Determinants of Short- and Long-Term Mobility Expectations for Home Owners and Renters

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Confusion about the role of residential satisfaction vis-à-vis structural factors in the mobility process stems from the failure to examine the determinants of mobility over varying time frames and housing tenures. Using survey data for a random sample of 580 Phoenix-area households, we test models of short-term (1 year) and long-term (5 years) mobility expectations for home owners and renters. The results show that residential satisfaction mediates the effects of structural variables on mobility expectations in the short term for home owners. In the long-term model for home owners and the short-term model for renters, the role of satisfaction as an intervening force declines in relative importance. Among renters, structural variables operate directly on long-term mobility expectations.

Following Rossi's (1955) classic study, *Why Families Move,* voluntary mobility in the city has been viewed as a response to residential stress or dissatisfaction that occurs in conjunction with progression through the life cycle. A major thrust in mobility research has been the examination of ways that objective measures of situation and context, hereafter called structural variables, operate in the mobility process by conditioning the household's subjective evaluation of residential satisfaction and, in turn, mobility desires, expectations, and behavior (Bach & Smith 1977; Landale & Guest 1985; Michelson 1977; Newman & Duncan 1979; Sell & De Jong 1983; Speare 1974; Speare, Goldstein, & Frey 1975). Advances have been made, but continuing debate centers on whether subjective measures of satisfaction act as intervening variables, mediating the effects of structural factors, or whether structural variables operate directly on mobility expectations and behavior (Clark 1983; Desbarats 1983; Landale & Guest 1985).

We argue that confusion over the role of structural variables vis-à-vis residential satisfaction stems from a failure to incorporate varying time frames and housing tenures in predicting mobility expectations. More specifically, we hypothesize that structural variables operate through residential satisfaction in the short term (1 year) but independently affect moving expectations in the long term (5 years). Further, we hypothesize that the mediating influence of residential satisfaction is weaker for renters than for home owners. These hypotheses are tested by using survey information for a random sample of Phoenix-area home owners and renters.

Background

Drawing on the stress-threshold notion proposed by Wolpert (1965), Speare and his associates developed a model that centers on residential satisfaction as an intervening variable between background (structural) characteristics and mobility predispositions and behavior (Speare 1974; Speare et al. 1975). Speare argued that structural variables—housing attributes, social bonds, and sociodemographic characteristics—condition the level of residential satisfaction, which, in turn, shapes mobility desires and the propensity to move. Structural

variables are hypothesized to work through residential satisfaction and have no direct effects on mobility desires and behavior.

Speare et al. (1975) obtained partial support for their model in a test using survey data for a sample of 700 Rhode Island households. They found that residential satisfaction is a moderately strong predictor of the "wish to move," which, in turn, is a good predictor of subsequent mobility over a 1-year period. The satisfaction index mediates the effects of four background variables on the wish to move, but housing tenure influences mobility desires directly. In addition, housing tenure and duration of residence in the community influence mobility behavior (stay/move) over and above the two subjective measures, the wish to move and the satisfaction index.

Michelson (1977), Bach and Smith (1977), Lee (1978), Newman and Duncan (1979), Landale and Guest (1985), and Moore (1986) also assessed the role of satisfaction and structural variables as determinants of mobility desires, expectations, and behavior. These studies are not directly comparable because they differ in the population surveyed, specification of mobility predispositions (thoughts of moving, desires, expectations), definitions of behavior (mobility vs. migration), and measurement of satisