuals' expectations to move.

Table 4.1 presents the results of a hierarchical logistic regression model predicting respondents' reported expectation to move in 2011. The stepwise model considers the effects of individual characteristics (model 1) and additional family-based characteristics (model 2), and the final model includes household and environmental context variables (model 3). Table 4.2 presents the results of a hierarchical logistic regression model predicting young adult mobility behaviors. Model 1 is a full model predicting household mobility between 2011 and 2013, including the measure for household mobility expectations in 2011. Additional models explore predictors of household mobility independently for those who reported expectations to move in 2011 (model 2) and those who did not report expecting to move (model 3). Descriptive statistics for all variables in the model are presented in Table 4.3 (Appendix).

### *Dependent Variable: Household Mobility Expectations in 2011*

In the full model in Table 4.1 (model 3), controlling for other important individual, household, and context characteristics, age was negatively associated with reported expectations to move ( $p < 0.01$ ). Compared with non-Black/non-Hispanic young adults, Black individuals were more likely to report expectations to move ( $p < 0.05$ ). Considering the family-related factors, young adults who were married were less likely to report expectations to move than the unmarried ( $p < 0.01$ ). The results also point to a

**Table 4.1** Odds ratios for young adult expectations to move in 2011

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>
Individual factors			
Age <sub>2011</sub>	0.9***	0.9***	0.9**
Female	0.9*	0.9*	0.9
Highest degree <sub>2011</sub>	1.0	1.0	1.0
Native-born	1.1	1.1	1.1
Race/ethnicity			
Non-Black, non-Hispanic (omitted)			
Black	1.4***	1.3***	1.2*
Hispanic	1.1	1.1	1.0
Mixed race	0.9	0.8	0.7
General health <sub>2011</sub>	1.0	1.0	1.0
Family structure and household variables			
Total children <sub>2011</sub>		1.0	1.0
Married <sub>2011</sub>		0.7***	0.8**
Household income <sub>2011</sub>		1.0	1.0
Employed <sub>2011</sub>		1.1	1.2
Housing and environmental context			
Housing tenure <sub>2011</sub>			
Owns (omitted)			
Rents			3.6***
Other situation			5.7***
Dwelling type <sub>2011</sub>			
House (omitted)			
Apartment			1.6***
Other			1.4**
Urban <sub>2011</sub>			1.3*
Neighborhood/school gangs <sub>2011</sub>			
No neighborhood gangs (omitted)			
Neighborhood has gangs			1.3*
Don't know or refused			1.1
Previous household mobility <sub>2006-2010</sub>			
No moves (omitted)			
Local moves only			1.5***
Distance move			2.1***

*Data Source:* National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997

*Note:* Multilevel logistic regression with imputed data

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

**Table 4.2** Odds ratios for young adult household mobility between 2011 and 2013

	<i>Household mobility 2011–2013</i>		
	<i>Model 1 Full model</i>	<i>Model 2 Expected to move 2011</i>	<i>Model 3 Did not expect to move 2011</i>
	Individual factors		
Expectation to move <sub>2011</sub>	4.7***	--	--
Age <sub>2011</sub>	0.9*	0.9	0.9
Female	1.0	1.2	1.0
Highest degree <sub>2011</sub>	1.0	1.2*	0.9*
Native-born	1.4*	1.1	1.4*
	Race/ethnicity		
Non-Black, non-Hispanic (omitted)			
Black	0.8**	0.6**	0.8
Hispanic	0.8**	0.6**	0.8
Mixed race	1.2	0.7	1.3
General health <sub>2011</sub>	1.1	0.9	1.1*
	Family structure and household variables		
Total children <sub>2011</sub>	1.1***	1.0	1.1***
Married <sub>2011</sub>	0.7***	1.6*	0.6***
Marital status change <sub>2011–2013</sub>			
No marital status change (omitted)			
Got married	1.6***	3.2***	1.4**
Divorced, separated, or widowed	3.1***	0.8	4.0***
Parental status change <sub>2011–2013</sub>			
No children (omitted)			
Had first child	1.6***	2.5	1.5**
Had subsequent child	1.1	1.2	1.1
Household income <sub>2011</sub>	1.0	1.0	1.0
Employed <sub>2011</sub>	0.8**	1.2	0.8**
	Housing and environmental context		
Housing tenure <sub>2011</sub>			
Owens (omitted)			
Rents	3.6***	3.0**	3.6***
Other situation	2.4***	1.6	2.5***
Dwelling type <sub>2011</sub>			
House (omitted)			
Apartment	1.7***	1.1	1.9***

*(continued)*

**Table 4.2** (continued)

	<i>Household mobility 2011–2013</i>		
	<i>Model 1 Full model</i>	<i>Model 2 Expected to move 2011</i>	<i>Model 3 Did not expect to move 2011</i>
Other	1.4***	0.9	1.6***
Urban <sub>2011</sub>	1.0	1.2	1.0
Neighborhood/school gangs <sub>2011</sub>			
No neighborhood gangs (omitted)			
Neighborhood has gangs	0.8†	0.7*	0.9
Don't know or refused	0.9	0.9	0.9
Previous household mobility <sub>2006–2011</sub>			
No moves (omitted)			
Local moves only	1.7***	2.2***	1.6***
Distance move	2.4***	3.1***	2.4***
Model N	6493	1317	5176

*Data Source:* National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997

† $p < 0.10$ . \* $p < 0.05$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

*Note:* Multilevel logistic regression with imputed data

number of housing and environmental context variables that are strongly associated with expectations to move in 2011. In particular, individuals who rent are almost four times more likely to report expectations to move than owners ( $p < 0.001$ ). Those who have a housing situation characterized as “other” are almost six times more likely to report an expectation to move than those who own their residence ( $p < 0.001$ ). Young adults’ dwelling type is also an important correlate of expectations to move. Those who reside in an apartment ( $p < 0.001$ ) or other dwelling type ( $p < 0.01$ ) are more likely to report expecting to move than those who reside in a house.

Compared with young adults residing in rural areas, urban and suburban residents are more likely to report expecting to move ( $p < 0.05$ ). Consistent with the notion that environmental grievances, particularly gangs and drugs, influence individuals’ desires to move (Kling et al. 2007), young adults who reported gangs in their schools or neighborhoods were more likely to report expectations to move than those who reported no



**Table 4.3** Descriptive statistics for NLSY97 data

<i>Imputed model N = 6493</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
Housing tenure <sub>2011</sub>		
Owns	538 (10.4)	
Rents	3361 (65.2)	
Other situation	1260 (24.4)	
	Dwelling type <sub>2011</sub>	
House	4170 (64.2)	
Apartment	1759 (27.1)	
Other	562 (8.7)	
Urban <sub>2011</sub>	5067 (79.2)	
	Neighborhood/school gangs <sub>2011</sub>	
No neighborhood gangs	5004 (77.8)	
Neighborhood has gangs	735 (11.4)	
Don't know or refused	690 (10.7)	
Total children <sub>2011</sub>		1.3 (1.4)
Married <sub>2011</sub>	2374 (36.6)	
	Marital status change <sub>2011-13</sub>	
No marital status change	5605 (88.3)	
Got married	528 (8.3)	
Separated, divorced, widowed	214 (3.4)	
	Parental status change <sub>2011-13</sub>	
No change in parental status	5239 (81.4)	
Had first child	357 (5.6)	
Had subsequent child	837 (13.0)	
Household income <sub>2011</sub>		63,443 (58,171)
Employed <sub>2011</sub>	1121 (17.4)	
Age <sub>2011</sub>		29.0 (1.4)
Highest degree <sub>2011</sub>		1.6 (1.1)
Female	3276 (50.5)	
Born in the U.S.	6108 (94.1)	
	Race/ethnicity	
Non-Black, non-Hispanic	3229 (49.7)	
Black	1801 (27.7)	
Hispanic	1402 (21.6)	
Mixed race	61 (0.9)	
General health <sub>2011</sub>		3.7 (1.0)
Moved <sub>2011-13</sub>	3249 (50)	
	Previous household mobility <sub>2006-11</sub>	
No moves	1150 (17.7)	
Local moves only	1861 (28.7)	

*(continued)*

**Table 4.3** (continued)

<i>Imputed model N = 6493</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
Distance move	3482 (53.6)	
Expected to move <sub>2011</sub>	1317 (20.3)	

*Note:* Unimputed and unweighted estimates

gangs ( $p < 0.05$ ). Lastly, previous household mobility influences young adults' household mobility expectations. Compared with young adults who had not moved in the last 5 years, young adults who moved locally or across a distance within 5 years were significantly more likely to report expecting to move in 2011 ( $p < 0.001$ ). This supports recent findings by Eggleston and Oishi (2013) who identified past mobility as a significant and positive predictor of future expectations to move.

#### *Dependent Variable: Household Mobility between 2011 and 2013*

Consistent with recent research that found that expressed *desires* to move are strongly associated with later household mobility (Mateyka 2015), young adults who expressed an intention to move were significantly more likely to move in the following 2 years than those who did not expect to move ( $p < 0.001$ ). Of those who reported expecting to move in 2011, almost 79 percent did so before 2013. Of those who did not expect to move, 43 percent relocated between 2011 and 2013. Table 4.2 reports the effects of several factors influencing individuals' household mobility between 2011 and 2013. In the full model (model 1), those who reported household mobility expectations in 2011 were almost five times more likely to move by 2013 than those who did not ( $p < 0.001$ ). Since individuals may not actually move despite expressed intentions to do so, models 2 and 3 consider predictors of household mobility in 2013 separately for those who expected to move in 2011 and those who did not expect to move. Bonferroni corrected significance is used for these coefficients; therefore, significance is reported only at the 0.025 level.

Possibly related to resource differences available to realize a move, the results of model 2 indicate that higher levels of education were significantly associated with household mobility between 2011 and 2013 among those who reported an expectation to move in 2011 ( $p < 0.025$ ).

Consistent with a large body of literature that shows that racial minorities are less likely to realize an intended or desired move (Crowder 2001; de Groot et al. 2011; Kan 1999), Black and Hispanic young adults who expected to move in 2011 were less likely than Whites to do so by 2013 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Married individuals were more likely than unmarried young adults to move between 2011 and 2013 when they reported an expectation to do so. These analyses also provide some support for the notion that life changes associated with the birth of a child and/or changes in marital status can influence household mobility. Among those who reported an expectation to move in 2011, individuals who were married between 2011 and 2013 were more than three times more likely to report moving between those years ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Consistent with the research presented in Chap. 3, young adult renters were three times more likely to move than owners ( $p < 0.01$ ). In support of the notion that household mobility decisions are rooted in cumulative, developmental processes—and residential duration leads to less likelihood of moving—past household mobility was a significant predictor of moving between 2011 and 2013. Compared with those who did not move between 2006 and 2011, those who reported moving locally were twice as likely to move between 2011 and 2013. Those who made at least one distance move between 2006 and 2011 were three times more likely to move again between 2011 and 2013 ( $p < 0.001$ ). Compared with young adults who reported no gangs in their neighborhood and/or schools, those who reported gangs were less likely to move between 2011 and 2013 ( $p < 0.025$ ). Thus, while young adults who reported community gang activity were more likely to express an intention to move, they were ultimately less likely to do so.

Model 3 assessed predictors of household mobility between 2011 and 2013 among those who did not report an expectation to move in 2011. Among those who did not expect to move in 2011, young adults with lower levels of education were more likely to move by 2013. Native-born young adults were more likely to move than foreign-born individuals ( $p < 0.025$ ). Those who had higher self-reported health were also more likely to move in this period. Young adults in poor health who did not expect to move in 2011 were less likely than those in better health to relocate between 2011 and 2013 ( $p < 0.025$ ).

Those with children and no expectations to move were somewhat more likely to move than those without children and no expectations to move in 2011 ( $p < 0.001$ ). Contrary to married young adults who expected

to move, those who did not expect to move in 2011 were less likely to do so between 2011 and 2013 ( $p < 0.001$ ). Consistent with de Groot et al. (2011), compared with individuals who had no change in marital status, those who got married ( $p < 0.01$ ) or became unmarried ( $p < 0.001$ ) were significantly more likely to move despite no expectation to do so. Compared with young adults who had no change in parental status, those who reported expectations to move in 2011 were more likely to do so if they had their *first* child ( $p < 0.01$ ), but the effect for subsequent children was nonsignificant. Those who were unemployed and did not expect to move in 2011 were less likely than employed individuals to do so ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Consistent with the results presented in Chap. 3, young adult renters and those in other living situations were more likely to move despite no expectation to do so 2 years prior ( $p > 0.001$ ). Previous household mobility was also a significant predictor of household mobility among these young adults. Compared with those who had not moved between 2006 and 2011, those who moved locally and/or across a distance were significantly more likely to move between 2011 and 2013 ( $p < 0.001$ ).

These analyses have confirmed a number of the assertions made earlier in the chapter. Decisions to move are based on resources, employment- and family-related characteristics and events as well as housing and environmental grievances—and stated desires to move do not always lead to a realized move. Thus, the results underscore the importance of distinguishing the process of household mobility into distinct cognitive stages. The desire to move, intentions to move, and planning stages of moving are a complex network of cognitive and behavioral processes that sometimes lead to a realized move and other times do not (see Fig. 4.1). Additionally, the results illustrate the complex multilevel theoretical nature of household mobility decision-making. In their motivations and decisions to move, individuals express agency based on past and present experiences, values, goals, needs, resources, and preferences. As such, the geographic, historical, and sociodemographic factors discussed in the previous chapters also influence individuals' lived experiences, behaviors, and biographies.

## LOCATION DESIRES AND DECISIONS

Researchers often discuss the decision to move and decisions about *where* to move as distinct processes (e.g., Brown and Moore 1970; Pendergrass 2013; Wong 2002); however, the decisions can also be made simultaneously. Individuals who desire to move may already have a destination in mind based on their needs, preferences, and resources. For example, decisions about where to go can be a simultaneous component of young adults' decision to move out of the parental home to attend college in another state. Nevertheless, research commonly identifies location choice as an important aspect of household mobility decisions that requires consideration and planning (Coulombel 2010; Pendergrass 2013). For example, when deciding *where* to move, young adults without children may consider the importance of access to public transportation and accessibility to work and other daily routines. Individuals and families with children may emphasize safety or proximity to schools.

De Jong and Fawcett (1981) outlined seven broad sets of personal values associated with household mobility and location choice. They argued that individuals are motivated to move to specific locations based on utility from dimensions of wealth, status, comfort, stimulation, autonomy, affiliation, and morality. The first value, *wealth*, includes economic rewards, such as higher wage rates, more stable employment, and cheaper housing. *Status* is linked to social mobility, including increases in occupational status and educational attainment. *Comfort* is related to physical and psychological appeal of living and working conditions. *Stimulation* refers to culture, entertainment, and activities (e.g., theater, restaurants). *Autonomy*, or personal freedom, refers to individuals having fewer restrictions on their behavior and freedom. *Affiliation* includes tied migration, chain migration, and other household mobility that occurs as a result of affiliation with other mobile people. *Morality* refers to individuals' decision to move (or not move) to a specific location based on religious values or belief systems.

The authors argued that these values vary in importance based on individual and household characteristics, social and cultural influence, personality factors, and needs and opportunities. In other words, individuals self-select into household mobility and specific locations based on characteristics that influence their values, needs, and preferences (e.g., Ueno et al. 2014). After assessing these values, or after they are compromised, individuals will consider relocating based on the potential for a more attrac-

tive alternative. While the first section of this chapter discussed factors that motivate individuals to move based on their needs and preferences, the next section discusses factors that may inspire or deter household mobility to or from specific locations.

### PUSH/PULL THEORY

The decision-making processes involved in moving are dynamic and usually consists of more than a single, isolated decision to relocate to a different physical space. Once the decision to move has been made (or sometimes simultaneously with the decision to move), individuals often consider a number of place-based factors, known as “pull” factors, in deciding where to go (Lee 1966). In short, the decision to remain in an area is based on the “pull” factor in that area in relation to its “push” and the “pull” of some other area. The interplay between individuals’ motivations and various alternatives are based on characteristics at the origin and destination. Brown and Moore (1970) identified five factors that directly influence destination choices: proximity to urban centers, physical characteristics of the area, quantity and quality of public services, social characteristics, and residential and dwelling characteristics.

Based on Lee’s “Theory of Migration” (Lee 1966), place characteristics at the origin and destination locations may provide some incentive for household mobility. For example, for some, low unemployment rates, plentiful job opportunities, and high wages are an attraction to move. However, amenities (e.g., a more attractive location, low pollution, or a pleasant climate) also pull individuals to new locations. Individuals choose where to go based on a variety of place characteristics coupled with their various needs and preferences given the heterogeneity in the public and environmental goods and services available in an area. In order to further contextualize the decision-making process, the next sections review the literature on location-based amenities (attractions), followed by a review of commonly discussed deterrents to long-distance mobility (deterrents).

### ATTRACTIONS

Attractions and/or amenities can influence individuals’ decisions to move to a new area. If individuals are dissatisfied with their location, they may seek a new area based on neighborhood and school quality/safety and proximity to work or potential employment. These “amenities” were

identified in the early research of Ravenstein (1885:168), who noted, “Inducements to migrate are offered by educational facilities, salubrity of the climate, and cheapness of living.” Perhaps more than anything, the focus on preference-based amenities illustrates individuals’ human agency in their household mobility decision making.

Rappaport (2007) identified two types of attributes discussed in the economic literature. Exogenous attributes are mostly uninfluenced by individuals’ residential choices—these amenities include agreeable climates, proximity to the beach, and attractive scenery. On the other hand, endogenous attributes are interrelated with the social and economic environment and the use and availability of public goods and services, such as high-quality schools, police protection, and low crime. Endogenous attributes are amenities that often select people into areas based on their particular housing needs and preferences. As perceived amenities change in a given area, so too will individuals’ decisions to move toward them (e.g., as neighborhood quality declines it can trigger moves away among those who have the resources to do so). In addition to exogenous and endogenous amenities, a third potential “pull factor” to move or to stay in an area is rooted in the presence and availability of social and kin networks. The following sections synthesize the research literature on location-based attractions and how they interact with individuals’ goals, preferences, and resources to facilitate or deter household mobility to and from specific locations.

### *Endogenous Amenities*

For some potential movers, the physical environment is an important pull factor for relocation destinations (Rappaport 2007; Partridge 2010). The influence of a pleasing climate, coastal locations, recreational activities, a slower pace of life, and good air quality serve as pull factors—in many cases, these moves are associated with urban-to-rural household mobility (Gosnell and Abrams 2009). Schachter and Althaus (1989) identified climate as an important amenity that individuals consider when choosing to move. Clark and Cosgrove (1991) used multiple measures of amenities and found that sunshine and lower variation in temperature between January and July were significant predictors of in-migration. In later research, Rappaport (2007) found that climate is a long-standing pull factor for long-distance household mobility in America, persisting throughout the twentieth century, even after the advent of the air conditioner.

Partridge (2010) identified natural amenities, such as nice climates and pleasant landscapes, as a primary factor influencing individuals' household mobility decisions.

Of course, the relative importance of natural amenities also varies by personal preference and residential needs (Chen and Rosenthal 2008; Walters 2002). Certain natural amenities may carry a different weight or be more appealing to individuals based on their life-cycle stage. For example, as discussed in Chap. 3, a desirable/agreeable climate may be a more important criterion for postretirement older adults' location decisions than families with young children who prioritize proximity to quality schools (Bradley 2011).

### *Exogenous Amenities*

As noted above, exogenous amenities are those which facilitate movement toward an area but are also influenced by the social and economic environment. For many of these exogenous amenities, there can also be tradeoffs based on resources and preferences. For example, when considering among location alternatives, individuals allow for *compensating differentials*, whereby they might sacrifice income in order to capitalize on amenities and other quality of life returns (Rosen 1986). For example, individuals choose to live in what they perceive to be a safer or more congenial area, perhaps even closer to kin and social ties, at the expense of higher rent or mortgage costs. As such, individuals select into places that satisfy specific preferences and needs, which can also be expanded to include public goods and services (Tiebout 1956).

### *The Tiebout Hypothesis*

The Tiebout Hypothesis argues that people “will move to that community where their preference patterns, which are set, are best satisfied” (Tiebout 1956:419). Thus, public goods (e.g., hospitals, roads, parking, and beaches) and services (education and police protection) help to select people into communities based on their various needs and preferences. This selectivity can have important large-scale implications for population distribution, which is discussed further in Chap. 7. Long (1988:165) and Cadwallader (1992) discussed how participation in and reliance on local welfare programs, such as Section 8 housing, can deter long-distance migration—tying the chronic poor to their neighborhoods. Recent research drawing on the Tiebout model found that the original



hypotheses are still relevant in the local, community context. People still move toward preferred public goods (Banzhaf and Walsh 2008) but the insights have less application at the state and federal level (Boadway and Tremblay 2012).

### *Cultural Congeniality*

One way individuals choose select locations is based on cultural homophily and congeniality. Building on the Tiebout Hypothesis, the notion of homophily indicates that people move to certain places because they have high proportions of individuals with similar ideologies (Barone 2013). For example, household mobility can influence civic participation and voting patterns in areas where liberal ideologies are a “pull” for migration. There has long been a historic tendency for sexual minorities to select into large metropolitan areas, particularly those characterized by political progressiveness, from nonmetropolitan areas (Black et al. 2000, 2002; Walther and Poston 2004), which is rooted in the idea of cultural congeniality. However, there is reason to believe that relocation for cultural congeniality among sexual minorities has declined, at least among gay men (Cooke and Rapino 2007; Ghaziani 2015; Ueno et al. 2014). Of course, cultural congeniality might also deter household mobility among those who already reside in places that are compatible with their cultural, religious, and/or political ideologies (Myers 2000).

### *Social and Kin Networks*

Suggesting the importance of the linked lives tenet of the life course perspective, decisions about moving are also dependent upon others, including family members who have moved, are moving, and those who are not (Haug 2008). In fact, Cooke (2008) argues that *all* migration should be considered family migration because of the interdependence between individuals and their family members. As discussed in Chap. 1, network ties can decrease information costs and pull individuals to move to an area. Relatives and friends who have moved or visited an area can encourage household mobility by providing information, support, and stability that can stimulate distance mobility (Massey 1990; Pendergrass 2013). Thus, at times, migrant kin and social ties can facilitate household mobility by attenuating some of the risk associated with moving. For example, researchers have established the importance of social and family ties for augmenting migratory streams and influencing population structure dur-

ing the Great Migration (Lemann 1991; Tolnay 2003). On the other hand, family ties, as a form of location-specific capital, can also deter household mobility.

## DETERRENTS

Just as kin and social ties can pull an individual to a new location, strong ties to a location, based on school, friends, and family, can also discourage household mobility, especially over long distances. Relatedly, non-economic benefits (e.g., professional clientele, social ties, work seniority) tied to specific locations can be lost with a move. The following sections explore the factors that deter individuals from moving, especially across long distances.

### *Location-Specific Capital*

Location-specific capital consists of intangible resources and assets like business clientele, seniority, knowledge of an area, and community and civic participation. This form of capital is characterized by the collective factors that tie an individual to a specific place because their utility is geographically restricted (DaVanzo 1981; Kan 2007). Thus, location-specific capital models argue that collective characteristics in an area (that are not universally available and would be reduced with household mobility) can factor into individuals' decisions whether or not (and where) to move. For example, while many high-status (i.e., white collar/professional) workers may have a higher propensity to move, others, such as lawyers, therapists, and other locally based and locally licensed professionals, may be less likely to move a great distance. An additional, and perhaps the most important, form of location-specific capital are kin, social, and community ties in an area (DaVanzo 1981; Kan 2007).

### *Family, Social, and Cultural Networks*

Consistent with the linked lives tenet of the life course perspective, the "affinity" hypothesis argues that close ties to kin and family, a form of location-specific capital, can deter individuals from household mobility, especially over long distances (Mulder and Malmberg 2014; Ritchey 1976). In support of this assertion, recent research has found that individuals' likelihood of moving declined when their parents and siblings

lived nearby (Mulder and Malmberg 2014)—and that family cohesion influences how far young adults move from the parental home (Gillespie and van der Lippe 2015; Gillespie and Treas 2015). Related to large-scale processes discussed in Chap. 2, demographic changes associated with the family, such as high levels of divorce, separation, and blended families can also influence where individuals choose to move. For example, divorced and separated parents are often tied to their locations through shared custody arrangements (Feijten and van Ham 2007; Feijten and van Ham 2013; Mulder and Malmberg 2011).

Cultural constraints, which refer to the desire for cultural groups to have coethnic social support and kinship networks nearby, can also affect individuals' location choice (Frey and Liaw 2005; Pendergrass 2013). For example, location-specific religious capital—the embeddedness in social networks through common religious affiliation—can deter individuals from moving far away (Myers 2000).

Individuals may also choose to remain nearby because of the racial and ethnic concentration of an area. Frey and Liaw (2005) found that members of racial and ethnic minority groups were less likely to move if they lived in areas with a high concentration of coethnics. This research was recently supported by Bader and Krysan (2015), who explored individuals' self-segregation in their housing search. They found that the racial composition of an area shapes individuals' attraction to, or avoidance of, certain areas. This self-segregation was especially pronounced among Whites, who were more likely to begin their search in White communities and less likely to broaden their search to integrated communities than Black and Hispanic individuals. The notion of selective mobility and the consequences of racial self-segregation are discussed further in Chap. 7.

### *Cumulative Development*

As with the decision to move, cumulative developmental experiences can also factor into decisions about *where* to move. Sociological research has explored the role of nostalgia in place attachment (Gustafson 2013; Milligan 2003). Given that residential place and mobility are important sources of identity (Eggleston and Oishi 2013), early migration out of an origin can evoke later emotions and/or memories of those places, possibly prompting a return later in life. Consistent with this notion, using case study data and life history interviews in Northern Ireland, Stockdale et al. (2013) highlight the importance of place attachment, based on childhood

memories and nostalgia, in informing midlife internal migrants' decisions to return to their origins.

### *The Friction of Distance*

Early theories about destination decisions argued that distance itself can deter moves to specific locations (Zipf 1946). In fact, early cost-benefit models used relocation distance as a proxy measure for the financial costs incurred by moving (Sjaastad 1962). The friction-of-distance hypothesis suggests that distance is an obstacle that needs to be overcome in decisions about where to relocate. This “gravity model of migration” argues that when comparing two locations, potentially mobile individuals will choose the more populous and closer location rather than a farther one (Zipf 1946). If mobile individuals encounter an attractive alternative in the process of moving, they will choose to remain closer, unless kin or social ties provide some incentive for the farther location (Lee 1966). As discussed in Chap. 2, some of these early concerns about distance may have weakened with advancements in information and communication technology and better transportation (Cooke 2013a).

Another location-based factor that can influence and constrain decisions about where to move is based on residential proximity to the workplace (Clark et al. 2003). However, as Coulombel (2010) suggested, there has been no definitive consensus over whether and exactly how commute time is associated with household mobility decisions. Some, especially individuals in dual-worker households, may strategically choose their destination location in order to decrease or limit commuting time to work (Clark et al. 2003). On the other hand, movers may be willing to increase their commute time in order to remain in, or relocate to, areas where housing prices or the overall cost of living is lower (Krol and Svorny 2005). Therefore, as with the arguments above regarding decisions to move, the importance of proximity to work for location decisions also varies based on individuals' personal characteristics, needs, preferences, resources, and other economic and place-based factors.

## FORCED MOBILITY

As this chapter has demonstrated, individuals' choices about staying or moving are conceptually complex. Of course, some relocations do not involve choice. Adapting Petersen's (1958) classic typology, Sell (1983)

identified three types of household mobility, each rooted in its own causes. *Preference dominated* are moves that occur because of household and/or other environmental dissatisfaction. *Imposed mobility* usually results from changes in marital status, an expanding family, or other factors in the life cycle, such as leaving the parental home for work or college. Additionally, the concept of *forced mobility* involves households that are required to vacate—and these moves are often unplanned. Forced movers usually have considerably less time, money, energy, and information on which to base their moving decisions (Skobba and Goetz 2013). As such, they are unable to express agency in their household mobility decisions, as their move is involuntary.

Forced mobility, particularly through eviction, is an event most commonly experienced by the extremely poor (Clark 2010; Skobba and Goetz 2013). These forced moves usually occur among impoverished households because of an inability to pay rent. However, others have identified individual and family-based factors that lead to eviction or household displacement, such as mental health issues and domestic violence (Desmond et al. 2013; Phinney 2013). For some, forced mobility can indirectly lead to frequent mobility. Without preparation, time, or financial resources, forced movers engage in brief and haphazard housing searches that warrant additional moves, which can also lead to housing instability and possibly homelessness (Desmond et al. 2013; Skobba and Goetz 2013).

While forced mobility is disproportionately experienced among the chronically poor at the individual and family levels, it also occurs on a larger scale. Research has explored how large-scale factors, such as natural hazards (Elliott 2015) and urban renewal (Fullilove and Wallace 2011), lead to the forced mobility of entire communities. Just as individuals' decisions and choices are constrained when they are forced to move, others face constraints because they are unable to move despite desires or expectations to do so. These large-scale processes are explored in Chap. 7.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter explored theory and research on household mobility decisions, including location-based decisions. Contrary to early deterministic treatments of household mobility, individuals and families are motivated to move and pushed and pulled toward specific places for different reasons at different stages of life, often equipped with very different resources and reasons for doing so. Building on the structural and context-based

elements discussed in Chaps. 2 and 3, this chapter approached household mobility from a humanistic perspective, illustrating the link between socio-historical context and personal circumstances and resources. Individual characteristics, such as housing tenure, age, and family structure, influence mobility intentions and expectations. The way these intentions are expressed depends upon goals, preferences, and resources at the individual and family levels. In turn, these household mobility decisions and behaviors can also lead to very different individual and family-level outcomes. These consequences are explored in the next two chapters.

## APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL DETAILS FOR DATA AND ANALYSIS IN CHAP. 4

### *NLSY97 Sample*

The NLSY97 is a nationally representative sample of 8984 adolescents in 1997 who were born from 1980 through 1984 and were 12 through 17 years of age during the initial 1997 round. The NLSY97 followed these adolescents as they transitioned from adolescence to adulthood. The analyses in Chap. 4 draw on the most recent available data from the 2011 and 2013 waves.

Because of the moderate amount of missing data in the sample, a chained multiple imputation procedure was utilized to handle missing data (Allison 2002). The dependent and independent variables were used to construct the imputations, but imputed values for dependent variables were dropped before conducting analyses. The imputation procedure produced ten imputed datasets, and the imputed estimates were subsequently combined. Descriptive statistics and parameter estimates for each imputed dataset were virtually identical. Listwise deletion of missing data on the dependent variables yielded a final analytic sample of 6493.

### *Measures*

#### *Dependent Variables*

Young adults' *expectation to move* was assessed in 2011 with a yes or no question that asked, "Do you expect to move within the next year?" This variable was modeled as the dependent variable for the models in Table 4.1 and an independent variable for the models in Table 4.2. Young

adult *household mobility* indicates whether or not an individual moved at all between 2011 and 2013. To assess which factors led to household mobility based on move expectations in 2011, this is the dependent variable for models 1, 2, and 3 in Table 4.2.

### *Independent Variables*

A number of individual- and family-level independent variables were included to explore the characteristics that influence young adults' expectations to move and subsequent moving behaviors. The models included measures for young adult *age*, *gender* (male/female), *highest degree completed*, and *nativity* (native-born/foreign-born). *Race* was classified as non-Black, non-Hispanic; Black; Hispanic; and mixed race. Young adults' self-reported general health was reverse coded as (0) poor, (1) fair, (2) good, (3) very good, or (4) excellent.

At the young adult household level, a measure was included for employment status and logged household income in 2011. Measures also included total number of children (residential and nonresidential) and marital status. Young adult housing tenure indicated whether they owned part or all of their home (omitted), rented, or some other situation (e.g., live rent-free with parents). A variable for dwelling type identified housing units as houses, including town homes and row homes (omitted), apartments, and other living situations (e.g., mobile homes). Previous household mobility between 2006 and 2011 was also included in the model as a proxy for residential duration: no move occurred, a local move or moves occurred, or a distance move or moves occurred. Additionally, the models in Table 4.2 included controls for whether a marital or parental status change occurred between 2011 and 2013. For marital status, the categories were no marital status change (omitted), got married, or got separated, divorced, or widowed. The parental status variable indicated whether there was no change (omitted), the respondent had his or her first child, or the respondent had a subsequent child.

Additional measures explored the effects of environmental context on household mobility expectations and behaviors. A variable indicated whether young adults lived in an urban or suburban (1) compared to rural (0) area in 2011. And another variable explored neighborhood and community context based on reported gang activity. Young adults were asked, "Are there any gangs in your neighborhood or where you go to school?" Response options were yes, no, or don't know/refuse to answer.

### *Analysis Notes and Limitations*

Examination of variance inflation factors did not indicate there was any severe multicollinearity in the models (average VIFs < 1.3). Analysis of the correlation matrix (not shown) indicated that none of the observed relationships between the independent variables in the models were very strong. In fact, the strongest correlation (0.29) was between moving expectations in 2011 and moving between 2011 and 2013.

A primary limitation of these analyses is that the measure for move expectations was based on expectations to move *in the following year*. Because the NLSY97 switched to a biennial cycle, the next available wave of NLSY97 data were not collected until 2 years later in 2013. Therefore, individuals in 2011 who reported no expectation to move *in the following year* may have actually done so within the 2-year time frame between waves.

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PART II

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Mobility Effects

# Individual- and Family-Level Mobility Effects

## INTRODUCTION

While Chaps. 3 and 4 explored how household mobility is influenced by a number of sociohistorical, demographic, and cognitive processes, this chapter examines whether household mobility *influences* individual and family outcomes. Identifying mobility as a factor that influences individual and family welfare is a step toward reducing the “personally disruptive and societally costly consequences of mobility” (Stokols and Shumaker 1982:150), especially since household mobility rates in America are still high compared to other industrialized countries (Molloy et al. 2011; Bell and Charles-Edwards 2013).

The life course perspective provides a useful framework for understanding household mobility effects on individuals and families (Elder 1998). First, the principle of cumulative development over the life span suggests that household mobility can be a turning point, or “pivotal incident,” that influences later developmental processes (Kirk 2012). For example, household mobility in childhood, and frequent moving in particular, has been identified as a risk factor for developmental and psychological problems later in life (Oishi and Schimmack 2010). Second, the timing in lives principle points to potentially different outcomes of household mobility depending on the age(s) at which a move or moves take place. Accordingly, the first set of analyses will draw on the NLSY97 to explore household mobility in adolescence—and the effect it has on both short- and long-term behavioral, academic, and health effects. Third, the linked



lives principle emphasizes the interdependence of individuals' lives and highlights the importance of network ties. Therefore, members of a family are interconnected in their decisions about, experiences with, and outcomes of household mobility. The second set of analyses in this chapter uses data from the NLSY to explore the effect of household mobility on family processes.

The first part of Chap. 5 discusses a number of reasons for the mixed results within the mobility effects literature. To illustrate these discrepancies, a broad survey of the literature on mobility effects on health, behavioral, and academic outcomes is presented. Following this review, data from the NLSY97 are explored to examine how different types of mobility affect individuals across a number of outcome domains in both the short and long term. The chapter then transitions into a discussion of mobility effects for family-level outcomes. Following the review of this research, and drawing on data from the NLSY97, the effects of household mobility (by type and frequency) on a variety of family processes are explored.

Importantly, this chapter presents neither an exhaustive nor a systematic review of the very expansive literature on mobility effects. Rather, the objectives of this chapter are to (a) discuss several reasons why interdisciplinary research has produced mixed results on mobility effects, (b) provide examples of these differences in the research literature, and (c) use data to illustrate how mobility effects are multilevel (individual and family) and vary based on the type of move made (local or distance), move frequency, outcome domains and measurements, and the effect interval (i.e., short-term and long-term effects).

### *Methodological Differences in Mobility Effects Research*

As noted above, research reporting on the effects of moving, particularly on adolescents, has produced mixed conclusions, with some studies reporting that moving is associated with negative outcomes and others identifying null effects, only minor effects, or even positive outcomes. Several of the reasons for these discrepancies are due to methodological variation across different studies, including differences in sample characteristics, research design, and measurement.

First, as with research in most social science fields, one reason for the mixed results in mobility effects research is based on differences in sampling and research design. Small-scale studies—and their conclusions—often vary based on characteristics of the geographic location and urbanicity of

the sampling frame (e.g., Voight et al. 2012). Additionally, samples often focus on a specific age or developmental stage, usually within adolescence. Since studies have found that household mobility has different effects at different ages and developmental stages (Gillespie 2013; Anderson et al. 2014b), these results cannot be generalized across age groups.

Second, in addition to sampling differences, studies also vary based on their research design. Differences in cross-sectional and longitudinal research design often lead to variation in the outcome intervals explored. Most studies focus exclusively on the immediate consequences associated with moving (Ersing et al. 2009), while others consider longer-term outcomes (Hango 2006; Tønnessen et al. 2016). Often, these studies reach different conclusions about the magnitude and durability of mobility effects. Each of these studies has made important contributions to the literature on mobility effects but differences in sampling and research design have made findings on the effects of household mobility notoriously difficult to compare.

A third methodological reason for mixed conclusions about individual-level consequences of moving concerns outcome measurement. Studies on mobility effects have used a variety of outcome domains—usually within the broad categories of academic, behavioral, and health effects associated with moving. Moreover, even within specific domains, studies have explored a variety of different outcome measures. For example, studies that have explored academic outcomes of mobility have looked at the effects of moving on dropping out (Metzger et al. 2015; South et al. 2007), academic achievement (Cutuli et al. 2013), and standardized test scores (Voight et al. 2012). Researchers interested in exploring the role of moving on behavioral outcomes have assessed delinquent behaviors (Gasper et al. 2010), substance abuse (Stabler et al. 2015), and early sexual activity (Stack 1994). To illustrate this wide variation, Table 12 identifies some of the outcome domains and measures used in research on the effects of household mobility. Of course, exploring the role of moving for a variety of outcome domains is necessary; however, it precludes definitive statements about the effects of moving.

Last, mobility effects research results often vary because of differences in researchers' operationalization of household mobility. Studies have explored a variety of effects based on move distance, household mobility of any kind, and the number of moves made. As Chap. 1 pointed out, the spatiotemporal nature of household mobility makes standard conceptualization and measurement difficult. Often, there is no clear distinction for

what constitutes a local versus a distance move. As a result of each of these methodological issues, it has been difficult to provide a definitive answer to whether (and when) moving affects individuals and families.

In addition to methodological differences, some debate over mobility effects is also rooted in the selective nature of household mobility. Characteristics that select individuals into household mobility complicate the assessment of mobility outcomes. For example, as noted in earlier chapters, household moves are often triggered by life events, such as divorce (Feijten and van Ham 2007) and employment changes (Jolly 2015; Kan 2003), that can affect children negatively. Additionally, mobile individuals and families may vary based on unobserved characteristics that predispose them to negative outcomes and also household mobility (Gasper et al. 2010). For example, recent research exploring personality factors and household mobility found that individuals who expressed more openness to new experiences and extraversion were more likely to move (Jokela 2009). Personality factors might also temper some of the negative consequences after a move takes place (Oishi and Schimmack 2010). As a result, some have argued that mobility effects are simply a product of preexisting differences between movers and nonmovers (Gasper et al. 2010).

The following sections briefly review the findings of classic and recent studies on mobility effects, emphasizing the (often competing) findings in order to highlight the complicated nature of the field. The outcomes are discussed across three broad outcome domains: physical health, educational outcomes, and behavioral and mental health. Theories and perspectives on *why* mobility is presumed to affect individuals and families are explored in Chap. 6.

### *Individual Household Mobility Outcomes*

#### *Physical Health Outcomes*

Since social conditions are known to be “fundamental causes” of disease (Link and Phelan 1995) and household mobility is a characteristic of social conditions at micro and macro levels, some have argued that household mobility is linked to health outcomes. Consistent with the methodological complexity introduced above, research on the health effects of moving has focused on a variety of outcomes, including self-reported health, receipt of health insurance, having a medical “home” (e.g., primary care physician), and visits to the hospital or emergency room (Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1** Mobility effects outcome domains and outcomes

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Physical health
Health insurance
Medical home/primary care physician
Hospital and physician visits
Self-rated health
Oral health
Behaviors and psychological health
Behavior problems
Loneliness/depression
Teen pregnancy
Delinquency and crime
Substance use and abuse
Suicidal ideation
Psychological development
Inhibitory control
Happiness/life satisfaction
Self-perception
Academic and educational
Academic achievement
Educational attainment
Standardized test scores
Dropping out
Grade retention
School attendance
Social outcomes
Social and Kin networks
Popularity

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Despite some research that found no effects of mobility on physical health outcomes (for a review on childhood effects, see Jelleyman and Spencer 2008), studies that explore the frequency of household mobility have also found that highly mobile families are at a greater risk for health issues than nonmobile and infrequent movers. Using the National Health Interview Survey 1988, Fowler et al. (1993) found that children, particularly those who moved more than twice, were significantly more likely to lack a primary care physician or regular place to access preventive health and sick care.

More recently, in their study of over 63,000 children, Busacker and Kasehagen (2012) found that highly mobile children (those who moved

three or more times) have poorer physical and oral health, are more likely to have a moderate or severe health condition, and are less likely to have health insurance and a primary care physician, even when controlling for individual, family, and environmental characteristics. However, these results did not hold for adolescents who moved fewer than three times. Using a separate outcome, Murphey et al. (2012) came to a different conclusion. These researchers found that hypermobility, measured as moving five or more times, does not affect parents' global rating of their children's health or the incidence of mental health treatment when controlling for economic disadvantages.

In addition to move frequency, the health-related effects of household mobility can also depend upon the type of move made and outcome interval. One study found that, when adjusting for household structure and poverty status, local mobility was linked to poorer self-reported health (Gillespie and Bostean 2013). Research has also explored the long-term effects of household mobility on health outcomes. Bures (2003) identified residential instability during childhood as a primary predictor of lower self-reported health outcomes in midlife.

Overall, the results on mobility effects on health outcomes have been inconclusive. However, research findings have generally concluded that individual, family, and environmental variables interact to influence the mobility-health relationship (Jelleyman and Spencer 2008) and that families who move multiple times are at a greater risk for poor health outcomes.

### *Educational Outcomes*

Research on the effects of moving on educational outcomes has mostly concluded that moving adversely affects children's educational achievement and attainment. In early research, Pribesh and Downey (1999) found significant effects of moving on poor academic performance—but noted that selection into moving among particularly vulnerable families led to pronounced effects. Others identified household mobility as a mediating mechanism in the relationship between family structure and dropping out (Astone and McLanahan 1994; Crowder and Teachman 2004). These studies found that differences in household mobility between children in blended families versus “intact” families explained a significant proportion of the variance in the prevalence of dropping out among high school-age adolescents. As such, changes in household structure influence child outcomes, but the negative effects are more pronounced when these changes lead to household mobility.

More recent research has confirmed and updated these findings, concluding that household mobility is associated with low educational attainment and higher probability of dropping out (Metzger et al. 2015; South et al. 2007), lower standardized test scores (Voight et al. 2012), and lower math and reading achievement (Schmitt et al. 2015) net of selection into moving. Several studies have focused on the effects of moving on the educational outcomes of particularly vulnerable children, concluding that negative educational outcomes are especially pronounced among poor children (Schmitt and Lipscomb 2016) and those who experience frequent moves and residential instability (Ziol-Guest and McKenna 2014).

A great deal of research finds that household mobility has negative academic consequences in both the short and long-term—and, similar to the effects on health, these effects are magnified for particularly disadvantaged children and families. However, one problem researchers often face is that changing homes (especially over long distances) often also entails changing schools, which can affect educational outcomes (Rumberger 2015). This distinction is discussed further in Chap. 6.

#### *Behavioral and Mental Health Outcomes*

While some researchers have identified household mobility as a risk factor for negative behavioral and mental health, the results have mostly been mixed, with recent research pointing to direct effects of moving on behavior problems (Anderson et al. 2014a). As with health and educational effects, these studies have usually relied on different measures for individual-level outcomes and different treatments of household mobility by type and frequency.

Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), Haynie and South identified household mobility as a significant predictor of adolescent violence (2005) and a later paper found higher rates of attempted suicide among mobile youth (Haynie et al. 2006), even when controlling for preexisting differences between mobile and nonmobile adolescents. Research has also identified household mobility as a risk factor for early sexual activity (Stack 1994), substance use and abuse (DeWit 1998; Stabler et al. 2015), and declines in psychological development, particularly among adolescent girls (Adam and Lindsay Chase-Lansdale 2002). Using propensity score matching, Wolff et al. (2016) found that household mobility increases the likelihood of recidivism among both male and female juvenile offenders.

Others have found that the relationship between household mobility and negative behavioral effects is linked to selection into moving (Dong et al. 2005; Gasper et al. 2010; Porter and Vogel 2014). For example, Dong et al. (2005) found that childhood household mobility is linked to increased health-risky behaviors (i.e., higher odds of smoking and suicide) but that the effects were greatly reduced when accounting for the number of additional adverse events the child experienced, including family dysfunction, neglect, and abuse. Similarly, using fixed effects models, Gasper et al. (2010) argued that the association between behavior problems and long-distance mobility is mostly due to selection into moving based on preexisting characteristics of mobile individuals and families. They found that mobile adolescents (age 15–17) are usually poorer and have lower academic achievement than nonmobile children, which puts them at greater risk for behavior problems.

Research has less often considered the effects of household mobility beyond adolescence and young adulthood; however, the results of several studies have pointed to negative behavioral and mental health effects for midlife and older adults (Choi 1996; Magdol 2002; Bradley and Van Willigen 2010). There is also some reason to believe the effects of moving on mental health in adulthood are gendered—research has found that women are particularly vulnerable to depression and stress associated with household mobility (Magdol 2002), which could be tied to greater expectations on women to shoulder the practicalities of moving (Boyle et al. 2008).

### *Overall Effects*

Despite concerns that the effects of moving are spuriously linked to unobserved characteristics of movers (Gasper et al. 2010), the research overwhelmingly identifies household mobility as a risk factor for negative outcomes, albeit inconclusively. Few individuals and families, if any, benefit from the actual *act* of household mobility. Moving is stressful, distracting, and often consumes a substantial amount of time and energy (see, for example, Hansen 2016). At the individual and family level, household mobility is economically and emotionally costly. The disruption of family life, changes in roles and habits, identity reconstruction, and the psychological effects associated with losing one's home, downsizing, direct financial costs, can prove stressful—even with relatively local moves.

However, mobility effects appear to be particularly pronounced for poor families (Ziol-Guest and McKenna 2014), families that move across

a distance (Gillespie 2013), and those experiencing multiple moves in a short period of time (Busacker and Kasehagen 2012; Murphey et al. 2012). The next section uses data from the NLSY97 to explore mobility effects based on a number of different short- and long-term outcomes based on move frequency as well as the type of move made (i.e., local or distance).

## NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL SURVEY OF YOUTH 1997

Drawing on nationally representative data from the NLSY97, the next sections explore the effects of moving on different outcomes discussed above. Study 1 examines the effects of household mobility on self-reported health and delinquency among adolescents age 12–16 in 1999 ( $N = 8140$ ). Study 2 explores the long-term effects of childhood household mobility, based on the number of moves made before age 12, on educational attainment, life satisfaction, happiness, and self-reported health in adulthood ( $N = 6944$ ). Detailed information on variable measurement, descriptive statistics, multilevel statistical analyses, and model diagnostics is presented in appendix C.

### STUDY 1: SHORT-TERM ADOLESCENT OUTCOMES, AGE 12–16 ( $N = 8140$ )

As discussed above, research has explored the effects of household mobility on adolescent behavioral and physical health outcomes with mixed results, partially attributable to different treatments of household mobility based on differences in study populations, research designs, and sample populations. To contribute to this literature, the following nationally representative, longitudinal, multilevel analyses explore the effects of household mobility by type and frequency on delinquency and self-reported health in adolescence. In order to isolate the short-term effects of household mobility that occurred between 1998 and 1999, a control for childhood mobility before age 12 was included in the models.

For each outcome, the results of baseline models with lagged variables (to control for those individual/family characteristics before the move took place) are discussed. Preliminary models exploring the effects of *any* move are discussed but not shown. Table 5.2 presents the effects of household mobility on delinquency and subjective health outcomes with



**Table 5.2** Household mobility and adolescent outcomes, Age 12-16

	<i>Delinquency</i> <sub>1999</sub>		<i>Self-reported health</i> <sub>1999</sub>	
	<i>Model 1.1</i>	<i>Model 1.2</i>	<i>Model 2.1</i>	<i>Model 2.2</i>
Household mobility type <sub>1998-99</sub>				
No move (omitted)				
Local move	0.01		0.00	
Distance move	0.05***		0.01	
Household mobility frequency <sub>1998-99</sub>				
Did not move (omitted)				
Moved once		0.03*		0.01
Moved more than once		0.05***		-0.01
Childhood mobility <sub>age &lt; 12</sub>	0.02	0.02	-0.02*	-0.02*
Individual and family characteristics				
Age <sub>1999</sub>	-0.07***	-0.07***	-0.01	-0.01
Female	-0.11***	-0.11***	-0.08***	-0.08***
Siblings	-0.01	-0.01	-0.00	-0.00
Race (non-Black, non-Hispanic omitted)				
Black	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.02
Hispanic	-0.03*	-0.03*	-0.02	-0.02
Mixed race	0.01	0.01	-0.00	-0.00
Parent college degree	-0.00	-0.00	0.03*	0.03*
Household structure change <sub>1999</sub>	0.01	0.01	-0.00	0.00
Household structure <sub>1999</sub>				
Both biological parents (omitted)				
Biological and other parent	0.02	0.02	-0.05***	-0.05***
Single parent	0.03**	0.03**	-0.05***	-0.05***
Other household structure	0.00	-0.00	-0.03	-0.02
Urban <sub>1999</sub>	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00
Logged household income <sub>1999</sub>	-0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.01
Number of schools attended <sub>1999</sub>	0.02	0.02	-0.04***	-0.03**
Delinquency <sub>1998</sub>	0.41***	0.41***	-	-
Delinquency <sub>1999</sub>	-	-	-0.06***	-0.06***
Self-reported health <sub>1998</sub>	-	-	0.42***	0.42***
Self-reported health <sub>1999</sub>	-0.06***	-0.06***	-	-
Average adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.21

*Note:* Standardized coefficients for multilevel regression models with imputed missing data on independent variables. Subscript denotes measurement wave or retrospective time.

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

separate models exploring distance versus local mobility and single moves versus multiple moves.

### *Adolescent Delinquency*

In baseline models exploring the relationship between household mobility and delinquency in 1999 (controlling only for delinquency in 1998), mobile adolescents displayed significantly more delinquent behaviors than nonmobile adolescents ( $p < 0.001$ ). Furthermore, this association was maintained when controlling for individual and family characteristics ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Models 1.1 and 1.2 in Table 5.2 present the multilevel regression results for type of household mobility (no move, local move, or distance move) and frequency (no move, single move, multiple moves) on logged adolescent delinquency. Model 1.1 presents the results of a regression of household mobility type on delinquency in 1999 controlling for individual and family characteristics and delinquency score prior to the move. The results indicate that adolescents who moved to another city, county, or state ( $p < 0.001$ ) had higher delinquency than those who did not move. The results of Model 1.2 indicate that those who moved once ( $p < 0.05$ ) or more than once ( $p < 0.001$ ) displayed significantly higher rates of delinquency in 1999 than nonmobile adolescents. Consistent with previous research that found that moving was linked to behavior problems, particularly adolescent violence (Haynie and South 2005), these results suggest that distance mobility, whether undertaken a single time or multiple times, is a risk factor for delinquent behavior in adolescence, at least in the short term.

### *Adolescent Self-Reported General Health*

Baseline models exploring the relationship between any household mobility and self-reported general health in 1999, controlling for self-reported health in 1998, indicate that household mobility is significantly and negatively associated with adolescent health ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, the significance diminished with inclusion of additional controls for individual and family characteristics.

The results of multilevel regressions (models 2.1 and 2.2 in Table 5.2) indicate that there are no significant differences in self-reported health among nonmobile adolescents and those who moved locally or across a distance (model 2.1) or those who moved once or multiple times (model

2.2). Therefore, these analyses do not provide evidence for a relationship between household mobility and adolescent health. Of course, this could be a reflection of the use of self-reported health as a measure of health outcomes. Researchers have found significant effects of frequent moving on a number of objective measures (Busacker and Kasehagen 2012).

The results of both models do indicate, however, that household mobility before age 12 ( $p < 0.05$ ), and school mobility, measured as the number of schools attended before 1999 ( $p < 0.01$ ), may be risk factors for poorer health outcomes. One problem with the measure for number of schools is that it measures *any* change in schools, even preference-based and promotional school changes (e.g., from middle school to high school) that are not linked to household mobility. As such, this measure could be tapping into processes other than relocation-based school changes.

## STUDY 2: YOUNG ADULT OUTCOMES, AGE 24–32 ( $N = 6944$ )

As noted above, there is a substantial body of research on the long-term effects of childhood household mobility on educational outcomes, often finding that frequent mobility in childhood leads to dropping out (e.g., Metzger et al. 2015), while others have found that the opposite relationship exists (Hango 2006; Swanson and Schneider 1999). Studies exploring the long-term behavioral and psychological effects of childhood mobility found that frequent mobility in childhood was linked to lower rates of self-reported well-being and higher mortality in young adulthood (Oishi and Schimmack 2010). Other studies on the psychological effects of moving have produced null results. A longitudinal study using the British Household Panel Study explored subjective well-being and household mobility over 12 years and found that there were no long-term effects of household mobility on happiness (Nowok et al. 2013). In their study, adult movers (age 15+) experienced declines in happiness prior to the move, increased happiness associated with the move, but then an eventual return to baseline levels of happiness. In light of these mixed findings, and in addition to the short-term effects of household mobility explored above, the following analyses examine how childhood household mobility affects long-term academic, behavioral, and health outcomes in young adulthood.

**Table 5.3** Childhood household mobility and young adult outcomes, Age 24–32

	<i>Model 1</i> <i>Education</i> <sub>2010</sub>	<i>Model 2</i> <i>Life</i> <i>satisfaction</i> <sub>2008</sub>	<i>Model 3</i> <i>Happiness</i> <sub>2006–10</sub>	<i>Model 4</i> <i>Health</i> <sub>2006–10</sub>
Childhood mobility <sub>age &lt; 12</sub>	-0.04***	-0.03**	-0.03*	0.00
Household mobility <sub>2006–10</sub>	0.05***	-0.01	-0.02	0.02
Individual and family characteristics				
Age <sub>2010</sub>	0.05***	0.00	-0.02	-0.03*
Female	0.17***	0.04***	-0.06***	-0.06***
<i>Race (non-Black, non-Hispanic omitted)</i>				
Black	-0.02	-0.01	0.06***	-0.01
Hispanic	-0.11***	0.05***	0.06***	-0.06***
Mixed race	0.00	0.01	0.00	-0.01
Number of siblings <sub>2011</sub>	-0.06***	-0.03*	0.02	-0.01
Family income <sub>2010</sub>	0.11***	0.03*	0.01	0.04***
Married <sub>2010</sub>	0.07***	0.15***	0.05***	-0.01
Number of children <sub>2010</sub>	-0.28***	0.03*	-0.02	-0.01
Urban <sub>2010</sub>	0.06***	-0.03**	-0.02	0.01
Number of schools attended <sub>1999</sub>	0.01	-0.04**	0.02	0.00
Childhood sadness and depression <sub>1997</sub>	-0.02	-0.02	-0.06***	-0.00
Childhood health <sub>1997</sub>	0.06***	-0.00	-0.02**	0.20***
Logged household income <sub>1997</sub>	0.11***	0.01	-0.02	0.01
Household structure <sub>AGE 12</sub>				
Both biological parents (omitted)				
Single parent or blended family	-0.12***	-0.01	-0.00	-0.04***

(continued)

**Table 5.3** (continued)

	<i>Model 1</i> <i>Education</i> <sub>2010</sub>	<i>Model 2</i> <i>Life</i> <i>satisfaction</i> <sub>2008</sub>	<i>Model 3</i> <i>Happiness</i> <sub>2006-10</sub>	<i>Model 4</i> <i>Health</i> <sub>2006-10</sub>
Other family structure	-0.08***	-0.03*	-0.00	0.00
Self-reported health average <sub>2006-10</sub>	0.16***	0.14***	0.20***	-
Life satisfaction <sub>2008</sub>	0.05***	-	0.33***	0.14***
Average happiness <sub>2006-10</sub>	-0.04***	0.33***	-	0.20***
Highest degree <sub>2010</sub>	-	0.05***	-0.04***	0.18***
Average adjusted $R^2$	.30	.22	.21	.22

*Note:* Standardized coefficients for multilevel regression models with imputed missing data on independent variables. Subscript denotes measurement wave or retrospective time

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

### *Adult Educational Attainment*

Table 5.3 presents the results of a multilevel ordered logistic regression model for the number of childhood moves that occurred before age 12 (measured retrospectively starting in 2002) on educational attainment in adulthood. A baseline model for the relationship between childhood household mobility and later educational attainment in 2010 points to a significant negative relationship ( $p < 0.001$ ). Model 1 in Table 5.3 presents the results for childhood mobility and educational attainment controlling for a number of individual and family characteristics in adolescence and young adulthood. In the final model, the results suggest that childhood household mobility is significantly and negatively associated with educational attainment in 2010 ( $p < 0.001$ ). An additional logistic model (not shown) explored the effects of childhood household mobility on a dichotomous measure of college graduation. Consistent with results of the ordered logistic model, childhood mobility in adolescence led to somewhat lower odds of graduating college ( $OR = 0.9$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Additionally, the coefficient for *recent* household mobility (between 2006 and 2010) is significant and positive. This may be a reflection of more-educated individuals' propensity for long-distance moving discussed in Chap. 3.

### *Adult Life Satisfaction*

The results of a baseline multilevel model exploring the relationship between childhood household mobility and self-reported life satisfaction in 2008 (not shown) point to a significant and negative relationship ( $p < 0.001$ ). In the full multilevel model, which adds controls for individual and family characteristics (Model 2 in Table 5.3), household mobility in early adolescence is linked to lower life satisfaction in adulthood ( $p < 0.01$ ). This is consistent with prior research that found lower rates of self-reported well-being among young adults who were highly mobile children (Oishi and Schimmack 2010). Additionally, number of schools attended in adolescence is negatively associated with life satisfaction in young adulthood ( $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that childhood relocation and school transitions can independently affect later mental health outcomes.

### *Adult Happiness*

In order to explore a more robust long-term measure of well-being in young adulthood, scores on young adults' self-reported happiness in the last month were averaged across the years 2006, 2008, and 2010. A baseline model predicting young adults' self-reported happiness indicated that higher rates of childhood mobility were associated with decreased happiness ( $p < 0.001$ ). Model 3 in Table 5.3 presents the results of a full model with controls for individual and family characteristics in adolescence and young adulthood. The results of this model indicate that increased childhood mobility is significantly associated with lower happiness in adulthood ( $p < 0.05$ ). Consistent with prior research (Oishi and Schimmack 2010) and the findings from the life satisfaction model above, the results point to diminished self-reported happiness in adulthood among highly mobile children net of controls for individual and family characteristics in childhood and young adulthood.

### *Adult Self-Reported General Health*

The results of a baseline multilevel model (not shown) exploring the relationship between childhood mobility and self-reported general health in young adulthood suggest that number of childhood moves is negatively associated with reported health outcomes in young adulthood ( $p < 0.01$ ). However, as the results of model 4 in Table 5.3 indicate, similar to the

results for adolescent health (models 2.1 and 2.2 in Table 5.2), this relationship is diminished with the inclusion of controls for individual and family characteristics in adolescence and young adulthood. Altogether, there is no evidence to support the notion that household mobility by type or frequency has a short-term or long-term effect on self-reported health outcomes.

These results indicate that there are short-term behavioral effects and long-term educational and mental health effects associated with household mobility. Importantly, in the short-term models that explored different treatments of household mobility, significance and effect sizes varied based on move type and frequency.

## HOUSEHOLD MOBILITY AND FAMILY OUTCOMES

Children and young adults are not the only individuals affected by household mobility. Moving disrupts an entire household and its routines. Considering the linked lives principle of the life course perspective, individuals' decisions and behaviors are interrelated. As such, the effects of moving can extend to one's partner, as is the case with tied migration (Magdol 2002).

Moving is a decision made almost completely by parents, albeit sometimes with children's interests as a major concern (cf. Bushin 2009). As Talhelm and Oishi (2014:226) speculate, "adulthood moves do not make people unhappy, probably because they are often self-chosen. Childhood moves do seem to harm well-being, probably because they are not. ..." Moreover, parental perceptions of the move can influence how mobile children react to household mobility (Norford and Medway 2002). This intergenerational dynamic points up the importance of linked lives in the household mobility experience.

Although the life course perspective emphasizes the interdependence of family members (Elder 1998), very little research exists on how household mobility affects mobile families. Household mobility of any type creates stress that can influence family outcomes (Magdol 2002). However, distance moving in particular might have a pronounced impact on the family unit as individuals adapt to new circumstances and environments and develop new social ties (Coleman 1988).

Even though the relationship of child outcomes with mobility (Pribesh and Downey 1999) and with family structure and processes (Darling and Steinberg 1993) is well established, very little research exists linking

household mobility with family-based outcomes. South and colleagues found that parents of mobile children are less knowledgeable about their children's social networks than parents of nonmobile children (South and Haynie 2004; South et al. 2007). Recently, Metzger et al. (2015) found that household mobility in adolescence was negatively associated with family processes, measured by the quality of the home environment, maternal depression, and maternal sensitivity.

If moving leads to changes in individuals' roles, habits, and routines that can affect family processes, then it can also lead to changes in family structure. While family structure is often considered as a factor that prompts relocation, changes in family structure can also result from a move. As discussed in Chap. 3, a large proportion of mobile individuals are "tied" migrants, or those who relocate because of their partners (Cooke 2008; Green and Canny 2003). Research has found that household mobility (long- or short-distance) can affect employment status, particularly for tied movers who may be leaving a job in order to relocate (Geist and McManus 2008; Smith 2004), which can lead to weakened family relations.

While less often considered than other mobility effects, household mobility can also lead to union dissolution. In one of the only studies exploring the topic, Boyle et al. (2008) found that Austrian couples who made multiple distance moves were at a higher risk of separation and divorce than those who did not. The authors speculated that this relationship was associated with consistent housing dissatisfaction, the stress of moving, or gendered perspectives about the "trailing wife." However, additional research is needed to explore these hypotheses within different contexts. In addition to structural changes within the family, household mobility also has the potential to affect family interactions, attitudes, and behaviors.

### *Family Processes*

Three influential family processes have been identified in the family literature: family interactions and routines, parenting style, and parental monitoring. *Family routines* and social interactions among family members have been positively linked to educational achievement and behavioral development (Goldfarb et al. 2015). *Parenting styles* are the general context or emotional climate for specific parenting behaviors. Different styles of parenting, based on supportiveness and demandingness, have been linked



to a range of child outcomes, with generally positive outcomes associated with authoritarian parenting (Bronte-Tinkew et al. 2006). *Parental monitoring* is commonly defined as a strategy whereby parents obtain knowledge of their child's everyday activities. For example, children score higher on achievement tests and receive better grades in school if their parents are acquainted with their friends (Coleman 1988; Clark 1993; Muller 1998).

Because research has found that family processes vary over time and are environmentally influenced (Steinberg 1987; Beck et al. 2010), family processes and parenting behaviors might change in response to household mobility. Moving might disrupt family processes or prevent parents' ability to interact with, supervise, and adequately monitor their children. On the other hand, parents might strategically recalibrate their parenting strategies and become especially vigilant in order to "buffer" the effects of household mobility and offset the negative effects of moving for their children. Altogether, research findings suggest that household mobility could influence how families relate and parents parent.

Family interactions and supportive parenting processes are fundamental to the relationship that parents develop with their children. Major events and changes, including household mobility, increase the potential for conflict and unclear or ambiguous demands and responses from parents and children. If family interactions and parenting processes influence adolescent development, then factors such as household mobility may also be indirectly associated with adolescent outcomes. The next section draws on data from the NLSY97 to explore the effects of household mobility on changes in family routines, parenting style, and parental monitoring.

### STUDY 3: FAMILY OUTCOMES FOR ADOLESCENTS, AGE 12–14 ( $N = 4223$ )

Based on the literature presented above, the multilevel analyses presented below (Table 5.4) explore the effect of household mobility on different family processes for households with adolescents age 12–14 in 1999 ( $N = 4223$ ). The age range for these analyses is different from the models in Tables 5.2 and 5.3 because the NLSY measured family processes among only a subset of adolescents.

Since the mother–child link has been established as the strongest family bond (Rossi and Rossi 1990), the results for parenting changes are limited to mothers' parenting style and parental monitoring. Similar to

**Table 5.4** Household mobility and family outcomes for adolescents, age 12–14

	<i>Family routines</i> <sub>1999</sub>		<i>Parental monitoring</i> <sub>1999</sub>		<i>Parenting change</i> <sub>1998–2001</sub>	
	<i>Model 1.1</i>	<i>Model 1.2</i>	<i>Model 2.1</i>	<i>Model 2.2</i>	<i>Model 3.1</i>	<i>Model 3.2</i>
Household mobility						
type <sub>1998–99</sub>						
No move (omitted)						
Local move	0.02		0.02		0.02	
Distance move	0.03*		-0.01		0.04*	
Household mobility						
frequency <sub>1998–99</sub>						
Did not move (omitted)						
Moved once		0.03*		0.01		0.04*
Moved more than once		-0.01		0.01		0.01
Childhood	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02	0.01	0.01
mobility <sub>age &lt; 12</sub>						
Individual and						
family						
characteristics						
Age <sub>1999</sub>	-0.08***	-0.08***	-0.03*	-0.03*	-0.01	-0.01
Female	-0.02	-0.02	0.05***	0.05***	0.01	0.01
Siblings	0.05***	0.05***	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01
<i>Race (non-Black, non-Hispanic omitted)</i>						
Black	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Hispanic	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.03
Mixed race	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.00	-0.01
Parent college	-0.03	-0.03	-0.01	-0.01	-0.03	-0.03
degree						
Household	0.03*	0.03*	-0.02	-0.02	0.00	0.00
structure change <sub>1999</sub>						
Household						
structure <sub>1999</sub>						
Both biological parents (omitted)						

*(continued)*

**Table 5.4** (continued)

	<i>Family routines</i> <sub>1999</sub>		<i>Parental monitoring</i> <sub>1999</sub>		<i>Parenting change</i> <sub>1998–2001</sub>	
	<i>Model 1.1</i>	<i>Model 1.2</i>	<i>Model 2.1</i>	<i>Model 2.2</i>	<i>Model 3.1</i>	<i>Model 3.2</i>
Biological and other parent	-0.01	-0.01	-0.00	-0.00	0.02	0.02
Single parent	-0.01	-0.01	0.04*	0.04*	0.01	0.01
Other household structure	-0.00	0.00	0.01	-0.01	0.01	0.02
Urban <sub>1999</sub>	-0.02	-0.02	-0.04**	-0.04**	0.00	0.00
Logged household income <sub>1999</sub>	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	0.00
Mother religiousness <sub>1997</sub>	0.09***	0.09***	-0.01	-0.01	-0.03*	-0.03*
Mother self-reported health <sub>1997</sub>	-0.02	-0.02	0.00	0.00	-0.02	-0.02
Family relationship controls						
Mother monitoring scale <sub>1998</sub>	0.03*	0.03*	0.43***	0.43***	-0.01	-0.01
Family routines index <sub>1998</sub>	0.48***	0.48***	0.02	0.02	-0.01	-0.01
Closeness to mother <sub>1999</sub>	0.20***	0.20***	0.36***	0.36***	-0.09***	-0.09***
Average adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.39	0.39	0.45	0.45	0.02	0.02

*Note:* Standardized coefficients for multilevel regression models with imputed missing data on independent variables. Subscript denotes measurement wave or retrospective time.

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

the models for adolescent outcomes, in order to isolate the short-term effects of household mobility on family processes, a control for earlier household mobility (before the respondent child was age 12) was included in each model. Additionally, to control for family dynamics that precede the move, controls for mothers' monitoring score in 1998 and family routines in 1998 were included in each model. In order to control for family relations *after* the move, the child's self-reported closeness to his or her mother in 1999 was included in each model.

### *Family Routines*

Results of baseline models for the relationship between household mobility and family routines in 1999 (not shown) indicate that household mobility is only marginally associated with increases in family activities after a move takes place when controlling for family routines in 1998 ( $p < 0.10$ ). In models that include controls for adolescent, parent, and household characteristics (not shown), the relationship between household mobility is entirely diminished. Additional models (models 1.1 and 1.2 in Table 5.4) explore this relationship by move type and frequency. The results of model 1.1 indicate that household mobility is significantly and positively associated with an increase in family routines and activities but only among those who move to another city, county, or state ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, families that move across a distance engage in significantly more family routines than nonmobile families. Additionally, model 1.2 indicates that the effects of household mobility on family routines are significant for those who reported moving only once ( $p < 0.05$ ).

These results indicate that household mobility is related to changes in family routines in adolescence. While research has often linked household mobility to disruptive outcomes, these findings suggest that distance movers engage in *more* activities than nonmobile families. There is a number of possible explanations for this relationship. First, parents may initiate more family interactions after a move in order to buffer the potentially negative effects of long-distance relocation. This is consistent with previous research that found that parents can help mitigate the effects of moving on children (Gillespie 2014; Hagan et al. 1996). Second, and relatedly, families that relocate over a long distance may have fewer social ties in their new community and, as a result of social isolation, members of these families may interact with one another more frequently. This would be consistent with Magdol's (2000) finding that long-distance mobility—but not frequency of moving—was associated with dispersed network ties for mothers.

### *Parental Monitoring*

In baseline models predicting parental monitoring in 1999, controlling only for parental monitoring in 1998, household mobility is not associated with changes in parental monitoring. Moreover, the relationship is unchanged when controls for adolescent, parent, and household charac-

teristics are included in the model. Parental monitoring is not significantly different for mobile and nonmobile households. Models 2.1 and 2.2 in Table 5.4 explore the results for household mobility type and frequency. Again, the results indicate that household mobility is not associated with changes in parental monitoring behaviors.

### *Parenting Style*

Baseline results for household mobility and changes in parenting style (not shown) reveal that without controls, household mobility is significantly associated with change in parenting style for mothers ( $p < 0.001$ ). In a model predicting household mobility (of any type) and changes in parenting style that includes all controls, household mobility is associated with a somewhat greater likelihood of changes in mothers' parenting style between 1998 and 1999 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Models 3.1 and 3.2 in Table 5.4 present the results of logistic regression predicting change in mothers' parenting style between 1998 and 1999. The results of model 3.1 indicate that distance mobility (to another city, county, or state) is associated with a higher likelihood of changes in mothers' parenting style ( $OR = 1.4, p < 0.05$ ), but the results do not hold for local mobility. The results of model 3.2 suggest that these findings hold only for individuals who move once, rather than households that moved more than once between 1998 and 1999 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, similar to family outcomes in model 1.1, household mobility affects parenting styles when the move occurs over a long distance, but the finding does not hold for either local or multiple moves. The explanation supports the hypothesis proposed above—mothers might change their parenting style in order to buffer the negative effects of long-distance mobility. Additionally, families in highly mobile households might be adept at moving, successfully doing so without substantial changes in routines or behaviors.

To get a more complete picture, multinomial logistic results (not shown) explored the type of parenting change associated with household mobility. The multinomial logistic model estimated the likelihood of each of the three parenting styles relative to the omitted reference parenting style (authoritarian) in 1999. The model included the same controls for child, parent, and household characteristics. In order to tease out the type of parenting change that occurred, a lagged parenting style (1998 measure) was included with interactions between household mobility and lagged parenting style measures. Net of these variables, the lagged interac-

tions with mobility explored the effect of household mobility on changes in parenting style vis-à-vis the parenting style exhibited before the move took place.

For uninvolved parenting, the coefficient for household mobility was significant, indicating that household mobility is significantly associated with being an uninvolved compared to a permissive parent ( $p < 0.05$ ). Additionally, the interaction term between household mobility and permissive parenting in 1998 suggests that mothers who were (1) mobile and (2) exhibited a permissive parenting style were significantly more likely to be authoritative than uninvolved in 1999 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This provides some preliminary evidence for the speculation above—that mothers exhibit somewhat more attentive parenting characteristics after relocation, perhaps to buffer the negative effects of long-distance relocation.

While prior research has found that many different factors influence parenting styles, these same variables (e.g., changes in household structure, parental level of education) do not predict one's propensity to *change* parenting style. However, the results indicate that household mobility is associated with changes in parenting style.

## CONCLUSION

Answers about whether or not household mobility has individual and family-level effects have been inconclusive. Definitive responses have been difficult to pinpoint for a number of reasons, mostly based on differences in sampling frames, research design, and measurement. The analyses presented in this chapter support this irresolution. The effects of moving vary based on which outcome is being explored, the outcome interval, as well as the frequency and type of move. Consistent with some existing research, the results presented in this chapter suggest that long-distance moves—those which take place across city, county, or state lines—are a particularly important risk factor for adolescent delinquency and changes in some family processes.

Although this chapter did not explore theoretical explanations for why moving matters, a number of mechanisms have been identified as important mediators of the relationship between mobility and negative outcomes. Drawing on data from a different data set, the NLSY79 linked mother-child files, the next chapter explores some of the mechanisms behind *why* mobility affects individuals and families negatively, including the loss of social capital resulting from relocation.

APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL DETAILS FOR DATA AND ANALYSIS  
IN CHAP. 5

*NLSY97 Sample*

The NLSY97 is a nationally representative sample of 8984 adolescents in 1997 who were born from 1980 through 1984 and were 12 through 17 years of age during the initial 1997 round. The annual multi-topic survey collects extensive information on child and family interactions and relationships. It also contains an array of information about parenting practices, parent–child closeness, and other environmental characteristics. Furthermore, the survey collects information on parents and siblings of the respondents. The studies in Chap. 5 draw on data from the 1998, 1999, and 2006, 2008, and 2010 waves.

A chained multiple imputation procedure was utilized to handle missing data. The dependent and independent variables were used to construct the imputations but imputed values for dependent variables were excluded from the analyses. The imputation procedure produced ten imputed datasets and the imputed estimates were subsequently combined. Descriptive statistics and parameter estimates for each imputed dataset were virtually identical.

The measures and analytic procedures are discussed below as they relate to each of the three studies presented in Chap. 3. Study 1 explored short-term behavioral and health outcomes of household mobility on adolescents ( $N = 8140$ ). Study 2 explored the long-term outcomes of childhood mobility on young adults ( $N = 6944$ ). Study 3 explored the effects of household mobility on family processes for a subsample of adolescents ( $N = 4223$ ).

*Study 1: Short-Term Adolescent Outcomes of Household Mobility*  
( $N = 8140$ )

*Dependent Variables*

**Adolescent Delinquency**

The *adolescent delinquency index* is based on the respondent child's response to ten questions about delinquent behaviors between 1998 and 1999. The behaviors were related to running away, carrying a handgun,

belonging to a gang, destroying or damaging property, minor stealing, major theft, other property crimes, fighting and physical assault, selling drugs, and being arrested by the police for a delinquent offense. Summing the affirmative responses to the delinquent acts yields an index, ranging from 0 to 10, with previously established predictive and internal validity (Center for Human Resource Research 1999). A log-transformed measure of adolescent delinquency was modeled because the variable was highly positively skewed (kurtosis = 15.6). Distance mobility was still a significant predictor of increased behavior problems using a number of different transformations of the variable. However, models 1.1 and 1.2 use the log of adolescent delinquency in 1999 as the dependent variable.

### Adolescent Self-Reported Health

The child respondents were asked to report on their *overall health* as being (0) poor, (1) fair, (2) good, (3) very good, or (4) excellent.

#### *Independent Variables*

*Household mobility* indicates whether the respondent reported (0) not moving, (1) moving locally, or (2) moving to another city, county, or state between 1998 and 1999. *Move frequency* was a separate measure that explored whether (0) no move, (1) a single move, or (2) multiple moves took place between the 1998 and 1999 waves.

In order to tease out the short-term effects of household mobility, a control variable was included for a *number of childhood moves*. This variable documented the number of adolescent household relocations that occurred prior to age 12; the measure was top-coded at 10. An additional measure for *number of schools attended* was included to control for potentially confounding effects of school mobility. However, as discussed in Chap. 5, this variable measured any school moves, even promotional changes (e.g., from middle school to high school).

Additional variables for individual and family characteristics included *age*, *gender* (male/female), and *number of siblings*. *Race* was classified as non-Black/non-Hispanic, Black, Hispanic, and mixed race. A dichotomous variable indicated whether or not either parent had a college degree. *Household structure* identified children as residing with both biological parents (omitted for reference), a biological parent and stepparent, a single parent, or another household structure. An additional household-level variable identified whether or not any household *structure change* occurred between 1998 and 1999. A measure for *urbanicity* assessed whether or



not children relocated to an urban or suburban (1) as opposed to rural (0) area. The models included a measure for logged *household income*.

### **Analysis Notes**

Descriptive statistics for each of the variables discussed above are presented in Table 5.5. Multilevel logistic regression models explored the effects of household mobility on adolescent delinquency. Additionally, multilevel ordered logistic regression models were used to examine household mobility effects on self-reported health. For both outcomes, separate models explored the effects of move type (distance versus local) and move frequency (one move versus multiple moves).

In order to control for child outcomes *before and after* the move took place, each model included a lagged control for the dependent variable in 1998 and a measure of the other dependent variable in 1999. For example, the model that predicts delinquent behavior in 1999 includes a control for delinquent behavior in 1998 as well as a control for self-reported health in 1999. Variance inflation factors were checked in order to assess any severe multicollinearity in the models (average VIFs < 1.1). Analysis of the correlation matrix (not shown) indicated that none of the observed relationships between the independent variables in the models were very strong—the strongest correlation (0.32) was between household income and parental education.

## *Study 2: Long-Term Outcomes of Childhood Mobility on Young Adults (N = 6944)*

### *Dependent Variables*

#### **Young Adult Educational Attainment**

Information for young adults' educational attainment was collected in 2010. Individuals were categorized as having (0) no academic degree, (1) a high school diploma or equivalent, (2) some college or AA degree, (3) a college degree, or (4) a graduate degree. As noted in Chap. 5, an additional model included a collapsed dichotomous measure to indicate whether or not an individual had a college degree.

**Table 5.5** Descriptive statistics for adolescent outcomes, age 12–16

<i>Imputed model N = 8140</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
Household mobility type <sub>1998-99</sub>		
No move	5779 (72.9)	
Local move	1100 (13.9)	
Distance move	1053 (13.3)	
Household mobility frequency <sub>1998-99</sub>		
Moved once	1732 (21.84)	
Moved more than once	419 (5.3)	
Childhood mobility <sub>Age &lt; 12</sub>		2.7 (2.4)
Individual and family characteristics		
Age <sub>1999</sub>		16.9 (1.4)
Female	3906 (49.2)	
Siblings		2.1 (1.6)
Race		
Non-Black, non-Hispanic	4120 (51.9)	
Black	2069 (26.1)	
Hispanic	1669 (21.0)	
Mixed race	74 (1.0)	
Parent college degree	1915 (25.9)	
Household structure change <sub>1999</sub>	994 (12.7)	
Household structure <sub>1999</sub>		
Both biological parents	3621 (46.2)	
Biological and other parent	1027 (13.1)	
Single parent	2235 (28.5)	

*(continued)*

**Table 5.5** (continued)

<i>Imputed model N = 8140</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
Other household structure	963 (12.3)	
Urban or suburban <sub>1999</sub>	5749 (74.9)	
Logged household income <sub>1999</sub>		10.4 (1.2)
Number of schools attended <sub>1999</sub>		2.3 (0.9)
Delinquency <sub>1998</sub>		0.8 (1.5)
Delinquency <sub>1999</sub>		0.6 (1.2)
Self-reported health <sub>1998</sub>		4.1 (0.9)
Self-reported health <sub>1999</sub>		4.1 (0.9)

*Note:* Unimputed unweighted estimates

### Young Adult Life Satisfaction

A global measure of subjective well-being asked respondents to rate their current life satisfaction. Respondents were presented with the following question, “All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days?” Respondents were asked to provide an answer from 1 to 10, where 1 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied.

### Young Adult Happiness

In addition to a global measure of overall satisfaction, respondents are asked biennially about their happiness in the last month. Individuals are presented with the following question: “How much of the time during the last month have you been a happy person?” The response options were (1) none of the time, (2) some of the time, (3) most of the time, and (4) all of the time. The responses were averaged across the years 2006, 2008, and 2010 to provide an average young adult happiness score (range = 1–4).

### Young Adult Self-Reported Health

Similar to the measure of adolescent *self-reported health* in study 1 (which was included as a control variable in these analyses), the young adult

respondents were asked to report on their *overall health* as being (0) poor, (1) fair, (2) good, (3) very good, or (4) excellent.

### *Independent Variables*

#### **Childhood Household Mobility**

To tease out the long-term versus short-term effects of household mobility, a variable denoting moves that occurred between 2006 and 2010 was included in the models. A number of additional independent variables were included in the models in order to control for individual and family effects in childhood and young adulthood. At the individual-level, and similar to the models for study 1, these models included respondents' *age* and *gender* (male/female).

*Race* was classified as non-Black/non-Hispanic, Black, Hispanic, and mixed race. In order to control for physical and emotional well-being in adolescence, a *sadness and depression* measure indicated whether the adolescent rated the statement “You are unhappy, sad, or depressed” as being (0) not true, (1) sometimes/somewhat true, or (2) always true in 1997. Additionally, a measure for adolescent self-reported health in 1997 was included, with the same response options as those reported above.

At the adolescent household level, the model included measures for number of siblings. A retrospective measure of household structure at age 12 (collected starting in 2002) indicated whether respondents resided with both biological parents (omitted reference), a single parent or a blended family, or another household structure. A measure was also included for logged household income in adolescence (1997). Similar to the measure in study 1, the *number of schools* the respondent attended by 1999 was also included.

To control for the effects of individual and household characteristics in young adulthood, a variable was included for logged family income in 2010. A dichotomous measure assessed whether or not the respondent was married in 2010. Number of children in 2010 was also included as a young adult household-level control variable. Lastly, a measure for *urbanicity* indicated whether the young adult lived in an urban or suburban (1) as opposed to rural (0) area in 2010.

#### **Analysis Notes and Limitations**

Descriptive statistics for each of the variables discussed above are presented in Table 5.6. In Table 5.3 of Chap. 5, models 1–4 include each of

**Table 5.6** Descriptive statistics for long-term mobility outcomes, age 24–32

<i>Imputed model N = 6944</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
Childhood mobility <sub>Age &lt; 12</sub>		2.8 (2.4)
Household mobility <sub>2006–10</sub>	5.413(78.0)	
Individual and family characteristics		
Age <sub>2010</sub>		28.0 (1.4)
Female	3492 (50.3)	
Race		
Non-Black, non-Hispanic	3488 (50.2)	
Black	1905 (27.4)	
Hispanic	1483 (21.4)	
Mixed race	68 (1.0)	
Number of siblings <sub>2011</sub>		2.8 (2.3)
Logged family income <sub>2010</sub>		10.6 (1.1)
Married <sub>2010</sub>	2306 (34.0)	
Number of children <sub>2010</sub>		1.0 (1.2)
Urban or suburban <sub>2010</sub>	5316 (79.6)	
Number of schools attended <sub>1999</sub>		1.4 (0.9)
Childhood sadness and depression <sub>1997</sub>		0.5 (0.6)
Childhood health <sub>1997</sub>		4.0 (0.9)
Logged household income <sub>1997</sub>		10.1 (1.4)
Household structure <sub>age 12</sub>		
Both biological parents	2720 (44.4)	
Single parent or blended family	2992 (48.9)	
Other family structure	411 (6.7)	
Self-reported health average <sub>2006–10</sub>		3.7 (0.8)
Life satisfaction <sub>2008</sub>		7.6 (1.9)
Average happiness <sub>2006–10</sub>		2.8 (0.5)
Highest degree <sub>2010</sub>		1.6 (1.1)

*Note:* Unimputed and unweighted estimates

the controls for individual and family characteristics in both adolescence and adulthood discussed above. Each model also includes controls for the dependent variables used in each of the other models.

Examination of variance inflation factors did not indicate there was any severe multicollinearity in the models (average VIF = 1.4). Analysis of

the correlation matrix (not shown) indicated that none of the observed relationships between the independent variables in the models was very strong—the strongest correlation (0.44) was between life satisfaction in 2008 and the average happiness score for 2006–10. Multilevel ordered logistic regressions were modeled for each of the outcomes.

*Study 3: Effects of Household Mobility on Family Processes*  
(N = 4223)

*Dependent Variables*

**Adolescent Family Routines**

A *family routine's* scale sums responses to how many days in a typical week (1) the respondent had dinner with the family; (2) did something fun as a family, such as played a game, went to a sporting event, went swimming, and so forth; (3) did something religious as a family, such as going to church, praying, or reading the scriptures together; or (4) the housework got done when it is supposed to, for example, cleaning up after dinner, doing dishes, or taking out the trash. The resulting scale, which ranges from 0–28 with a higher score indicating a higher level of routine activities, has been shown to be high in predictive validity (Center for Human Resource Research 1999).

**Parental Monitoring**

For four items with response categories ranging from 1 to 4, the youth reported on the *monitoring* practices of his or her mother: (1) how well she knows her child's close friends; (2) how well she knows her child's friend's parents; (3) if she knows who her child spends time with when her child is not at home; and (4) how well she knows her child's teachers and school. These items were summed, creating a 16-point parental awareness scale, with higher scores indicating greater levels of parental awareness ( $\alpha = 0.71$ ).

**Parenting Style Changes**

Based on the commonly used four-quadrant typology of parenting style (Maccoby and Martin 1983), adolescents responded about whether or not they considered their mothers “very supportive, somewhat supportive, or not very supportive.” A separate item asked whether they considered

their mothers “permissive or strict about making sure you did what you were supposed to do.” For responsiveness, “very supportive” responses are coded “1,” else “0.” For demandingness, “demanding,” responses are coded “1,” else “0.” Combined, the variables create a two-by-two typology of parenting style: *authoritative* (demanding and supportive), *authoritarian* (demanding and not very supportive), *permissive* (nondemanding and very supportive), and *uninvolved* (nondemanding and not supportive). These parenting style measures are high in construct and predictive ability (Center for Human Resource Research 1999). Based on the parenting style categories, a dichotomous variable indicates whether the mother’s parenting style changed between 1998 and 1999 (change = 1, else = 0).

### *Independent Variables*

Similar to study 1, *household mobility* indicates whether the respondent reported (0) not moving, (1) moving locally, or (2) moving to another city, county, or state between 1998 and 1999. *Move frequency* was a separate measure that explored whether (0) no move, (1) a single move, or (2) multiple moves took place between the 1998 and 1999 waves.

Additional individual and household level variables were included for *age*, *gender* (male/female), and the presence of *siblings*. *Race* was categorized as non-Black/non-Hispanic, Black, Hispanic, and mixed race. At the household and family level, a dichotomous variable for *parental education* indicated whether or not either parent had a college degree. *Household structure* identified children as residing with both biological parents (omitted for reference), a biological parent and stepparent, a single parent, or another household structure. An additional household-level variable identified whether or not any household *structure change* occurred between 1998 and 1999.

The models included a measure for logged *household income*. Additionally, a measure for *urbanicity* indicated whether or not the household relocated to an urban or suburban (1) as opposed to rural (0) area. To tease out the effects of earlier household mobility, *childhood mobility* indicated the number of household relocations of any type that occurred in adolescence (top-coded at 10).

Additional controls included parental behaviors and characteristics known to influence family processes, including parenting. *Mother’s self-reported health* in 1997, the only year for which the information was available, used the same response options as the self-reported health measures

**Table 5.7** Descriptive statistics for family outcomes, age 12–14

<i>Imputed model N = 4223</i>	<i>N (%)</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
Household mobility type <sub>1998-99</sub>		
No move	3584 (84.9)	
Local move	415 (9.8)	
Distance move	224 (5.3)	
Household mobility frequency <sub>1998-99</sub>		
Moved once	565 (13.4)	
Moved more than once	74 (1.8)	
Childhood mobility <sub>Age &lt; 12</sub>		2.7 (2.3)
Individual and family characteristics		
Age <sub>1999</sub>		15.9 (0.9)
Female	2055 (48.7)	
Siblings		2.1 (1.6)
Race		
Non-Black, non-Hispanic	2279 (53.9)	
Black	998 (23.6)	
Hispanic	903 (21.4)	
Mixed race	43 (1.0)	
Parent college degree	1107 (27.6)	
Household structure change <sub>1999</sub>	241 (5.7)	
Household structure <sub>1999</sub>		
Both biological parents	2319 (55.1)	
Biological and other parent	634 (15.1)	
Single parent	1201 (28.5)	
Other household structure	56 (1.3)	
Urban or suburban <sub>1999</sub>	3064 (74.5)	
Logged household income <sub>1999</sub>		10.5 (1.1)

*(continued)*



**Table 5.7** (continued)

<i>Imputed model</i> $N = 4223$	$N$ (%)	<i>Mean</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Mother religiousness <sub>1997</sub>		3.7 (1.6)
Mother self-reported health <sub>1997</sub>		3.7 (1.1)
Family process outcomes and controls		
Family routines index <sub>1998</sub>		8.0 (4.3)
Family routines index <sub>1999</sub>		7.5 (4.2)
Mother monitoring scale <sub>1998</sub>		10.0 (3.2)
Mother monitoring scale <sub>1999</sub>		9.7 (3.4)
Mother changed parenting style <sub>1998-99</sub>	1961 (46.4)	
Closeness to mother <sub>1999</sub>		11.6 (3.2)

*Note:* Unimputed and unweighted estimates

reported above. *Parent religiosity* is based on six questions that describe how the mother felt about religion and religious practices in 1997. The items were summed to produce a scale ranging from 0 (not religious) to 6 (very religious) ( $\alpha = 0.60$ ).

To assess the quality of the mother–child relationship after the move takes place, *mother–child closeness* is based on the adolescent’s report on their relationship with their mother in 1999. The emotional dimension includes “She is a person I want to be like” and “I really enjoy spending time with her.” The behavioral dimension is based on two 5-point Likert items ranging from 0–4 (never to always): “How often does she praise you for doing well?” and “How often does she help you do things that are important to you?” The items were summed to create a scale, ranging from 0–16, with the highest scores indicating a stronger mother–child relationship ( $\alpha = 0.77$ ).

#### *Analysis Notes and Limitations*

Models 1 and 2 in Table 5.4 used multilevel OLS regression to model the effects of moving on changes in family routines and parental monitoring.

Model 3 used logistic regression to examine the effects of moving on any change in parenting style between 1998 and 1999. Descriptive statistics for each of the variables discussed above are presented in Table 5.7.

A collective account of the chapter's limitations is below. However, one data limitation specific to study 2 is that the childhood mobility measure is imperfect for a number of reasons. First, the variable is based on retrospective assessment of mobility behavior in childhood; therefore, the data could reflect some recall bias. Second, the variable does not have information on whether, or how many of, these moves were long-versus short-distance moves. As Chap. 5 demonstrates, there are different effects associated with different types of moves. Third, the variable assesses the *number of moves* made during childhood, but nothing is known regarding the *frequency* with which moves were made. For example, four moves before age 12 with 2-year intervals between moves might have very different effects than four moves before age 12 where all occurred within the span of 2 years.

In order to control for family processes before and after the move took place, each model controlled for family processes in 1998 (before the move took place). Additionally, the measure for respondents' reported closeness to their mother was included to control for the quality of the family relationship *after* the move took place.

Variance inflation factors were checked in order to assess any severe multicollinearity in the models (average VIFs < 1.2). Analysis of the correlation matrix (not shown) indicated that none of the observed relationships between the independent variables in the models was very strong—the strongest correlation (0.42) was between mother's monitoring score in 1998 and closeness to mother in 1999.

There are several limitations particular to study 3. First, the parenting style typology consists of only two measures (i.e., demandingness and responsiveness). Although this typology has been validated in recent research (Bronte-Tinkew et al. 2006; Bronte-Tinkew et al. 2010; Baumrind et al. 2010), this two-measure typology may be less stable than a continuum-based scale for parenting style and change. However, analyses conducted by the Center for Human Resource Research (1999) confirm that the parenting style typology is a high-quality measure with both construct and predictive validity. Another limitation involves the fact that adolescents provide information about the parent-child relationship. Mothers might perceive themselves to be more demanding and more responsive than their adolescents perceive them to be. Along the same

lines, they could also report more monitoring and involved parenting than their children report. Therefore, single-source bias may affect the validity of the outcome measures.

### *Overall Study Limitations*

The NLSY97 does not contain information on the reason for moving. This is an important limitation since the circumstances of a move (e.g., upward mobility following a promotion versus downward mobility following divorce) can influence individual and family outcomes. An additional limitation is that the NLSY97 does not include information about whether or not childhood mobility (before age 12) occurred over long or short distances. Thus, the analyses did not explore whether or not there were particularly pronounced effects for adolescents and families that frequently moved across long distances versus those who made frequent local moves.

Also, individual and family outcomes were only assessed for children starting at age 12. As such, the findings may not hold for younger children. Of course, development through adolescence and young adulthood introduces a complex issue. For instance, is it mobility that leads to change in parenting behavior or is it just autonomy associated with the transition to adulthood? At the same time, parents who move frequently may already be the type of parents to exhibit inconsistent parenting styles.

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# Mobility Effects and Cumulative Mobility Contexts

## INTRODUCTION

As with the study of migration and household mobility more generally, there has been a wide interdisciplinary focus on the effects of moving on individuals, especially children, and families. For example, mobility effects research has been published in public health (Bures 2003), demography (Boyle et al. 2008), sociology (Tønnessen et al. 2016), psychology (Oishi and Talhelm 2012), psychiatry (Mok et al. 2016), education (Voight et al. 2012), criminology (Porter and Vogel 2014), social work (Ersing et al. 2009), and public policy (Anderson et al. 2014b), among others. As a result of this interdisciplinary diversity, a variety of theoretical perspectives have been applied to *why* moving might negatively affect individuals and families.

In an early review of the literature, Scanlon and Devine (2001) documented five perspectives on why moving is linked to negative child outcomes: stress and coping theory, the mobility experience, social capital, classroom turnover, and moving to opportunity. This chapter integrates these perspectives and proposes an updated framework for understanding mobility effects. The primary goals of this chapter are to (a) emphasize the importance of resources, risk factors, and move context, (b) illustrate how cumulative context-related stressors lead to the most harmful outcomes, and (c) identify why moving might be beneficial for some individuals and families but detrimental for others.

## MOBILITY EFFECTS FRAMEWORK

As earlier chapters demonstrated, household mobility can be undertaken to satisfy housing or other environmental grievances; however, at the same time, moving can also be disruptive to the family system. Despite being a normative life event, moving often entails substantial readjustment and adaptation. If individuals and families are unable to productively adjust to mobility-related disturbances, they can experience disruption, disorder, and distress.

The cumulative context framework proposed in this chapter suggests that mobility effects are rooted in three interconnected dynamics. First, *preexisting conditions and resources* influence mobility stress and the context in which household mobility occurs. Second, the *move context* (e.g., circumstances, timing, frequency) influences individuals' exposure and vulnerability to stress. Collectively, these experiences influence how

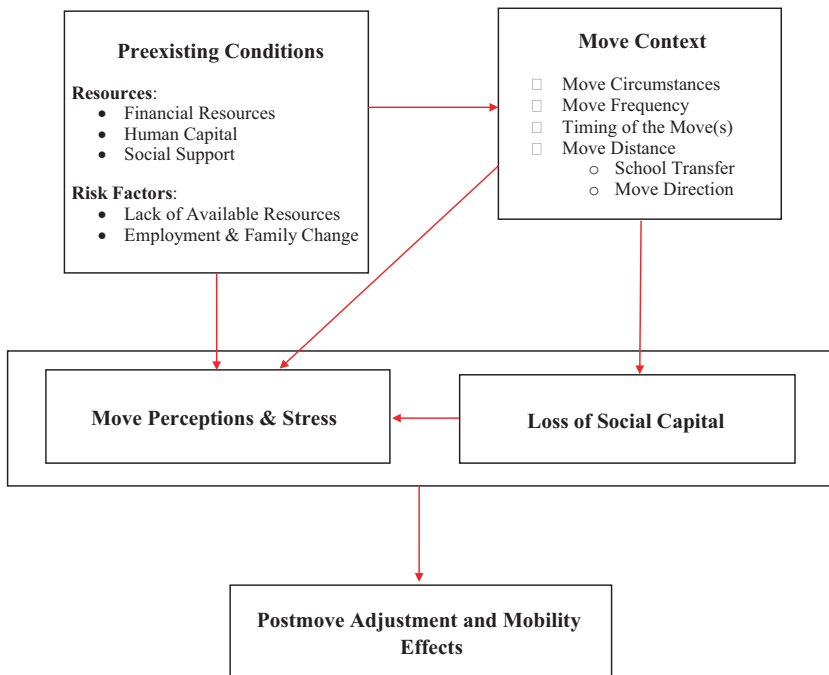


Fig. 6.1 Cumulative context framework

individuals and families respond to moving. Negative effects will be most salient when the move itself is compounded by multiple stressors, including the context of the move itself. Each of these dynamics is discussed in the sections to follow. Figure 6.1 illustrates the proposed framework. While limitations to available data preclude a full analysis of the path model, several components are explored later in the chapter.

### *Preexisting Characteristics and Conditions*

Researchers have struggled with disentangling the effects of household mobility from the preexisting conditions that select individuals into household mobility. Earlier chapters explored how sociodemographic characteristics, such as income and education, influence individuals' mobility decisions. However, these characteristics are also associated with mobility *outcomes*. As such, perceived mobility effects might be a function of differences between those who move and those who do not (Gasper et al. 2010; Morris et al. 2016). Drawing on the life course notion of variability, preexisting conditions, particularly heterogeneity in resources and other risk factors, provide a starting point for understanding mobility effects.

### *Individual and Household Resources*

Family stress frameworks emphasize the role of individual, family, and community resources in coping with adverse life events (Hill 1949; Pearlman 1999). These resources influence the mobility experience and move contexts, which can lead to different mobility experiences and outcomes. Financial resources, human capital, and family and social support can influence the amount of time and energy dedicated to the move. Financial resources allow individuals to cushion the economic costs of moving, including outsourcing labor for the act of moving itself. Although financial expenses incurred by household mobility are usually only costly in the short term, they have the potential to be a substantial cause of stress and a draw on resources.

A strong social support network can provide instrumental assistance and emotional support with the move. Additionally, family stability has been linked to positive move outcomes. Although children from two-parent households are less likely to move overall, they generally fare better than single-parent households when they do (Astone and McLanahan 1994; Crowder and Teachman 2004; Fomby and Sennott 2013).

Human capital also influences the mobility experience. For example, marketable skills for employment and knowledge about different areas and housing markets offset some of the time and energy involved in choosing among locations. Personality characteristics amenable to household mobility, such as openness to experience and extraversion (Jokela 2009), can bolster less stressful perceptions of the move—potentially leading to better outcomes (Oishi and Schimmack 2010). Thus, preexisting individual, family, and community resources impact how a move is perceived and experienced. These resources “become part of the family’s capabilities for resisting crisis” (McCubbin and Patterson 1983:8), in turn facilitating postmove adjustment. However, a *lack* of resources is a risk factor for more stressful move contexts.

### *Risk Factors*

Financial resources, human capital, and social support have been linked to differential exposure and vulnerability to stressful life events (Conger and Donnellan 2007). A lack of resources is a risk factor for household mobility—and it also situates certain types of households into more stressful contexts of moving. For example, individuals living in poverty are differentially exposed to forced mobility through eviction (Skobba and Goetz 2013), more likely to be hypermobile (Cohen and Wardrip 2011), and less likely to make “upward” moves to better neighborhoods (Clark and Rivers 2012). Moreover, limitations in human capital, especially cognitive constraints to “individuals’ mental perceptions and understandings of which communities are possible residential destinations,” can lead to restricted housing searches (Sharkey 2012). On the other hand, individuals without an established support system may be more likely to broaden their search.

As earlier chapters have shown, life events often trigger household mobility. Two such events, marital disruption and the loss of employment, are common risk factors for moving (Brett 1982; Feijten and van Ham 2007; Mulder and Malmberg 2014). In addition to prompting a move, these events also impact the *context* of the move (i.e., the circumstances, type, timing, and distance of the move). For example, marital disruption that involves shared child custody often requires at least one parent to relocate locally—and these moves are often relocations to smaller and lower-quality residences (Cooke et al. 2016; Feijten and van Ham 2013). Thus, when negative life events occur in conjunction with a move, there

will be particularly salient negative outcomes—especially if the household mobility context augments these stressors.

### *The Household Mobility Context*

Mobility effects vary based on context factors surrounding the move. Building on studies that identified several such factors (for a review, see Scanlon and Devine 2001), the following sections describe how the household mobility context, which is influenced by resources and risk factors, leads to differential outcomes. Specifically, the amalgamation of move circumstances and the timing, frequency, and distance of household mobility influence postmove conditions and individual and family responses.

#### *Move Circumstances*

Risk factors influence the circumstances in which individuals move. Early research emphasized how preference-based moves often led to increases in housing satisfaction (Speare 1974). However, some families respond to life events, such as unemployment or marital dissolution, by “downgrading” to cheaper dwellings and/or lower-quality housing conditions. While these moves involve some element of preference, they are likely to be more stressful than voluntary moves to better housing conditions.

The stress process model in sociology argues that individuals experience stress from life events based on the degree of power they have over their occurrence (Pearlin 1999). Involuntary and unplanned events are considered more stressful than voluntary events, where planning can be more strategic (Aneshensel 1992; Cohen and Wardrip 2011). Accordingly, forced moves entail more disruption and stress than voluntary moves—and those who have time to plan a move have more time to mitigate the stresses of moving.

As an extreme example of this notion, eviction often occurs as a result of poverty and the lack of a social support system (Clark 2010). The circumstances surrounding this type of forced move often lead to quick, stressful, and disorganized housing searches (Skobba and Goetz 2013). Thus, risk factors and available resources can influence the circumstances of the move—including individuals’ degree of planning and control. In turn, these circumstantial discrepancies influence individuals’ perceptions of, and responses to, household mobility.

*Timing of Household Mobility*

As Chap. 3 described, resources and risk factors influence individuals' mobility propensities at different ages. The age at which a move takes place can also have important implications for subsequent move outcomes for several reasons. Individuals' ability to respond to stressful life events changes across different stages of development (Folkman et al. 1987). One reason could be that resources, such as financial capital and social support networks, vary across the life course (Gillespie et al. 2014; Schieman et al. 2001). As a result, the timing of a move—or, broadly, how old one is when the move takes place—can impact the way individuals respond and adapt to the move (Anderson et al. 2014a; Coley and Kull 2016).

Moves that take place during childhood might be particularly detrimental since children are more vulnerable to stressful environmental changes than adults (Folkman et al. 1987). The effects of moving can even vary based on the developmental stage *within* childhood, whereby mobility effects are more or less pronounced among younger versus older children. In line with this notion, early research found that household mobility was associated with lower student achievement—but the effects were strongest at early grade levels (Ingersoll et al. 1989).

*Move Frequency and Previous Household Mobility*

Frequent moving is especially harmful for individuals and families, and it occurs disproportionately among single-parent families and households in poverty (Ackerman et al. 1999). The effects of frequent household mobility are usually compounded by other stressors, including poverty, unemployment, and marital dissolution. As a result, hypermobility has been identified as a particularly strong predictor of negative academic and behavioral outcomes, such as grade retention (Wood et al. 1993) as well as peer conflict and antisocial behavior (Simpson and Fowler 1994).

In a recent exploration of close to 1.5 million adolescents in Denmark, Mok et al. (2016) found that household mobility was positively linked to a wide array of psychiatric disorders, with especially pronounced effects for those who moved multiple times. Among the more extreme consequences, frequent moves in childhood have been linked to increased risk of suicide (Qin et al. 2009) and mortality in adulthood (Oishi and Schimmack 2010). Researchers have also explored the effect of frequent moving on military families. A recent qualitative study identified the cumulative

effects of multiple moves as harmful to military children's well-being and the parent-child relationship (Bradshaw et al. 2010).

The family stress and coping model differentiates between normative and non-normative life events (Conger and Donnellan 2007; Hill 1949; McCubbin and Patterson 1983). Given that household mobility is a common life experience, it is often considered a normative event—one that involves universal issues that most families incur at one point or another. Frequent moves, on the other hand, are non-normative events that present distinct challenges for individuals and families to overcome—and would, therefore, be considered “chronic” stressors (Evans and Kim 2013). Thus, move frequency—which is dependent upon available resources and risk factors—will impact postmove adjustment processes.

### *Move Distance*

As the results of Chap. 5 demonstrated, findings on the effects of moving can vary based on the distance of the move. One reason researchers argue that long-distance moves are particularly stressful is the loss of social capital that results from distance moves, which is discussed later in this chapter. Two other reasons associated with distance mobility that can influence individual and family outcomes are related to changing schools (for families with children) and the upward, downward, or lateral “direction” of the move.

### **School Mobility**

Researchers have argued that the negative effects of moving on school-age children are related, at least in part, to the simultaneous occurrence of household and school mobility (Rumberger 2015; Scanlon and Devine 2001). A change in schools that accompanies a change in residences adds stress to the mobility experience. In addition to changes in the residential environment, student transfers often require adjustment to new curricula, school facilities, teachers and teaching practices, school practices and regulations, and peer groups (Rumberger 2015), which can lead to negative academic and behavioral outcomes (Engel 2006). For example, Dunn et al. (2003) found that the effects of household and school mobility on standardized test scores was the equivalent of missing two weeks to a month of school. Another stressor that can influence a child's response to moving is the seasonal timing of the move (Hanushek et al. 2004), which might be linked to the degree of planning and control parents have over the move (Rumberger 2015). In addition to the potential of changing

schools, there may also be changes in the *quality* of schools. Therefore, the direction of the move will also influence whether and how school mobility influences move outcomes.

### **Move Direction**

In their review of theoretical frameworks for mobility effects, Scanlon and Devine (2001) discussed the “Moving to Opportunity” (MTO) approach. The MTO approach argues that move outcomes depend, in part, on the move context—and the “direction” of the move, in particular. “Upward” household mobility to a better neighborhood or school will lead to more positive outcomes compared to “downgraded” or lateral moves. Several recent studies have found similarly negative academic outcomes for those who made “upward” moves and those who did not (Metzger et al. 2015; Wolff et al. 2016). However, others have identified that outcomes based on move direction depend on the age of the adolescent when the move took place and the duration of exposure to the new environment (Chetty et al. 2016).

Based on origin and destination contexts, the MTO perspective helps clarify several issues: (1) changes in social context influence household mobility outcomes, and (2) some effects are more prominent for directional moves (e.g., moving from a poor to an affluent neighborhood) than lateral moves. Additional discussion of origin and destination characteristics, as they relate to neighborhood effects and selective mobility, is presented in Chap. 7.

## *Postrelocation Characteristics and Contexts*

### *Social Capital*

As noted in previous chapters, a primary reason given for the differences in outcomes between mobile and nonmobile individuals and families, especially those who move across long distances, is the loss of social ties experienced with the move. Outside of resources and move context, the major debates on household mobility and child outcomes have centered on diminished social capital—the quality and quantity of one’s interpersonal relationships (Pettit and McLanahan 2003; Pribesh and Downey 1999; Stack 1994). Close friends and kin provide important emotional and instrumental support in times of need (Barrett and Mosca 2013;



Gillespie et al. 2014; Magdol 2000); the loss of those important social ties can lead to negative outcomes.

Coleman's (1988) work on social capital inspired scholars to view where a person lives as promoting the formation and maintenance of social ties that lead to beneficial outcomes. This perspective emphasizes that interactions within and outside of the household (e.g., among children, parents, teachers, schools, and community) are resources that enhance individuals' overall well-being. Social interactions among parents (*parent–community*), between parents and their children (*intergenerational*), and among children (*child–community*) provide pathways to socialize, facilitate control, share information and resources, and establish and reinforce social norms and expectations. When a family moves, these ties are broken, resulting in a loss of social capital. As discussed below, the negative effects can be even worse for frequent movers: “For families that have moved often, the social relations that constitute social capital are broken at each move” (Coleman 1988:113).

Research has established that parent–community involvement has a positive influence on individual and family outcomes (Domina 2005; Epstein and Sanders 2002; Grolnick and Ryan 1989). Parental involvement leads to richer social networks, better knowledge of children's academic and behavioral well-being, and knowledge of their child's social network (Magdol 2000; Muller 1998; Spera 2005). Household mobility runs the risk of severing or greatly diminishing these important ties (e.g., Pettit and McLanahan 2003).

High-quality intergenerational relationships are also beneficial for children (Aseltine et al. 1998). The parent–child relationship may be jeopardized by household mobility since moving can lead to changes in family relationships (Anderson et al. 2014a; Gillespie 2015). Research on child–community involvement has focused on the social and emotional benefits of having friends (Crosnoe et al. 2003; Maxwell 2002). Researchers agree that friendship is an important social qualifier for adolescents, as they establish their independent identities and focus more on the acceptance, opinions, and ideas of their peers (Daddis 2008). Again, household mobility can sever these important social ties, leading to loneliness, depression, or association with delinquent peer groups (Haynie and South 2005; Haynie, South, and Bose 2006; South and Haynie 2004). However, some recent research suggests that social media and the Internet are helping to maintain social ties over long distances, potentially mediating some of the negative effects associated with moving (Mok et al. 2010). Overall,

the context of the move influences whether or not there is a subsequent loss of social capital—this is understood to be an important reason for the negative effects of moving on individuals and families. Another reason proposed for mobility effects is related to the stress of moving—which can also result from a loss of social capital.

### *Family Stress and Negative Perceptions of the Move*

Moving is commonly understood to be a stressful life event that has the potential to be a “turning point” with significant effects for individuals and families (Elder 1994; Hagan et al. 1996; Holmes and Rahe 1967). As such, the stress induced by the disturbance of daily life and routine, the emotional upheaval brought on by a move, and the time consumed by the act of moving can have negative effects for mobile individuals and families.

Depending on available resources and the move context, individuals may *perceive* the stresses of household mobility very differently (Norford and Medway 2002). For example, when individuals perceive a move as a productive event with opportunities for constructive growth, negative outcomes may be less severe. Additionally, if an individual has personality characteristics that are amenable to household mobility (see Jokela 2009), the move may be perceived as less stressful. As noted above, individual, family, and community resources can also influence stress levels and the perception of the move. For example, human capital can reduce search and psychic costs, financial resources allow for outsourcing the practicalities of moving, and support networks can provide assistance.

Altogether, resources and risk factors influence move contexts. The context of the move can vary based on a combination of (a) the degree of planning for, and control over, the mobility decision, (b) the timing of the move, (c) move frequency, and (d) the distance moved—which is also linked to school transitions and directional changes. The negative effects of moving will be especially salient when different stressful move contexts accumulate.

### *Cumulative Context Framework*

Based on available resources and risk factors before a move takes place and the move context during and after the move, individuals and families are differently equipped to adjust to moving. Families with resources to voluntarily realize a minimally disruptive local move to a better residence will experience relatively fewer negative mobility effects. At the other extreme,

mobility will have more-pronounced negative effects for poor, single-parent families that are forced to move (possibly more than once) to a worse area, where children must change schools, and there are substantial losses to financial and social capital.

Taken together, different resources, risk factors, and move contexts influence individuals' household mobility experiences. In turn, the interconnected processes lead to different outcomes depending on how an individual experiences a move from beginning to end. As Pearlin (1999:396) emphasized, "An implication of the web of interconnections among these multiple factors is that a change in one can result in changes in the others, thus setting in motion chains of effect."

One reason moves might have particularly negative effects for children—and perhaps the reason why mobility effects research has tended to focus on childhood and adolescence—may be related to differences in children's exposure to stressors associated with the move context. For example, school mobility and variations in the timing of household moves are particularly relevant concerns for household mobility in childhood and adolescence. Additionally, children are often passive actors (tied movers with their parents) which can also impact how children perceive, respond, and adjust to the move.

The next section explores several of the processes proposed in the cumulative context framework: preexisting characteristics and conditions, move context, the timing of household mobility, and the loss of social capital on academic achievement and behavior problems in adolescence. Given that the negative effects of moving are particularly relevant for the young, the following analyses focus on outcomes in childhood and adolescence.

## STUDY: THE EFFECTS OF HOUSEHOLD MOBILITY ON ADOLESCENTS

### *National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79) Linked Mother–Child Files*

The NLSY79 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016b) is a longitudinal study of a representative sample of American men and women aged 14 to 21 in 1979. The children of the female NLSY79 respondents were surveyed biennially starting in 1986, and these NLSY79 Child and Young Adult

data files can be linked to the original data files to assess intergenerational phenomena and outcomes. Therefore, the children in the current study sample represent the children born to the nationally representative cohort of women sampled in 1979.

These analyses use the NLSY79 data (rather than the NLSY97 used in Chaps. 4 and 5) because the NLSY79 contains established social capital measures and detailed information on parents and their children. Multiple children are surveyed in each household, giving the NLSY a useful hierarchical design. Data are primarily collected in the respondent's home through face-to-face interviews, which has led to response rates between 85 and 90 percent.

This study draws on data from the 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006 survey waves because household mobility was not assessed in the NLSY79 until 2000. In order to have complete trajectories in the analysis, including the baseline controls, ages range from six to fifteen and are based on respondents' test-ready age in 1998. To avoid the confounding effects of marital disruption on mobility effects (an important life event and stressor), households experiencing divorce and/or separation between survey waves (less than 5 percent) were removed from the analysis. Owing to these restrictions and attrition across waves, this study utilizes the records of 2835 adolescent respondents—a sample of 11,340 child-years.

The results presented in Tables 6.1 and 6.2 are based on separate linear mixed models for adolescent academic achievement and behavior problems. These multilevel models account for change in social capital and household mobility between each survey wave. Each model presents a summary of the theoretically important variable clusters (individual characteristics, resources, and social capital). For each dependent variable, four models were tested on three levels. Additional details about the study are presented in appendix.

Based on the framework above, the models explore (a) the effect of the timing of the move, (b) the potentially mediating role of social capital, and (c) the net effect of household mobility separated by local versus distance mobility. The analyses in Table 6.1 test the effects of household mobility on academic achievement using the Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT). Table 6.2 presents the results of household mobility and behavior problems using the Behavior Problems Index (BPI).

**Table 6.1** The timing of household mobility, social capital, and academic achievement

	<i>Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT)</i>			
	<i>Model 1.1</i>	<i>Model 1.2</i>	<i>Model 1.3</i>	<i>Model 1.4</i>
<i>Household mobility</i>				
Local mobility	-0.08	26.02**	13.94	14.27
Local mobility × age		-2.01**	-0.96	-0.99
Distance mobility	1.15	10.65	6.74	-4.70
Distance mobility × age		-0.94	-0.6	-0.24
<i>Individual/household</i>				
Age			-0.73***	-0.73***
Male			1.63*	1.68*
Black			-6.45***	-6.43***
Income (logged)			3.16*	3.22*
Father in household			-0.01	-0.04
Urban			-0.45	-0.46
Mother's education			0.91***	0.9***
Birth order			-0.62	-0.62
Mother's age at child's birth			0.34*	0.34*
Children in household			-0.19	-0.18
Mother never married			-1.85	-1.78
<i>Social capital</i>				
Church attendance			0.16	0.20
Closeness to mother			-0.15	-0.29
Friends by name			0.12	0.17
Catholic			2.15	2.36
Loneliness			-0.01	-0.00
Extracurricular activities			1.73**	1.59*
<i>Interaction terms</i>				
Distance move × church attendance				-0.58
Distance move × closeness to mom				2.54
Distance move × friends by name				-0.54
Distance move × Catholic				-11.18
Distance move × loneliness				-0.20
Distance move × extracurricular				1.30
PIAT baseline		0.77***	0.68***	0.68***
Constant	58.25***	13.68***	-6.73	-6.61
Variance components				

*(continued)*

**Table 6.1** (continued)

	<i>Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT)</i>			
	<i>Model 1.1</i>	<i>Model 1.2</i>	<i>Model 1.3</i>	<i>Model 1.4</i>
Level 2	300.32*	86.6*	93.5*	93.36*
Level 3 (initial status)	1271.4*	630.37*	815.1*	811.67*
Rate of change	6.06*	3.61*	4.4*	4.41*
Covariance	-79.66	-41	-54.25	-54.1
Residual	250.62*	253.8*	246.15*	246.15*

Note: Robust standard errors. \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

### *Social Capital, the Timing of Household Mobility, and Academic Achievement*

The baseline model, model 1.1, in Table 6.1 suggests that there is no association between household mobility and academic achievement. In model 1.2, household mobility effects on academic achievement are being measured with the inclusion of interaction terms between local mobility and age, as well as distance mobility and age. Both local mobility and the age interaction with local mobility are significant in this model ( $p < 0.01$ ). However, the nonsignificant main effect for local mobility in the prior model implies a null effect. Thus, in conjunction with model 1.1, these results suggest that the main effect is meaningless in the presence of the interaction term between local mobility and age. The next two models (models 1.3 and 1.4) paint a clearer picture of the mobility-achievement relationship.

Model 1.3 includes demographic variables and measures for individual and household resources *before the move took place*: age, sex, Black or non-Black status, logged household income, father in household, number of children in the household, birth order, mother's age at birth of child, mother's education, urbanicity, and a dummy variable for mother never married. This model also includes the main effects for several social capital measures based on the literature (see Appendix): parental knowledge of

**Table 6.2** The timing of household mobility, social capital, and behavior problems

	<i>Behavior Problems Index (BPI)</i>			
	<i>Model 2.1</i>	<i>Model 2.2</i>	<i>Model 2.3</i>	<i>Model 2.4</i>
<i>Household mobility</i>				
Local mobility	2.97±	13.68	16.22	10.62
Local mobility × age		-0.95	-1.18	-0.71
Distance mobility	3.74*	29.75*	37.17**	45.2*
Distance mobility × age		-2.19*	-2.8**	-3.1**
<i>Individual/household</i>				
Age			0.11	0.13
Male			2.61**	2.65**
Black			-0.09	-0.1
Income (logged)			0.03	0.08
Father in household			0.43	0.36
Urban			1.1	1.1
Mother's education			-0.1	-0.12
Birth order			-0.06	-0.11
Mother's age at child's birth			0.13	0.17
Children in household			0.09	0.12
Mother never married			1.13	1.2
<i>Social capital</i>				
Church attendance			-0.56	-0.51
Closeness to mother			-1.64**	-1.67**
Friends by name			-1.88***	-1.68***
Catholic			-1.79	-1.63
Loneliness			3.36***	3.44***
Extracurricular activities			-0.34	-0.76
<i>Interaction terms</i>				
Distance move × church attendance				-0.64
Distance move × closeness to mom				0.45
Distance move × friends by name				-2.39±
Distance move × catholic				-10.89**
Distance move × loneliness				-1.03
Distance move × extracurricular				5.61±
BPI baseline		0.57***	0.55***	0.55***
Constant	55.14***	24.22***	26.3***	28.99**
Variance components				

*(continued)*

**Table 6.2** (continued)

	<i>Behavior Problems Index (BPI)</i>			
	<i>Model 2.1</i>	<i>Model 2.2</i>	<i>Model 2.3</i>	<i>Model 2.4</i>
Level 2	331.66*	61.17*	39.97*	41.28*
Level 3 (initial status)	1130.8*	1000.8*	767.03*	775.2*
Rate of change	5.3*	5.49*	4.1*	4.1*
Covariance	-70.1	-69.17*	-51.3	-51.67
Residual	90.3*	87.19*	87.37*	87.3*

Note: Robust standard errors.  $\pm p < 0.10$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

the child's friends and the respondent child's Catholic school attendance (the parent–community relationship); the child's participation in extracurricular activities, religious service attendance, and child's self-reported level of loneliness (the child–community relationship); and the child's report of closeness to his or her mother (the parent–child relationship).

Participation in extracurricular activities is the only social capital measure significantly associated with academic achievement ( $p < 0.01$ ). As expected, the baseline achievement score is a significant predictor of later academic achievement ( $p < 0.001$ ). The linear age term is also significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that academic achievement scores decrease over time. However, neither local nor distance mobility are associated with academic achievement in this model. The results offer no evidence for a relationship between household mobility and academic achievement.

Given that social capital is presumed to be lost with long-distance moves, model 1.4 adds interaction terms for social capital and distance mobility in order to test the moderating effects of changes in social capital. Model 1.4 also includes an age interaction with distance mobility to assess whether the timing of the move matters. Participation in extracurricular activities is still significantly associated with academic achievement ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, social capital does not moderate the effects of distance mobility on academic achievement. Furthermore, household mobility does not significantly influence academic achievement—nor does the relationship depend on the timing of the move. Several individual



and household characteristics are associated with lower achievement [age ( $p < 0.001$ ); Black ( $p < 0.001$ )] and higher achievement [male ( $p < 0.05$ ); income ( $p < 0.05$ ); mother's education ( $p < 0.001$ ); and mother's age at the child's birth ( $p < 0.05$ )].

Altogether, the results suggest that neither household mobility nor the attendant loss of social capital is associated with changes in adolescent academic achievement. This of course is not an indication that household mobility and educational outcomes are unrelated since this is only one measure of educational outcomes. The use of other educational outcome measures (e.g., educational attainment) could lead to different results.

### *Social Capital, the Timing of Household Mobility, and Behavior Problems*

As with Table 6.1, Table 6.2 presents models for mobility effects in four steps: model 2.1 shows the baseline effect of household mobility on adolescent behavior problems, model 2.2 adds interactions to test for age effects. Model 2.3 adjusts for individual and household characteristics as well as the main effects of social capital, and model 2.4 adds a series of interactions for social capital and long-distance mobility.

The baseline model, model 2.1 in Table 6.2, points to significant differences between nonmovers, distance movers, and local movers for the respondent child's BPI score. Long-distance mobility is significantly associated with increased behavior problems in adolescence ( $p < 0.05$ ) and local mobility is marginally significant ( $p < 0.10$ ). Model 2.2 includes interaction terms for age and household mobility. Long-distance mobility and the interaction between age and distance moving are significantly associated with behavior problems ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Model 2.3 adds relevant household and individual-level predictors of child behavior problems. Unlike achievement, several social capital measures are significantly associated with changes in behavior problems. Closeness to mother ( $p < 0.01$ ) and the number of the child's friends their parents know by sight and name ( $p < 0.001$ ) are both negatively associated with behavior problems—and loneliness ( $p < 0.001$ ) is positively associated with behavior problems. Compared with model 1.3, the results of model 2.3 highlight the differential importance of social capital for behavioral and academic outcomes.

Model 2.4 tests whether social capital measures moderate the effects of moving on behavior problems net of other characteristics. Several social

capital interactions have at least marginally significant explanatory value for behavior problems. There are significant interaction effects between long-distance mobility and (a) the parent–community relationship [parents’ familiarity with their child’s friends ( $p < 0.10$ ) and Catholic school attendance ( $p < 0.01$ )] and (b) the child–community relationship [involvement in extracurricular activities ( $p < 0.10$ )].

The main effect of distance mobility is significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) along with the interaction between age and long-distance mobility ( $p < 0.01$ ). Thus, consistent with the notion above regarding the *timing* of household mobility, long-distance mobility is a significant predictor of increased behavior problems in adolescence—but the effects are diminished for children who move at older ages. The negative effects associated with long-distance mobility also exist above and beyond individual and family characteristics and conditions and social capital. This suggests that social capital may not be the only, best, or even simplest explanation for the negative effects of moving on children, at least regarding adolescent behavior problems. The residual effects might be related to family stress, compounded stressors, and/or the direction of the move. However, because of restrictions in the publicly available NLSY97 data, these models do not include measures for stress or move direction.

In a series of sensitivity analyses, separate models explored the effects of single moves versus multiple moves between survey waves for each outcome. The final results did not point to significant differences in achievement or behavior for those who moved once versus multiple times compared with nonmovers. This null result could indicate that highly mobile children become resilient to the negative effects of moving over time.

## STUDY DISCUSSION

Consistent with a main premise of Chap. 5, mobility effects differ depending on the outcome under consideration. In this case, distance moving matters more for adolescent behavior problems than for academic achievement. In fact, it appears that achievement is less affected by household mobility than by preexisting resources, such as parental education and income. On the other hand, consistent with the findings presented in Chap. 5, behavior *is* affected by the act of moving.

One reason that household mobility affects adolescent behavior but not achievement may be related to the move context: whether or not a res-

idential move requires a school transfer. School mobility might be a better predictor of academic outcomes than household mobility. However, in additional analyses (not shown), the number of schools the child attended was not a significant predictor of behavior or achievement. This might be related to the NLSY measurement of the total number of schools attended. Since children can change schools without changing residences (e.g., to attend a better local school or as a promotional change from grade to grade), total number of schools attended would overestimate mobility-related transfers. In sensitivity analyses, the null results held for both outcomes even when the models included interaction terms for distance mobility and the number of schools attended.

The social capital main effects models (models 1.3 and 2.3) suggest that social capital (child–community, parent–community, and intergenerational relationships) is associated with behavior problems but not achievement. The only significant social capital predictor for academic achievement is whether or not the child participates in extracurricular activities. These findings build on previous research that found that social capital has more pronounced effects for behavioral than cognitive outcomes (McNeal 1999), even when considering the loss of social capital associated with household mobility. As model 1.4 indicates, social capital moderated some of the effects of distance mobility on adolescent behavior problems. These findings help substantiate that distance mobility—and the attendant loss of social capital—can influence mobility outcomes for adolescents.

The timing of household mobility also plays an important part in how children respond to moving. For academic achievement, neither household mobility nor the moving-by-age interaction were significant net of the other theoretically important variables in the analysis. However, moving was associated with an increase in adolescent behavior problems, but the harmful effects of moving were attenuated by age. These effects might reflect older children's ability to seek out social capital and support, such as school counselors and so on to offset the negative behavioral effects of a move.

## CONCLUSION

Why is household mobility harmful for some and beneficial for others? One reason is related to the research findings presented in Chaps. 3 and 4—individuals are equipped with different resources and, therefore, experience and respond to mobility in very different ways. There is great

heterogeneity in the number of stressors individuals experience across different move contexts. Individuals have different exposure and vulnerability to stressful moving contexts—and mobility effects reflect those contexts.

Households experiencing multiple stressful life events, including multiple stressful move contexts, are especially vulnerable to negative outcomes. Within the cumulative context model, moving has negative effects on individuals and families, but those who have fewer resources and whose moves are compounded by other traumatic life events and stressful move contexts will experience increased stress. In other words, young children in poverty who frequently move long distances that require school transfers likely experience more negative outcomes than older children who make a single, relatively short move.

## APPENDIX: NATIONAL LONGITUDINAL SURVEY OF YOUTH 1979

### *Sample*

The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY79) is a longitudinal study of a representative sample of American men and women aged 14 to 21 in 1979. The children of the female NLSY79 respondents were surveyed biennially starting in 1986, and these NLSY79 Child and Young Adult data files can be linked with the original NLSY79 files to assess inter-generational phenomena and outcomes. The analyses in Chap. 6 draw on data from the 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006 survey waves.

### *Dependent Variables*

#### *Academic Achievement*

*Academic achievement* was measured using the NLSY79 Child and Youth respondents' 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006 Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT) scores. The PIAT is a widely used measure of academic achievement for children (Dunn and Markwardt 1970). Since 1986, the children in this study have been assessed biennially between ages 5 and 15. Each assessment begins with five age-appropriate questions and progresses to more advanced concepts. The reading recognition test measures word recognition and pronunciation ability, and the math test measures basic math skills and concepts. The score is the mean of the

child's age-standardized percentile scores on subsets in mathematics, reading comprehension, and reading recognition.

### *Behavior Problems*

The *behavioral problems* measure is based on Peterson and Zill's (1986) Behavior Problems Index. This index consists of twenty-eight questions, drawn primarily from the widely used Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach and Edelbrock 1981) along with other widely used child behavior scales. The respondent's mother indicates whether a statement about the child's behavior is "often true," "sometimes true," or "never true." The composite score is a measure with higher numbers indicating more behavior problems.

## *Independent Variables*

### **Residential (Local) and Geographic (Distance) Mobility**

The act of household mobility is captured by two dummy variables indicating whether a respondent (1) relocated within the same city or (2) relocated to a new city, county, or state between each survey wave. The omitted category for comparison is not moving.

### **Individual and Household Characteristics**

Individual and household characteristics include time-variant variables, such as annual household income (logged) and age. A dummy variable for parent marital status indicated whether or not a respondent's mother was never married at each survey wave. Time-invariant variables include the child's sex, birth order, mother's age at child's birth, mother's highest year of education completed (measured once in 2000), family structure (father in household or not), and the number of children in the respondent's household. Children were assigned to racial groups based on the primary racial identification of their mothers as Black; Hispanic; or non-Black/non-Hispanic. All other variables in the analysis vary across survey waves. Urban residence was measured as whether or not the respondent lived in an urban or suburban (1) versus a suburban area (0).

### **Social Capital**

*Parent-community social capital* was measured using two variables: how many of the *child's friends* the parent knows by sight and name, coded

as none of them (0), only a few (1), about half (2), most of them (3), or all of them (4) (Teachman et al. 1996) and, following Coleman (1988), a dichotomous variable marking whether or not a child attends Catholic school.

*Child–community social capital* was assessed by whether or not the child participates in extracurricular activities (White and Gager 2007); how often he or she attends religious services coded as (0) never, (1) a few times a year, (2) about once a month, and (3) about once a week (Parcel and Dufur 2001); and how often the child feels lonely or wishes he or she has more friends as measured as never or hardly ever (1), sometimes (2), or often (3).

*Intergenerational social capital* was measured by the level of closeness the respondent feels to his or her mother, reported as being not very close (1), fairly close (2), quite close (3), or extremely close (4) (Pryor 1999).

### *Analysis Notes*

Because the purpose of this analysis was to assess the effects of moving on changes in educational achievement and behavior problems, longitudinal data were necessary in order to include measures of the predictors and outcomes in a person-year format. This allows for consideration of social capital for each survey wave in the analysis. Adequately controlling for past behaviors *before* a move occurs is crucial; otherwise, associated changes in child outcomes *after* moving cannot be determined confidently. The sample consists of children who completed the PIAT and BPI for the 1998 (*baseline*), 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006 survey rounds. The PIAT is administered starting at age 5, and the behavior problems assessment begins at age 4; neither examination is recorded after age 15. Linear mixed modeling (LMM) was used to examine the effects household mobility and social capital have on child educational achievement and behavior problems. Models were run separately for each of these two child outcomes. Descriptive statistics for all measures in 2000 are presented in Table 6.3.

LMM is a flexible and powerful method for the analysis of longitudinal data. In LMM, independent observations are not assumed, meaning that between-subject and within-subject effects are both considered. This modeling structure is also flexible in its use of missing information. Other models use listwise deletion of cases if a complete trajectory is not available for an individual. LMM, on the other hand, accounts for all respondents in the data set and is, therefore, arguably a better model for unbalanced

**Table 6.3** Descriptive statistics for timing of mobility and social capital

	N = 2835	Mean/%	SD
Dependent variables			
BPI <sub>2000</sub>		53.88	28.6
PIAT <sub>2000</sub>		57.95	25.1
BPI baseline <sub>1998</sub>		56.31	28.4
PIAT baseline <sub>1998</sub>		56.27	24.9
Individual/household			
Age <sub>2000</sub>		10.8	2.5
Male		52%	
Black		29%	
Income		54,668	52,763
Father in household		65%	
Birth order		2.2	1.2
Urban		72%	
Mother's education		13.1	2.5
Mother's age at child's birth		27.9	3.1
Children in household		2.6	1.2
Mother never married		11%	
Social capital			
Church attendance		2.1	1.1
Closeness to mother		3.6	0.7
Friends by name		2.9	1.5
Catholic		0.1	0.2
Loneliness		1.4	0.6
Extracurricular activities		0.6	0.5
Geographic mobility			
Did not move		77%	
Local move		14.5%	
Distance move		8.4%	

panel data sets like the NLSY where not every respondent is observed in every year. Lastly, LMM allows for the analysis of hierarchically organized data. In this study, four models were tested on three levels. The first of these levels consisted of households, the second was the individual child nested within each household, and the last level, survey wave or "time," was measured by interview round and nested within each child.

This study applied an upward two-step *preliminary* modeling procedure employed by Singer and Willett (2003): (a) an unconditional means model and (b) an unconditional growth model. First, the unconditional means model is the preliminary verification for whether this is an appropriate analysis by partitioning the total variation in the outcome variable (BPI and PIAT). The intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) measures the proportion of variance in the outcome variable that is due to between-children differences rather than differences within children over time. The unconditional growth model was run to (a) assess the effects of aging on child achievement in academics and behavior problems and (b) detect whether there was significant variance to be explained from household-level characteristics. In the models, a considerable decrease in information criterion fit statistics indicates that the behavior and achievement final models are a significantly better fit than the individual- and household-level models. Level-1 and level-2 random effects remain significant in each model, meaning that additional level 1 and 2 predictors may improve model fit. Controls and interactions are included to explore the moderating effect of social capital on the effects of moving.

The Hausman specification test validated the models. LMM assumes that the dependent variable be conditionally normal. Shapiro-Wilkins testing and examination of skewness and kurtosis indicated that both dependent variables were distributed reasonably normally. Variance inflation factors indicated that multicollinearity was not a problem in the models (average VIFs < 1.31).

### *Limitations and Future Directions*

These analyses are subject to several caveats. Measuring child outcomes across only four waves of this longitudinal survey does not allow for analysis of behavior and achievement effects that take longer than 2, 4, or 6 years to develop. In fact, the findings presented in Chap. 5 (Table 5.3) provide evidence that the negative effects of childhood mobility can last into young adulthood. Additionally, despite restricting the data to try to account for some selectivity, as with most empirical studies of correlational data, there is a possibility that unobserved parent and household characteristics account for the geographic mobility. Another limitation is that reverse causation may be present in the models above. For instance, problem behavior may cause children to have distant relationships with



their parents, or families may be more or less likely to move because of their child's preexisting behavior problems or school achievement.

The sample also has limitations. In 1986, when the children of these 21- to 28-year-old mothers were first assessed, the oldest children had been born to very young women. As a result, the sample may exclude some children born to younger women, because they had already left the sample before the 2000 wave. Further, because only the children of NLSY female respondents are surveyed, father-child and father-community interaction (other than what is reported by the mother) cannot be assessed as a component of social capital. Relatedly, because of the NLSY79 child data design, children raised in single-father homes are not included.

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## Spatial and Community Consequences

### INTRODUCTION

As the preceding chapters have illustrated, household mobility is studied at both the macro and micro levels. Microlevel perspectives tend to focus on (1) individuals' mobility preferences and decisions, emphasizing autonomy in the decision to mobilize, and (2) individual-level mobility effects. However, researchers have also linked high rates of household mobility to macrolevel outcomes in several ways.

First, household mobility has been identified as a driving force behind social stratification and residential segregation. Linking to the idea of heterogeneity in resources, risk factors, and life outcomes emphasized by the life course perspective, these large-scale processes occur primarily through the selective sorting of households based on sociodemographic characteristics, such as education, wealth, and age (Franklin 2003; Massey 2016; Ellen et al. 2013). Selective household mobility has also been linked to racial/ethnic residential segregation through white outmigration and white avoidance (Ellen 2000; Quillian 2002).

Second, household mobility at the neighborhood level influences community dynamics and other neighborhood characteristics. High mobility rates can lead to social disorganization, crime, and barriers to social mobility and employment opportunities (Wilson 1987). Areas characterized as "high turnover" communities often have more abandoned and vacated properties, higher crime, and fewer community-based services than stable communities. Taken together, disproportionately high rates of mobility

impact the social characteristics and demographic composition of neighborhoods and regions, with especially important consequences for those who do not—or cannot—move.

Third, as the life course perspective and earlier chapters have demonstrated, individuals are embedded in a complex series of shared networks that are interdependently linked to one another (Elder et al. 2003; MacMillan and Copher 2005). Household mobility, especially over long distances, alters the geographic and spatial layout of these connections. As such, household mobility geographically restructures and spatially diversifies social and kin networks. This network expansion can lead to changes in the quality and frequency of contact among mobile individuals and their kin and social networks.

Following Fischer (2002:179), who argues that “we should treat separately the consequences of mobility for *communities* from those for *individuals*,” this chapter identifies some of the larger-scale consequences of household mobility, focusing particularly on regional, community-level, and spatio-geographic outcomes. First, selective mobility is discussed, particularly as it relates to population redistribution and residential segregation. Since moving can be both a cause and a consequence of social disorganization and crime, a related discussion explores the mutually reinforcing relationship between household mobility and neighborhood effects. The chapter concludes with a discussion of recent research on household mobility and the spatial organization of social and kin networks. The primary objective of the chapter is to highlight recent interdisciplinary research that illustrates the large-scale outcomes associated with household mobility.

## SELECTIVE MOBILITY AND RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION

### *Selective Mobility and Social Stratification*

Selective mobility is rooted in the idea that individuals with certain demographic and socioeconomic characteristics are more or less inclined to move—and have differential access to certain places—than others. Mobile individuals and families often differ from “stayers” on a number of different characteristics, including age, housing tenure, family structure, and socioeconomic status. Movers also relocate to specific types of areas based on particular resources and risk factors. In turn, this selective sorting influences population density, age structure, mortality, and other regional



dynamics. Selective mobility also reinforces patterns of residential segregation and social stratification. In order to understand population dynamics and characteristics (e.g., aging communities, the urban concentration of poverty), it is important to understand how patterns of household mobility reinforce—and are reinforced—by selective mobility.

Consistent with the research presented in Chap. 4, changes in marital and parental status increase the likelihood of relocation (Clark and Ledwith 2006; Kley and Mulder 2010). These moves can also select young adults, especially young families, into certain areas. To the extent that young families have idiosyncratic needs, selective mobility can concentrate young families in “family-dominated” communities that are amenable to families with young children; for example, quality schools and other child-friendly public services (Smith 2011; Tiebout 1956). These types of moves are also selective based on age, which is usually considered in the context of health-selective migration.

Epidemiologists, demographers, and health geographers have explored the impact of *health selective migration*, although this research has typically focused on selective immigration based on health (e.g., Bostean 2013). Regarding household mobility in the United States, health selective mobility has only recently been explored (Geronimus et al. 2014; Halliday and Kimmitt 2008). However, Geronimus et al.’s (2014) study does *not* point to health selective mobility in their sample regions. In fact, young, educated, and healthy out-migrants seem to be replaced by similarly young, educated, and healthy in-migrants. However, their results do point to some evidence for selectivity based on mental health outcomes (see Silver et al. 2002). The researchers call for more research in this area to substantiate their cross-sectional findings. Overall, population restructuring along the lines of health, family status, and age can have important implications for a variety of different area-specific public services in both origin and destination regions.

Demographers and social geographers have focused on the inherent selectivity out of particular areas for certain individuals based on *level of education and skill* (e.g., Foulkes and Newbold 2005). In particular, rural communities lose their most skilled and highly educated residents to out-migration (Cushing 1999; Lichter et al. 1992). The documented shift out of rural areas into suburban and urban areas has important implications for rural populations, especially in the Midwest. These regions tend to lose substantial numbers of their college-educated residents, leaving less skilled and less educated populations behind—a process often referred to

as human capital migration, or the rural “brain drain” (Carr and Kefalas 2009). This process is also linked to age-selective mobility—young adults are more mobile when employment opportunities are limited, attachment to social and kin relationships is low, and educational and career aspirations exceed that which is available in rural areas (Elder et al. 1996).

*Cultural transfers* are another way that populations are redistributed and restructured through selective household mobility. Several studies have emphasized individuals’ tendency to relocate based on cultural homophily—moving to be near individuals with similar cultural tastes and preferences. Along these lines, household mobility can influence voting behaviors (Ansolabehere et al. 2012; Hansen 2016) and reinforce political polarization at the regional level (Rossi and Shlay 1982). Additionally, cultural homophily was instrumental in the development and rapid growth of gay meccas (Ghaziani 2014)—which has also been linked to the transfers of wealth in some large, urban places (Brown-Saracino 2009).

These *wealth transfers* restructure local populations, often leading to the process of gentrification. Gentrification has been defined as the influx of middle-class individuals into areas once characterized as disadvantaged—often because of the perceived attractiveness of low housing costs, property investment, cultural history, or aesthetic allure (Ellen et al. 2013; Lees et al. 2008; Smith and Williams 1986). Some research has detailed the potentially positive outcomes of gentrification, citing the economic benefits of wealth-selective mobility into impoverished areas, such as increasing property values, neighborhood restoration, and political mobilization (see Freeman 2005). However, others have emphasized how gentrification leads to higher housing costs, declines in housing affordability and accessibility, and mass residential displacement (Fullilove 2004; Fullilove and Wallace 2011; Hwang 2015). For incumbent occupants, especially minority residents, renters, and families living in poverty, gentrification can also prevent household mobility to areas once perceived as accessible (Clark 2009; Newman and Wyly 2006).

### *Racial Residential Segregation*

Sociologists and demographers have been particularly concerned with the role of household mobility in the residential segregation of racial minorities and, in particular, the creation and reproduction of poor urban communities. Several perspectives have been advanced for the endurance of racial residential segregation: racial and ethnic self-segregation, white

avoidance, and white flight. Each of these perspectives is rooted, to some extent, in racialized patterns of household mobility.

One approach suggests that “white flight”—large-scale white exodus from an area after a threshold of minority and immigrant residents is reached—plays an important role in racial residential segregation (Wilson 1987; Crowder and South 2008). Others have argued that racial and ethnic *self*-segregation, based on preference for racial homophily, promotes racial and ethnic homogeneity in residential choice (Fossett 2006). Frey and Liaw (2005:208) use the term “cultural constraints” to suggest that household mobility patterns are shaped by ethnicity because of the particular “needs for social support networks, kinship ties, and access to informal employment opportunities that tend to be available in areas that house large concentrations of coethnics.” Accordingly, in their study, interstate moves were more commonly undertaken into areas with high concentrations of coethnics.

A related but competing approach argues that residential segregation is the result of long-standing self-segregation and racial homophily *among whites* (Ellen 2000). This perspective argues that preferences for racial homogeneity among whites has led to racial segregation through “white avoidance” of areas with large minority populations (Bader and Krysan 2015; Quillian 2002). The white avoidance hypothesis argues that mobile and potentially mobile whites avoid areas with high concentrations of ethnic and minority populations, which serves to reinforce racially selective mobility patterns (Ellen 2000; Iceland and Sharp 2013). Relatedly, racial minorities may avoid moving into predominantly white areas for fear of hostility and discrimination (Krysan and Farley 2002). Some have argued that this residential segregation is actually a “racial proxy,” and the avoidance of certain areas is actually rooted in concerns about other neighborhood characteristics, such as crime and housing depreciation (Harris 1999; Swaroop and Krysan 2011). Importantly, within any of these contexts, racial residential segregation, one of the most pervasive social problems in contemporary urban America is the result of patterns of racialized household mobility (Massey and Denton 1993; Massey 2016).

Overall, household mobility reinforces patterns of residential segregation and social stratification. Since household mobility propensities vary based on sociodemographic characteristics, such as age, health, culture, wealth, and race, patterns of moving have important consequences for the demographic makeup and population characteristics of certain areas.

Given differences in resources and risk factors, some groups are restricted in their mobility options or blocked from moving altogether.

### *Blocked Mobility*

Blocked mobility refers to external constraints placed on individuals' ability to move. Restrictions to moving often reflect economic and other structural constraints that limit individuals' agency and autonomy, usually at the community level among the urban poor. Therefore, just as structural opportunities, resources, and risk factors play an important part in *facilitating* household mobility for some, they also play an important part in *blocking* household mobility for others. Blocked mobility can trap individuals in areas with high concentrations of poverty.

Blocked mobility has been linked to a lack of available resources, particularly among, but not limited to, the extremely poor (Clark and Rivers 2012). Given that household mobility declines during times of economic recession (Pandit 1997; Sturtevant 2013) and people are less inclined to move because of resource constraints (Mulder and Hooimeijer 1999), there is reason to believe that a lack of economic resources can block individuals from moving. For example, credit issues can create problems securing adequate housing. Poor credit histories restrict household mobility in a competitive renter's market, where individuals are forced to remain in place or are limited in their housing options (Popkin et al. 2005).

Large-scale economic and demographic factors also mediate the relationship between resource constraints and household mobility. Among owner-occupiers, declining property values can create housing "lock-ins," whereby homeowners are trapped in their living situations or face the risk of negative housing equity (Modestino and Dennett 2013). Recent research has also found that economic instability, including mounting student loan debt, has led to delays in the transition to adulthood (Bozick and Estacion 2014; Danziger and Ratner 2010), which can affect individuals' decisions about moving and/or ability to do so.

Individuals can also be constrained in their ability to move to certain places. For example, only individuals with the economic resources to afford high-quality areas can access those areas because housing costs are largely a function of neighborhood quality (Clark et al. 2006; Hipp 2011). As a result, poor individuals living in areas marked by high rates of crime are most likely to report dissatisfaction and a desire to relocate—but they also

face more constraints in their ability to move and where to go (Mateyka 2015). In Chap. 4, Tables 4.1 and 4.2 support this notion. Despite being significantly more likely to report an *expectation* to move, young adults who reported the presence of neighborhood gangs were less likely to move than those who reported no gang activity. Resource-based factors, such as education, also led to differences in realized mobility among those who reported a desire to move. In Table 4.2 of Chap. 4, models 2 and 3 indicate that better educated young adults who expected to move were more likely than less educated individuals to do so in the 2 years that followed.

As discussed above, researchers have emphasized the role of racialized patterns of household mobility (e.g., white avoidance, white flight) as mechanisms underlying residential segregation. However, the *blocked* mobility of certain racial groups reinforces residential segregation—which, along with income segregation, has grown over time (Reardon and Bischoff 2011). Sociologists have explored the role of racial prejudice in reinforcing racial segregation, such as discriminatory housing markets and informal gatekeeping and steering practices among property owners and real estate agents (Ross and Turner 2005). Thus, when racial and ethnic minorities relocate, informal exclusionary practices have historically restricted access to certain areas (Galster and Godfrey 2005). In this sense, certain racial groups are constrained in their ability to move out of high-poverty areas into lower-poverty areas.

Pointing to potential difficulties escaping poor neighborhoods, Hipp (2011:429) found that Black men and women are less likely to relocate out of impoverished neighborhoods even after experiencing victimization—partially as a result of fewer economic resources available to leave a neighborhood. He argued that this is because “constrained housing choices reduce the ability of African Americans to exit more dangerous neighborhoods.” Consistent with this notion, model 2 in Table 4.2 indicates that Black and Hispanic young adults who reported expectations to move in 2011 were less likely than Whites to move within the next 2 years. Despite similarities in desires and expectations to move, racial and ethnic minorities are less likely to move than Whites.

Certain groups may also face cognitive constraints to moving because of limited or imperfect knowledge about different locations (Sharkey 2012). Information about mobility alternatives is unequally distributed. Various legal, political, and social institutions have control over the flow of information about housing costs, specific areas, and vacancies (Cadwallader

1992). Therefore, individuals also face constraints to their understanding of potential destinations.

Structural, cognitive, environmental, and resource-based characteristics constrain individuals' choices and, at worst, block some from moving entirely. Particularly among low-income and racial-minority families, housing market constraints, high costs of living, and discriminatory housing processes block mobility, making it difficult to "put preference into practice" (Galster and Hedman 2014:353). Accordingly, some have called for a reconceptualization of household mobility, advocating a more holistic view that also incorporates aspects of household *immobility* (e.g., Coulter et al. 2015).

Overall, large-scale patterns of selective mobility restructure populations based on demographic characteristics, including age, health, income, education, and race. These selective patterns of mobility influence segregation. As Sharkey (2012:13) describes, "The result is a system of neighborhood inequality that is reproduced by the mobility of different groups within it." At the same time, not all social groups are equally equipped to realize a household move, particularly one that elevates them out of poverty. Therefore, not only do selective patterns of *mobility* facilitate residential segregation, so does *blocked* mobility among those who desire to move but are constrained in their options or are entirely unable to do so. As a result, household immobility also reinforces the geographic concentration of poverty and inequality. The next section details how high rates of household mobility can disrupt neighborhood dynamics, particularly in distressed communities. Research in this area is rooted in a substantial body of research on neighborhood effects.

## NEIGHBORHOOD-LEVEL HOUSEHOLD MOBILITY

### *Household Mobility Rates and Neighborhood Effects*

Researchers interested in "neighborhood effects" have explored how neighborhood ecological characteristics shape individuals' life chances and outcomes. In his classic work, Wilson (1987:60) argued that "concentration effects" led to negative outcomes for those living in areas with disproportionately high rates of poverty and unemployment. Wilson identified several reasons for these negative effects, such as isolation from main-stream values, fewer and weaker social ties, and limited access to informal employment opportunities. Over time, research has confirmed these

early conclusions, finding that individuals who live in disadvantaged areas suffer negative academic, behavioral, and health outcomes, such as lower educational attainment (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000), more delinquent behavior (Kling et al. 2005), higher likelihood of teen pregnancy (Brooks-Gunn et al. 1993), and increased substance abuse (Silver et al. 2002).

Disadvantaged and economically distressed neighborhoods often lack formal and informal social control, community resources, and opportunity structures. In other words, impoverished neighborhoods usually have qualitatively and quantitatively weaker social support systems (Wilson 1987). Some of these neighborhood-level differences have been linked to high rates of household mobility in these areas. For example, high turnover communities often have less social cohesion than “stayer” communities, which can affect neighborhood function and community dynamics (Xie and McDowall 2014; Manturuk et al. 2012).

Diminished social capital at the neighborhood level can lead to fewer networking opportunities and lower collective efficacy (Sampson et al. 2002). Additionally, highly mobile communities have more abandoned and vacated properties, higher crime, structural deterioration, and a loss of finances to fund (and possibly even interest in funding) community-based services than stable communities (Forrest and Kearns 2001; Sampson et al. 1999). In contrast, residents of stable communities have more social ties, collective socialization, social support, and interest in the well-being of the community (Kowaleski-Jones 2000; Krivo and Peterson 1996).

Highly mobile neighborhoods often have a higher degree of anonymity; a lack of social control through family, church, and community organizations; weaker community appeal and social cohesion; and lower levels of social regulation and civic participation. The absence of stable role models in highly mobile communities also influences negative outcomes. Ainsworth (2002) found that net of other individual, school, and community predictors, neighborhood residential stability is positively associated with homework completion, which he links to higher collective socialization in stable communities.

Residential turnover often leads to an overall weakening of community institutions. For example, Hanushek et al. (2004:1744) found that high levels of student turnover led to declines in school quality and academic achievement. They hypothesized that wide variations in skill and curricular experiences in high turnover schools may contribute to an overall decline in educational outcomes, whereby “effects are felt by everyone in

the school, not just those who themselves move.” Therefore, household mobility reinforces geographies of inequality not just through spatial segregation but also by facilitating social disorganization.

Social disorganization theory posits that, among other things, household mobility leads to lower social control and collective efficacy and less adherence to community values and norms (Shaw and McKay 1942, 1969). As such, when disadvantaged communities have high rates of mobility (e.g., a high turnover among residents), especially when coupled with racial and ethnic heterogeneity, they will be less likely to share common values, establish trust, and form bonds (Shaw and McKay 1942; Sampson et al. 1999). In line with this framework, researchers have found that high levels of community-level household mobility are associated with increased crime, mental illness, and substance abuse (Chamberlain and Hipp 2015; Sampson et al. 2002; Silver et al. 2002).

### *Selective Mobility and Neighborhood Effects*

The issue of selective mobility and neighborhood context is linked to issues discussed in earlier chapters, particularly that residential satisfaction, housing tenure, and residential duration are all linked to individuals’ propensity to move. For example, Chaps. 3 and 4 showed that homeowners are less mobile than renters. Individuals in stable communities with high rates of owner-occupied units may be less likely to move because they are more satisfied with or attached to their and neighbors and communities (Clark and Ledwith 2006; Manturuk et al. 2012; Rohe and Stewart 1996). Long-term residents may have established more social and location-specific capital over time, which can also lead to lower rates of household mobility. On the other hand, those who are least satisfied with their neighborhoods, or perceive that their neighborhood has a bad reputation or is becoming worse, are more likely to express a desire to leave (Clark and Ledwith 2006; Galster 1987), which can lead to more crime and weakened social ties (Galster and Hedman 2014; Xie and McDowell 2008).

Therefore, communities with high turnover rates can also, by virtue of *being* highly mobile communities, stimulate household mobility within and out of the community. This can occur because others want to leave when their neighbors relocate or because mobile neighborhoods are often perceived as disadvantaged. There is a mutually reinforcing link between household mobility and neighborhood dynamics—social disorganization leads to selective mobility, but high rates of household mobility, and selec-



tive mobility in particular, can also lead to social disorganization (Galster and Hedman 2014). Therefore, “problems created by housing turnover are only aggravated by a vicious cycle of crime and residential instability” (Xie and McDowell 2008:565).

Researchers have emphasized the problem of selection bias in neighborhood effects research. In response to this problem, several unique experimental designs were developed to more accurately examine whether moving to a better neighborhood was a product of improved environmental circumstances or simply selection into these areas. Broadly, these studies explored whether moving from poor to lower-poverty areas would improve life outcomes for disadvantaged populations.

The Moving to Opportunity (MTO) experiment was one such project. MTO was designed to assist the relocation of more than 4600 low-income families in distressed communities in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Boston, and Baltimore. As part of the social experiment, three groups were established: an experimental group, which received Section 8 vouchers to move to low-poverty areas only; a comparison group, which could use housing vouchers to relocate anywhere; and a control group, which did not receive housing vouchers or relocation assistance (Briggs et al. 2010). While researchers have identified a number of limitations to the MTO program (see, for example, Sampson 2008), the experimental research design did effectively eliminate selection bias. Despite disappointing results about the effects of “moving to opportunity,” recent research using yearly income tax records found that some of the long-term effects were conditioned by the timing of the move. Children who received housing vouchers who moved prior to age 13 were better off than those who did not receive vouchers (Chetty et al. 2016).

Although the ideas behind residential segregation and neighborhood effects are discussed as conceptually distinct processes, some have begun to explore the connections between the two. Galster and Hedman (2014:345) argue that selectivity should be of interest to researchers, and selection bias on neighborhood effects should be *explored*, not eliminated. They propose a synthetic model that maps out the “complex nexus of causal interconnections” between selective mobility and neighborhood effects that are discussed as separate processes in this chapter. Their integrative framework provides a useful basis for future researchers to explore the connections between selective mobility and neighborhood effects.

## POPULATION REDISTRIBUTION AND SPATIO-GEOGRAPHIC DISPERSION

Household mobility is a central component of population redistribution, and the extent and distance of household mobility influences the large-scale spatial distribution and (re)organization of family and friendship networks (Aybek et al. 2015; Gillespie and Treas 2015; Smith 2011). Accordingly, household mobility plays a crucial role in either limiting or diversifying geographic network dispersion. This can have important implications for the quality and frequency of contact among individuals and their kin and social networks (Magdol 2000). For example, using Swiss data on geospatial networks, Viry (2012) found that household mobility led to a greater spatial dispersion of personal contacts and sparser local networks. At the same time, household mobility across great distances can also facilitate more geographically dispersed networks through the development of new social ties after relocation (Nisic and Petermann 2013).

Moving, particularly over long distances, can influence individuals' overall embeddedness in their diverse and complex social networks (Larsen et al. 2006; Mulder and Malmberg 2014). This geographic diversity was broadly summarized by Dorling (cited in Smith 2011:659): "Today communities tend to be more geographically polarized: we tend to now more live alongside people with similar age, socioeconomic and lifestyle status." In this context, household mobility leads to changes in social interactions, particularly face-to-face communication, within and across diverse networks. Long (1988) argued that affluence allowed for greater freedom of residential choice—obviously among some social groups more than others.

Age of departure from the parental home and weaker family ties can also lead to wider dispersion of kin and social networks (Höllinger and Haller 1990). Especially among later-life adults, household mobility can have important implications for family communication and contact (Mulder and van der Meer 2009) and the provision of long-term care and support (Bengtson and Roberts 1991) despite the development of cell phones and other communication technologies that transcend distance (Treas and Gubernskaya 2012).

As earlier chapters have demonstrated, individuals with nearby social and kin networks may be less inclined to move (Spilimbergo and Ubeda 2004). For example, demographic trends toward blended families mean that the spatial organization of separated and divorced families with children has become more important. In many cases, parents' household

mobility in this context is geographically restricted (Feijten and van Ham 2007), and distance moves can lead to declines in contact between the noncoresidential parent and his or her child. Even when individuals do move across long distances, kin and social networks can inspire later return migration in order to be closer to friends, parents, and children (Lovegreen et al. 2010; Michielin et al. 2008). Consequently, household mobility has an important impact on when and how individuals interact with their social networks.

## CONCLUSION

As a postscript to earlier chapters that explored the microlevel effects of household mobility, this chapter described three important ways that household mobility affects macrosocial outcomes, focusing particularly on regional, community-level, and spatio-geographic outcomes. First, selective mobility reinforces patterns of social inequality and residential segregation. Second, high rates of household mobility can lead to social disorganization at the neighborhood level. High turnover areas are often characterized by poverty and unemployment, high rates of crime, neighborhood stigmatization, deteriorating structures, and low social efficacy. Lastly, household mobility alters large-scale social and family dynamics by facilitating the geographic dispersion of networks.

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PART III

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## Praxis

## Policy Initiatives, Programs, and Praxis

### INTRODUCTION

Taken together, the research and analyses in preceding chapters help policymakers and planners understand the causes and consequences of moving at both macro and micro levels of analysis. This multiperspective approach assists in planning by helping policymakers identify patterns, trends, and correlates but also individual- and community-level consequences of household mobility. From a policy perspective, focusing exclusively on the absolute magnitude of mobility patterns is to overlook the microlevel factors that impact individuals' and families' mobility choices—or lack thereof in some cases. Along the same lines, looking at household mobility as an individual, isolated action without considering aggregate patterns loses sight of larger-scale implications. Housing policy should take into account the economic, geographic, and social context in which individuals operate. At the same time, policymakers should acknowledge that individuals are rational actors *within* those contexts, responding to structural inequalities and other constraints, which impact some groups more than others. Thus, holistic approaches to policy should take into account the macro and micro causes and consequences of household mobility.

As Chaps. 2 and 3 described, understanding changes in overall rates, patterns, and trends in household mobility, as well as the sociodemographic characteristics of movers, can help policymakers understand how and why populations change across time and contexts. Adequately understanding the sociodemographic correlates of household mobility can also

help researchers and policymakers anticipate population-based changes, which can assist with the provision of public services (e.g., police and fire departments), school enrollments, and labor market growth and decline (Rossi and Shlay 1982). DaVanzo (1981: 90) underscored that large-scale patterns are important for policy and planning, “because the aggregate movements of migrants often cause important shifts in the political power and economic fortunes of the places they leave and the places to which they go.”

The information in Chaps. 2, 3, and 4 help inform policymakers about who moves, why, and what decisions are involved in the process of moving. These chapters also underscore the selective nature of household mobility and location choice, which helps contribute to macrolevel consequences discussed in Chap. 7: the concentration of urban poverty and racial residential segregation. Chapters 5 and 6 explored how, why, and when mobility affects different children and families in diverse ways. These findings are important for policy and planning because they can influence localized initiatives designed to integrate families into new communities. Identifying mobility-related risk factors and outcomes is also valuable for social workers and therapists working to advocate for effective interventions that ease families’ adjustment to new communities and schools.

## HOUSING AND MOBILITY POLICIES

Income and racial segregation are among the most pressing social problems—and the concentration of poverty, particularly among black and Latino families, has increased dramatically in recent years (Bader and Krysan 2015; Jargowsky 2013). However, there has been a lack of scholarly consensus on how urban housing policy should address these problems, especially as it relates to household mobility (Crowley and Pelletiere 2012). These policy debates have made the impetus for and desired outcomes of housing policy difficult to resolve.

Imbroscio (2011) separated the competing perspectives into two factions. The “Mobility Paradigm” emphasizes the importance of household mobility in order to solve important urban social problems. Advocates for this perspective argue that household mobility can be used to disperse poverty, helping to eliminate geographies of inequality. The “Placemaking Paradigm” promotes place-based initiatives focused on the development of economically and socially desirable communities that empower residents and encourage *stability*. In the context of the research presented in

previous chapters, the next section discusses housing policy approaches designed to counter the effects of selective mobility on population restructuring, particularly the concentration of poverty and racial residential segregation.

### *Poverty Dispersal and the Mobility Paradigm*

Mobility-based poverty dispersal approaches generally adopt the perspective that upward mobility, “moving to opportunity,” provides a pathway to social mobility for economically disadvantaged groups who commonly experience structural barriers to moving out of low-income areas (Schwartz 2010; Winship 2015). Poverty dispersal advocates argue that household mobility should be used to facilitate the deconcentration of urban poverty and racial residential desegregation by providing disadvantaged families subsidies to access lower-poverty areas. As such, household mobility is not the desired goal itself but rather *a means to a desired goal* (Clark and Moore 1982; Rossi and Shlay 1982). The provision of assistance to relocate out of high-poverty areas will disperse low-income individuals and families to areas with more and better opportunities, including access to quality schools and safer environments (Pattillo et al. 2014; Theodos et al. 2014). As a result, several policy initiatives have been designed to stimulate household mobility, especially for racial minorities residing in low-income public housing.

The poor, and especially the chronically poor, are often trapped in high-poverty areas because of financial and structural constraints (Reardon and Bischoff 2011; Ross and Turner 2005). HOPE VI was an important government policy intervention developed to diffuse urban poverty. Between 1992 and 2010, the initiative financed the demolition and redevelopment of distressed, low-income public housing into mixed-income residential areas. The federal policy was developed in order to revitalize distressed, low-income public housing in order to reduce crime, integrate communities, stimulate the economy, and mitigate the effects of living in poverty that were discussed in Chap. 7.

Several other policies, such as MTO and Section 8, facilitate household mobility through voucher systems (Schwartz 2010). Since individuals living in disadvantaged areas that are often isolated from mainstream values and collective socialization and are surrounded by crime and dysfunction (Sampson et al. 2002), those who meet certain income and housing requirements are provided a housing voucher. The voucher enables house-

hold mobility out of low-income areas by subsidizing residence in a new area. This approach was geared toward providing low-income individuals with choices to relocate out of distressed residential circumstances into affordable housing in safer and more desirable neighborhoods. However, research has identified a number of barriers that low-income minorities face, including latent racial discrimination and landlords who decline housing voucher applicants (Turner et al. 2013; Turner et al. 2000).

Opponents of the poverty dispersal perspective have questioned the value of population shuffling as an effective way to address a social problem that was, in part, *caused* by those processes (Imbroscio 2011). As such, the dispersal-of-poverty approach has been met with resistance by researchers for a number of reasons (for a review and critique, see Goetz and Chapple 2010 and Imbroscio 2011, respectively). First, displaced families impacted by the HOPE VI program were often unprepared—and sometimes even unwilling—to move out of low-income public housing, especially those who lived in their communities for many years (Goetz and Chapple 2010). Studies also indicate that rapid racial and economic integration can lead to feelings of alienation (Chaskin and Joseph 2013, 2015) and displacement anxieties (Freeman 2006) that could ultimately lead to greater residential displacement for blacks (Freeman and Cai 2015).

Researchers identified some positive outcomes for participants in relocation-based programs, such as environmental enrichment and improvements in perceived safety (Goetz 2003; Chaskin and Joseph 2015). However, others highlighted the “disappointing” consequences of HOPE VI and MTO for employment, income, educational engagement, and health outcomes (Goetz and Chapple 2010). Issues with housing discrimination and availability, dispersed social networks, and weakened social ties also motivated some participants to relocate back to high-poverty areas (Clampet-Lundquist 2004; Goetz 2003). Thus, an important shortcoming of mobility-based policy initiatives was that they sometimes prompted—or required—additional moves among voucher users and displaced families (Imbroscio 2011); as Chap. 5 demonstrated, frequent moving can lead to negative outcomes across multiple domains in the short and long term. In the conclusion of their literature review, Goetz and Chapple (2010:223) conclude that “dispersal, as it has been experienced over the past 15 years, in countless American cities, has not produced the equity outcomes hoped for by proponents.” For this reason, a competing perspective stresses the importance of place-based initiatives that inspire household and community *stability*.

### *Preservation and the Placemaking Paradigm*

Proponents for place-based efforts argue that housing policy should prioritize *place* by revitalizing physical infrastructures and social and economic conditions in low-income areas in order to reduce the concentration of poverty (e.g., Cytron 2010). These initiatives depart from the poverty dispersal approach in that their efficacy is not dependent upon integration (or at least *forced* integration) or relocation to lower-poverty areas. Rather, the objective is to address the problems of poverty “in place” (Turner et al. 2014: 4), although *local* mobility—within the target area—is not discouraged (Coulton et al. 2012).

Proponents of the place-based perspective argue that it is a more practical approach than the mobility-centric model because it promotes residential and community stability rather than displacement—and relocation can have negative effects at the individual and community levels (Coleman 1988; Shaw and McKay 1942). Imbroscio (2011:6) argues that poverty dispersal models also rest on unrealistic assumptions about individuals’ residential locations:

In essence, from the vantage point of [the poverty dispersal] 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.

Place-based perspectives advocate for policy that promote economic growth and stable home environments by making safe, high-quality housing more accessible and affordable in low-income urban areas (e.g., Brennan et al. 2014). For example, community-level programs, such as Promise Neighborhoods, provide low-income children and families with stable and coordinated support for health, education, and social services (US Department of Education 2016). Others, including the Making Connections initiative, facilitate collective efficacy, informal socialization, and economic opportunities that promote family stability in low-income areas (see Coulton et al. 2012).

At the same time, some have questioned the success of place-based programs, citing mixed results for individual-level outcomes (Turner et al.

2014). Household mobility was identified as one reason for these mixed results—relocation into and out of targeted policy areas poses challenges for programs designed to foster social ties (Theodos et al. 2014, 2015). However, programs to develop social ties can also inspire individuals to remain in an area (Dawkins 2006; Whitaker 2010). Families and Schools Together (FAST) is one example of a place-based program designed to foster community and social ties.

The FAST program, an experimental place-based initiative implemented in two US cities, included an after school program with activities aimed at enhancing family-school relationships and fostering intergenerational bonding. Although the program was not designed to curtail mobility, Fiel et al. (2013) found that black children who participated in the program were less likely to change schools. While their supplemental results indicated that participation did not curtail *household* mobility, their overall results do tentatively indicate that social capital can encourage stability.

One problem with place-based approaches is that they can ultimately lead to residential displacement. The community development literature has long recognized that successful efforts to improve neighborhood conditions may not, in fact, benefit the original residents of the neighborhood, who may eventually be displaced by higher-income households (Fullilove 2004). As such, researchers have advocated for specific policy efforts that benefit, defend, and protect incumbent residents from gentrification-related displacement (e.g., Freeman 2015). In turn, the Choice Neighborhoods Program was designed to improve social and economic conditions in distressed areas while at the same time preserving affordable housing for low-income residents (US Department of Housing and Urban Development 2016).

Although not explicitly designed as place-based initiatives, economic incentives, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, can also incentivize homeownership, residential stability, and community cohesion (Stegman et al. 2004; Manturuk et al. 2012). Incidentally, these initiatives are also promising incentives to address the “rural brain drain,” whereby selective mobility occurs among young, highly skilled, and highly educated individuals who move out of rural areas into urban and suburban areas (Faggian and Franklin 2014). Researchers have recommended that rural areas institute policies (e.g., tax incentives) aimed at retaining educated young adults in those areas (Carr and Kefalas 2009).



### *Integration-Focused Policy*

Both sides of the housing policy debate converge on a dominant theme—choice (Crowley and Pelletiere 2012). Housing policymakers should, therefore, be particularly vigilant not to force or block household mobility. Instead, policy should focus on revitalizing distressed areas and assisting household mobility for those who want to move. This twofold approach effectively assists families who need assistance *moving out* of an area as well as those who need assistance *remaining in* an area. Such policies should be designed to facilitate diversity and integrate mobile families into their new communities. They should also focus on preventing population displacement, which can result from community revitalization efforts (Fullilove 2004).

In areas where displacement is imminent (e.g., through gentrification), Godsil (2013) recommends that residents be provided with vouchers that cover increased housing costs. Alternatively, she suggests that low-cost loans with low down payments be provided to help low-income households purchase a home, either within or outside of the neighborhood. Similarly, Ludwig and Raphael (2010) recommended the development of a “mobility bank,” whereby anyone can borrow on his or her future in order to realize a desired move. Their proposed program, similar to a student loan, facilitates autonomy in residential choice, especially for individuals and families experiencing housing lock-ins and other obstructions to household mobility.

For those who choose to “voucher out” of their communities, revisions to existing voucher provisions could remove constraints to locations and facilitate choice. Owens (2015) suggests implementing property tax rebates for landlords who accept housing vouchers. Voucher programs should also promote “mobility counseling” to advise movers about different housing options in beneficial locations (Sharkey 2012). Postmove counseling that monitors and facilitates community integration would provide necessary assistance to mobile families in their adjustment to new communities. From a research standpoint, these preventive processes would also allow for the collection of useful data to improve existing policies. Researchers could collect information about those who chose to utilize the voucher program, including their reasons for moving and details about their location decisions. This information would help policymakers effectively target specific issues in an area. Planners can then tailor local

initiatives to address problems specific to those areas, helping avoid “one size fits all” community policies.

For those who choose to remain in their communities, place-based initiatives should work to foster social and economic development without compromising the availability of affordable housing. These initiatives should continue to foster social ties among residents of low-income communities; however, programs should be designed in such a way that they can *seamlessly incorporate recently relocated families*. Additionally, these programs should incorporate all families, regardless of income. A broader scope could help foster diverse connections, especially in mixed-income communities.

Overall, policy and planning should focus on improving existing communities *and* promoting choice. For those who choose to move, revisions to voucher programs would allow for more and better choices. Pre-move advisement and search services are an effective way of directing voucher holders to promising locations (Shroder 2002). Additionally, post-move counseling can smooth the transition and help prevent issues with disruption and adjustment. For those who remain, place-based policies should be designed to curtail residential displacement, guarantee affordable housing, quickly integrate newly relocated residents into community-based programs, and facilitate economic development and diversity. The next section discusses ways that community-level programs can help mobile families adjust after moving.

## COMMUNITY-LEVEL PROGRAMS AND PRACTICE-BASED INTERVENTIONS

### *Integration-Based Community Programs*

As Chap. 7 discussed, community contexts exert important influence on individual and family outcomes (Sampson et al. 2002). Despite research findings that point to problems with social adjustment after moving to a new area (Lun et al. 2012; Magdol 2002; Pettit 2004), strategies to help integrate mobile families into new communities have received surprisingly short shrift. This section details several ways that communities and schools can help mobile families adjust.

Chapters 5 and 6 indicated that long-distance mobility leads to weakened social ties in new areas—which can lead to isolation, depression,

and other negative outcomes (Haynie et al. 2006a, b). Accordingly, community-level programs should be instituted to welcome new residents, assist their transition, and help them overcome impediments to community and school adjustment. For particularly vulnerable families, integration-focused programs can also mitigate some of the negative effects of risk factors associated with household mobility, such as family changes and employment disruption.

A number of place-based programs have been implemented to strengthen low-income communities (for a detailed review, see Turner et al. 2014). To some extent, most of these programs focus on fostering and maintaining social capital for families and communities. These programs should extend beyond low-income communities to help integrate newcomers on a larger scale—especially in voucher catchment areas. As noted, an important element of community-enhancement services is that they should be designed such that newcomers can be folded into the program at any time. Otherwise, programs designed to build social capital could actually be marginalizing newly arrived families.

Community ties serve an important function in everyday routines and activities. As such, they can make a substantial difference in postmove adjustment for new families. Forrest and Kearns (2001:2140) detailed eight domains of social capital and endorsed community policies that encourage their growth: empowerment, participation, associational activity and common purpose, supporting networks and reciprocity, collective norms and values, trust, safety, and belonging. These domains provide a useful framework for how communities can integrate newcomers.

Giving individuals a voice in policy-related processes leads to *empowerment*. Supporting and advertising local activities and events enhances *community participation*. Fostering supportive networks between residents and neighborhood organizations leads to feelings of *common purpose*. Encouraging cooperation among community residents builds *supportive networks and reciprocity*. Promoting common community interests inspires *collective norms and values*. Conflict resolution and delivering on promises facilitates *trust*. Formal and informal crime prevention leads to feelings of *safety*. Forming a unique collective identity among community members promotes a *sense of belonging*. Thus, providing tools to integrate newcomers enhances overall community function and can improve the well-being of all residents.

As the “building blocks of social cohesion,” community ties can have an important impact on postmove transitions. A lack of social ties can make

transitions more difficult, but community support and friendship can lead to a much smoother transition. For families with children, another way to promote successful adjustment is at the school level.

### *School-Level Welcoming Programs*

One way to target mobile families is at the school level since long-distance moves are often coupled with *school* mobility (Rumberger 2015). There are a number of reasons presented in the school mobility literature that suggest that mobile children experience difficulties transitioning to new educational environments and, therefore, need more teacher attention and school resources. Schools moves have been linked to performance disadvantages as a result of school curricular differences and interruptions in instruction (Lash and Kirkpatrick 1994), frequent absenteeism (Dunn et al. 2003), and chaotic home environments (Norford and Medway 2002). Children who move to new areas also experience the disruption of peer networks, weakened social ties, difficulty making friends (Pribesh and Downey 1999), and problems adjusting to new social and institutional rules (Jason et al. 1992). Students who relocate, and especially those who relocate often, can experience loneliness, depression, or anxiety in their new locations (Haynie et al. 2006a, b; South et al. 2007).

Parents may experience much the same stress and isolation, relying largely upon school faculty, staff, and administration to facilitate the transition. Research suggests that social capital, including parental involvement in school, can offset some of the academic, emotional, and behavioral problems that mobile adolescents encounter (Hagan et al. 1996).

Researchers and practitioners have explored the potential of peer orientation workshops for children and parents and welcoming programs to integrate children into their new schools and families into their new communities (e.g., DiCecco et al. 1995). When stressful circumstances pose a threat to family function (e.g., parental conflict could add to the stress of a move), school-based factors (e.g., school and community orientations and tutoring) can be important intervening mechanisms. Additionally, counselors can facilitate the transfer of school records and facilitate communication between previous and new teachers about mobile students' academic standing (Hartman 2006). Thus, a triad of individual, family, and school-based factors (including staff and teacher support) must interact to attenuate potentially negative effects of moving to a new area (Gruman et al. 2008).

A small number of programs have been designed to target and initiate school newcomers. DiCecco et al. (1995) describe one such “school welcoming” intervention program, Early Assistance for Students and Families, whereby schools take a multidisciplinary approach to introducing new children to schools and curricula. Building on research and theory about the role of parental involvement in school adjustment (e.g., Spera 2005), the program was designed to facilitate the transition to a new school and establish an overall sense of community. The researchers were optimistic about creating an atmosphere that “fosters smooth transitions, positive informal encounters, and social interactions; facilitates social support; provides opportunities for ready access to information and for learning how to function effectively in the school culture; and encourages involvement in decision-making” (Adelman and Taylor 2006:298).

In a large urban school district, the research team, which consisted of social workers, psychologists, community representatives, and teachers, outlined the mechanisms to establish and maintain such an intervention. Four tasks were outlined: (a) establishing a mechanism for implementing the program, (b) developing strategies for welcoming individuals, (c) providing social support and facilitating school involvement, and (d) maintaining support and involvement over time. Their recommendations include establishing groups that are “designed to help new students and families learn about the community and the school and to allow them to express concerns and have them addressed.” The benefits of such a group is that it can “allow new students and families to connect with each other as another form of social support” (DiCecco et al. 1995: 22). Altogether, these school-level responsibilities helped create a psychological sense of community at schools—one that benefits not only newcomers but *all* students.

Overall, a potentially effective approach to attenuate some of the negative effects of moving to a new area is to focus on developing community- and school-based programs that help welcome and introduce newcomers. Insofar as household mobility often leads to severed social ties and lower social capital at the individual level, these programs can help new and potentially vulnerable residents adjust to a new community. They can also provide a psychological sense of community, facilitate civic engagement, and enhance parental involvement in school.

### *Practice-Based Intervention*

Choosing an inviting and high-quality area could offset potential problems with moving, such as the loss of social capital. Therefore, as discussed above regarding mobility assistance, counseling and advisement in the housing search process, such as housing information and support counseling from experts, could reduce negative mobility outcomes and lead to a more successful postmove adjustment (Sharkey 2012). Although these resources are no doubt important in order to provide individuals and families with appropriate residential choices, individual-level intervention can assist children and families who seem to be acclimating poorly.

For mobile children experiencing academic and behavioral problems, social workers and family therapists can benefit from thinking about household mobility through the “person-in-environment” approach (Scanlon and Devine 2001). This perspective advocates a thorough understanding of individuals’ behaviors based on their lived experiences, cognitive abilities, environmental context, and structural circumstances (Kondrat 2008). This perspective could help social workers and therapists target vulnerable individuals and families and intervene as necessary. For example, a social worker who notes that a child is having trouble with school engagement should campaign for screening and evaluation to target possible adjustment issues. Indeed, no two schools are the same, and assessment might be necessary to make sure new students’ academic abilities are commensurate with the performance expectations of their grade placement in a new school.

The cumulative context framework presented in Chap. 6 should help social workers and therapists understand the linkages among resources and risk factors, mobility contexts, the accumulation of stressful events, and mobility outcomes. Individual and family outcomes are largely dependent upon resources and risk factors *before* a move takes place, the context of the move itself, and context and location-based factors after the move takes place. Social workers and therapists should query about the frequency of household mobility, history of prior moves, reasons for moving, and the distance of the move(s). These can provide important insights into child academic and behavior problems and help practitioners more effectively diagnose developmental setbacks.

Individuals in good physical and mental health, nested in families with income and savings, tied to a strong social network are able to draw on these forms of capital to buffer the effects of moving. However, if the same

household experiences a very time consuming move that entails a change in schools and/or an unwelcome or harsh reception in a new area, there may be very different levels of stress and other obstacles impeding adjustment. Compounded stressors (e.g., parental divorce, potentially changing schools) and chronic stress associated with frequent moving can lead to even more harmful effects (Brennan et al. 2014). In this sense, the challenge for social workers and therapists is identifying mobility-related risk factors and adjustment issues, understanding their causes, and advocating to reduce their impact to enhance overall well-being. This requires focused collaboration among social services, school personnel, and families.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed recent policy perspectives regarding housing, housing choice, and household mobility. Each preceding chapter contributes to a better understanding of housing policy and community initiatives discussed in this chapter. Information on large-scale rates of mobility and characteristics of mobile individuals can inform policymakers about selective mobility and population restructuring that can have harmful effects at the community and individual levels. Individuals' mobility choices and decisions are shaped and restricted by a number of factors, including physical neighborhood characteristics (e.g., structural deterioration) and social factors (e.g., social capital). An understanding of these factors enables researchers and policymakers to anticipate the types of social services needed in certain areas. Mobile individuals and families respond to household mobility in different ways. Knowing *how and why* mobility leads to negative outcomes for some but not others is a step toward developing programs to most effectively address those consequences.

The life course perspective is an important framework for discussing policy from macro and micro perspectives. The importance of place, choice, and diversity shape the mechanics of integration-focused programs. Policy should emphasize community, agency, and heterogeneity—importantly, policy initiatives and programs should emphasize the integration of mobile individuals into their communities. Timing, development, and family interdependence are all linked to individual-level mobility outcomes that can be used to target vulnerable children and families for intervention.

As Firebaugh et al. (2015:363) caution, “Incomplete information often leads to inaccurate information, and inaccurate information about a fast-changing U.S. population is sure to result in bad policy.” Accordingly,

the concluding chapter begins with a discussion of methodological issues in the study of household mobility. These concerns are particularly relevant for policy-related issues. Methodological developments are necessary for the advancement of social policy that targets people in need, adequately assesses and addresses their problems, and accurately evaluates the efficacy of programs for the populations they serve.

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## *Household Mobility in America* Overview and Conclusion

### INTRODUCTION

As Long (1988) identified, until the mid-1900s, American household mobility was studied almost exclusively in a macrolevel context. In particular, research focused largely on aggregate patterns of interregional and urban-rural migration. Data on household mobility for early periods in the United States were considered “fragmentary and not very trustworthy” (Rossi 1980:28). Starting in the late 1940s, the *Current Population Survey* (CPS) began asking individuals’ place of residence 1 year prior. As shown in Chaps. 2 and 3, these data continue to track patterns and trends in American household mobility.

In a more recent context, large-scale panel data have allowed for the study of individuals’ housing/migration “careers” and mobility *processes*, including mobility-related decisions and the ways in which moving coincides with other life events. These data advancements also allowed for the exploration of household mobility *outcomes* at the individual and family levels (Astone and McLanahan 1994; Hagan et al. 1996). Despite these developments, a number of methodological difficulties confront mobility researchers. Several of these concerns are identified below, broadly situated into categories based on (1) conceptualization and measurement and (2) selection into moving.

## METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS IN THE STUDY OF HOUSEHOLD MOBILITY

### *Conceptualization and Measurement*

#### *Distance Dualism*

The interdisciplinary nature of mobility studies has led to different perspectives regarding conceptualization and measurement (King and Skeldon 2010). One issue is related to “distance dualism,” the binary “local versus distance” approach to household mobility. Local and distance moves occur for a variety of reasons, and the distance of a move can rarely be mapped perfectly onto the motives for making the move (Clark and Huang 2004; Coulter and Scott 2015). For this reason, researchers have called for “a fuller and more critical” consideration of the local-distance dichotomy to try to bridge the gap (Smith and Finney 2015:93).

The terms used to characterize different types of movement have also led to difficulties with conceptualization. As the introductory chapter identified, the term “migration” is an umbrella term used to refer to *any* relatively permanent change of residence. However, over time, the term has become more closely associated with *immigration*, thereby disregarding “internal” forms of migration—those that occur *within* a given country (Ellis 2012; King 2012). The term *internal migration* has also been used inconsistently. Depending on researchers’ specific purposes, some have used *internal migration* to refer only to long-distance (*geographic*) mobility, while others include local (*residential*) moves. In an attempt to conceptualize relocation in a way that eludes distance dualism, throughout the book, the term *household mobility* was used. The term is a cross-fertilized concept that includes both local and distance moves.

There have also been problems with the operationalization of different types of mobility, namely, what characterizes a move as being “long-distance” as opposed to local. For example, Chap. 3 used “crossing county lines” to designate a long-distance move. However, the actual distance depends on a given household’s relative proximity to administrative borders at the origin and destination. These “intransitive and non-commutative” properties further highlight the importance of bridging the distance-local binary in mobility research (Cadwallader 1992:42). Standardizing measurement would likely be an unproductive approach to redressing the local-distance dichotomy, since researchers must use

definitions and measurements that best suit their research objectives. For example, economists examining labor mobility might consider distance mobility that occurs between labor markets. On the other hand, sociologists studying mobility effects on educational outcomes would consider transitions between school districts.

### *Mobility Searching and Planning*

Researchers have identified difficulties collecting reliable large-scale data on mobility-related processes (e.g., Coulombel 2010). Very few large-scale studies have empirically examined the resources and expenses involved in planning a move, the physical act of moving, and downsizing belongings (see Bieri et al. 2013). An interesting question is how these factors differentially influence individuals' decisions about moving. For example, how do search and moving costs differ for renters compared to homeowners (Van Ommeren and Van Leuvensteijn 2005)? Understanding how resources and immediate expenses affect the planning stages would be particularly useful for policymakers designing effective premove counseling programs discussed in Chap. 7 (Shroder 2002).

### *Frequent Moves and Hypermobility*

Mobility-effects researchers have applied a variety of different conceptual and operational treatments to “frequent” moves and “hypermobility.” For example, Tucker and Urton (1987) top-coded the number of adolescent moves at eight or more and identified these children as “very hypermobile.” However, others have used fewer moves, such as three or more moves (Simpson and Fowler 1994). Several studies have recently identified children as “frequent movers” if they made five or more moves within 6 years (Cohen and Wardrip 2011; Murphey et al. 2012). Mobility effects research would be enhanced—and results perhaps more consistent—if operational definitions for “frequent mobility” were established.

In addition to inconsistent conceptualization and measurement, frequent mobility has been notoriously difficult to enumerate at the national level. Since the CPS labels individuals as either mobile or nonmobile without inquiring about the number of moves, descriptive research on national trends in frequent moving is limited. Early research suggests that frequent moving and repeat migration were common in the early twentieth century (Shryock 1964). More recently, Clark and Withers (2007) suggest that a noteworthy amount of mobility occurs among a subpopulation of frequent movers. As such, CPS figures might underestimate overall rates of house-

hold mobility in a given year. Research centers should focus on providing estimates of mobility frequency. Since hypermobility occurs disproportionately among the chronically poor (Clark 2010; Skobba and Goetz 2013), information on move frequency in the United States could inform housing policies targeted at assisting economically disadvantaged families. Doing so could also help researchers uncover factors that lead to repeat mobility and/or initiate return migration.

### *Reason for Moving and Location Choice*

Several measurement issues confront researchers studying *why* people move. First, individuals can oversimplify the decision process and rationalize certain decisions, which can compromise the accuracy of responses. Since individuals do not always report reasons commensurate with the *type* of move they make, researchers have cautioned against inferring individuals' reasons for moving based on the type/distance of their move (Corgeau 1990). Second, data on individuals' reported reasons for moving in national cross-sections and panel data are rarely coupled with detailed information on the voluntary or involuntary nature of the move (Coulter and Scott 2015). Given that individuals' degree of choice over mobility decisions is an important indicator of mobility propensities and later outcomes, researchers should highlight differences between voluntary and involuntary moving and staying.

Third, many survey-based studies allow for the selection of only a single reason for moving—as is the case with the CPS data presented in Chap. 3. However, stress threshold models suggest that multiple compounded stressors over time may be a more likely reason for some to move, suggesting that nuance is lost to efficiency. Boyle et al. (1998:1) succinctly describe this notion: “The act of moving rarely involves one factor, even if the move is motivated primarily by one overriding issue. Rather, migration is firmly embedded within the complexity of people’s everyday lives and experiences.” However, Coulter and Scott (2015:367) recently concluded that allowing respondents to select several reasons for moving “may not be as important as is commonly thought.”

### *Selection Effects*

Since household mobility is a planned behavior (Kley and Mulder 2010), mobility-related decisions are rarely, if ever, random. As Chaps. 3 and 4 discussed, people move for a variety of reasons—those reasons are usually



linked to particular circumstances (e.g., age, education, residential grievances). Therefore, another important challenge to research on household mobility is selection bias (Galster and Hedman 2014). Selection into household mobility implies that (a) certain types of people are more mobile than others and (b) different types of people select into different types of places.

There has been considerable deliberation in the mobility effects literature about the role of unobserved characteristics. For example, does moving affect children negatively, or are highly mobile children predisposed to negative outcomes regardless of their household mobility? Increases in the availability of detailed panel data have allowed researchers to statistically control for covariates of household mobility. However, Porter and Vogel (2014) argue that this approach is flawed for two reasons: (1) research rarely considers the full range of factors that influence household mobility, and (2) those covariates might also differ between mobile and nonmobile individuals, thereby corrupting the element of control. As researchers continue to employ sophisticated statistical approaches that account for selection bias, such as propensity score matching propensity and fixed effects models, more conclusive evidence about individual- and family-level mobility effects will become available (Anderson et al. 2014a).

Another selection issue is related to panel study design because differential attrition can occur as a result of household mobility (Fitzgerald et al. 1998). One UK study of panel dropout found that the odds of attrition were over 40 percent higher for mobile families (Plewis et al. 2008). Therefore, researchers using panel data to explore mobility effects should be mindful that nonignorable differential attrition might lead to biased results (Washbrook et al. 2014).

### *Methodological Directions*

Several directions for methodological developments have been advocated in the migration literature, many of which materialized in the previous chapters. In general, novel approaches to data collection and analysis will continue to provide interesting insights into household mobility patterns, processes, and outcomes at micro and macro levels (Smith et al. 2015:79). Innovative research designs can help shed light on other migratory processes, such as circular migration, seasonal migration, and return migration, since these processes are often overlooked, hard to count, and difficult to measure. For example, investigating mobility in the context

of other large-scale events, such as natural disasters and mass evictions, has provided better understanding of forced mobility (e.g., Elliott 2015; Fullilove and Wallace 2011). Kirk (2009) used a natural experiment to explore criminal recidivism among displaced ex-offenders after Hurricane Katrina.

The use of nontraditional methods, such as GIS mapping, can help to better visualize large-scale mobility-related processes (Reibel 2007). For example, GIS can map mobility to schools, public transportation, and other social services that push and pull people to relocate. Data from social and cultural artifacts, including memoirs and fictional literature, have been effectively used to depict immigrant experiences (King et al. 1995). Vignettes could provide useful insights into hypothetical household mobility decisions (for a review and critique of the method, see Bruch and Mare 2012).

Second, qualitative inquiry—particularly through mixed-method research designs—can elucidate mobility processes. As Winstanley et al. (2002:829) acknowledge, “Given the complexity of residential mobility decisions and practice and the richness of the data obtained through in-depth interviewing compared with that generated by survey responses, attention has also been drawn to the need to find different theoretical approaches to do justice to respondents’ experiences.”

Qualitative investigations can uncover mobility-related pathways to agency, adaptation, and resilience (Mason 2004; Winstanley et al. 2002; Thulin and Vilhelmson 2013). For example, the study of place in household mobility decisions, or “roots mobility,” would lend itself to qualitative inquiry (Gustafson 2013). In their study of midlife migration in Northern Ireland, Stockdale et al. (2013) use life history interviews to explore how memories and nostalgia influence individuals’ decisions to return to their origins in midlife. Qualitative approaches enhance understandings of mobility choices, including outcomes associated with forced mobility and involuntary immobility (Chaskin and Joseph 2015; Thulin and Vilhelmson 2013). From a policy perspective, qualitative studies provide a “voice” to the individuals at whom programs are targeted.

Although less often employed in studies of household mobility than other traditional data gathering methods, ethnography can make important contributions to research on household mobility (McHugh 2000). This approach to qualitative inquiry allows for detailed, documented examinations of details about the household mobility experience, including how it constructs everyday experiences and shapes individuals’ histories

and identities. Ethnography is useful in exploring the “performativity” of mobility, where contexts and circumstances (e.g., resources, risk factors, and mobility contexts) lead to very individualized experiences. Such an approach emphasizes household mobility in the context of different societal norms and roles, stress, settlement processes, and development (Halfacree and Merriman 2015). For example, in the immigration literature, the expression of transnational identities is inherently performative—rooted in migrants’ lived experiences and “the embodied effort that migrants make to become transnational” (Halfacree and Merriman 2015:155).

Third, researchers have identified that the international/internal migration binary has led to the development of fragmented research and theory (Ellis 2012; King 2012; King and Skeldon 2010). Recent approaches to “bridge the gap” between immigration and internal migration have underscored the linkages between the two processes, arguing that a unified theory would lead to better understandings of migratory processes overall (Brown and Bean 2016; King 2012). One way that different forms of mobility have been connected is through the “new mobilities” paradigm, discussed in the next section.

## DIRECTIONS IN THEORY AND RESEARCH

Research and theory have been developing to accommodate multifaceted approaches to individuals’ experiences and perspectives. This section discusses three such perspectives: the family life course, intersectionality, and the new mobilities paradigm. These perspectives advance inclusivity and diversity in mobility frameworks.

First, family and life course studies would benefit from a more comprehensive approach to mobility processes. In particular, researchers should place greater emphasis on correlates and consequences of household mobility for individuals outside of the “social-chronological margins” of the life course (Hopkins and Pain 2007:292). An additional direction for researchers is to explore how kin and social ties influence mobility decisions, experiences, and outcomes in different ways (Mincer 1978; Smith 2011). For example, Bushin (2009) advocates for the exploration of children’s agency in mobility decision processes.

The literature would benefit from stronger perspectives on how (a) the choices of one individual affect the opportunities and choices of others and (b) sets of choices are interdependent on the previous choices of others (Bruch and Mare 2012). Since household mobility influences

the large-scale spatial distribution and (re)organization of family and friendship networks, researchers have discussed the potential for a “spatial turn,” which emphasizes the dynamic nature of families, social and spatial demography, and geographies of place over the life course. This shift toward the spatial dimension presents more opportunities for researchers to explore “intersectionalities of space, place, gender, and other social relations” (Smith 2011).

Second, intersectional approaches emphasize the ways culture, sexuality, social class, race, and gender shape intersect to inform life experiences (Hopkins and Pain 2007; Silvey 2004). Place is a part of identity and changing place is instrumental in shaping identity—therefore, household mobility experiences are uniquely influenced by social status, culture, and social identities. For example, one recent study explored how social class interacts with age and race to influence migration decisions (Pendergrass 2013). Researchers have also begun to explore intersectionality in the context of the life course approach (Hopkins and Pain 2007; Kelly 2015). Qualitative sociologists are well positioned to continue making substantial contributions to the field by exploring how crosscutting social identities inform mobility experiences in different times and spaces.

Third, the new mobilities paradigm, or the “mobilities turn,” emphasizes the systematic movement of people in everyday life, especially in the context of advancements in technology and transportation (Sheller 2014). The perspective underscores the relational dynamics of multiple mobilities for shaping individuals’ lived experiences and social and family relationships (Holdsworth 2013). From this perspective, household mobility is part of a continuum of mobilities that also includes automobility, travel for work and leisure, and nomadism (Sheller and Urry 2006).

## OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSION

Several common threads informed the overall structure of this book: (1) the book integrated *interdisciplinary* theory and research, (2) in order to explore *correlates and outcomes*, (3) at the *micro and macro levels*, (4) using the *life course perspective* as a guiding framework. Additionally, throughout most chapters, nationally representative cross-sectional and panel data helped link patterns, processes, outcomes, and praxis. Table 9.1 brings each chapter together with a conceptual map of the patterns, processes, and outcomes of household mobility in America. The table frames the topics, approaches, and questions addressed in this book and links



**Table 9.1** (continued)

	Patterns ↔ Processes ↔ Outcomes ↔ Practice				
Guiding life course principles	*				
Geographic place and historic time			*	*	*
Heterogeneity and variability	*		*	*	*
Cumulative development		*	*	*	*
Linked lives	*	*		*	*
Timing in lives			*	*	*
Human agency	*		*	*	*

Format adapted from Smith et al. (2015)

interdisciplinary, multilevel perspectives to the study of American household mobility. Each chapter has addressed questions regarding household mobility: “*What is it? How much is there? Who moves where, how, and why? What are the effects? So what? What next?*”

To set the stage for later chapters and address the question, “*What is it?*” Chap. 1 outlined different classifications of household mobility, including types of migration not explicitly covered in the rest of the book. The introductory chapter also introduced the interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives on household mobility.

Drawing on the life course principle related to geographic place and historical time, Chap. 2 addressed the question, “*How much is there?*” In order to highlight the ways mobility informs, and is informed by, American culture in various times and spaces, the chapter broadly reviewed large-scale, historical mobility patterns in the United States. The chapter also provided cross-national comparisons and interdisciplinary perspectives on recent trends in order to illustrate the changing geographic and historical nature of household mobility in America.

The life course principles for heterogeneity, agency, linked lives, and cumulative development were captured in Chaps. 3 and 4, which focused on precipitants of household mobility. Additionally, both chapters helped introduce the selective nature of household mobility. Drawing on data from the most recent CPS, Chap. 3 explored how sociodemographic correlates influence individuals’ overall propensity to move, the type of move, and reported reasons for doing so. Thus, by exploring “*Who moves and why?*” this chapter emphasized the variability in mobility experiences. Chapter 4 explored individuals’ decision-making processes, motivations, and choices, addressing questions related to “*Why, how, and where?*” Using the NLSY97, this chapter explored the ways agency, linked lives, and cumulative development influence microlevel choices, decisions, and behaviors.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 shifted the focus from correlates to consequences of household mobility. Drawing on the linked lives and cumulative development principles, Chap. 5 emphasized individuals’ interconnectedness in their relocation experiences. In order to attend to the first half of the question, “*What are the effects?*,” data from the NLSY97 helped point to short- and long-term consequences of moving for individuals and families. Chapter 6 explored several mechanisms for “*why*” household mobility affects some individuals and families but not others. Drawing on the NLSY79 linked mother-child files, the chapter explored how heterogeneity

in resources and risk factors coupled with the cumulative effects and timing of household mobility lead to differential mobility outcomes. Shifting the level of analysis, Chap. 7 addressed the second half of the question, “*What are the effects?*”. Synthesizing a wide, interdisciplinary literature, this descriptive chapter detailed several ways that household mobility influences macrolevel outcomes. Using principles of human agency and linked lives, the chapter detailed research and theory regarding the role of household mobility in population redistribution, community organization, and sociospatial dynamics.

Chapter 8 ties together the previous chapters and situates them in broader policy-based and applied contexts. As such, this chapter drew on each of the life course principles to address the question, “*So what?*” In particular, this chapter emphasized the influence of selective mobility on correlates and consequences of household mobility at micro and macro levels. The negative individual-, family-, and community-level consequences are pronounced for economically disadvantaged groups. At individual and family levels, resources and risk factors select households into different mobility contexts, the influences of which can lead to negative outcomes. At the neighborhood and regional level, selective mobility patterns are drivers of population restructuring that reinforce neighborhood and regional inequalities.

An overarching theme throughout each chapter was *change*. Household mobility influences—and is influenced by—cultural and structural forces in different historical times and geographic spaces. Although household mobility is considered a common life event, the option to change residences is neither desirable nor available to all individuals equally. As a result, selective mobility can lead to population changes that reinforce residential inequalities. These inequalities can inspire social justice and policy efforts to promote social change. Moving also disperses spatio-geographic networks, which can alter family relationships. Relocation, particularly over long distances, can lead to changes in social integration and modify habits, roles, and routines. As a result, moving can also lead to changes in behaviors, emotions, and identities. Each of these individual, family, and community shifts occurs in the context of historic social and economic change. Simply put, changing residence matters. It matters for individual outcomes, family relationships, and community function—even for those who do not move.



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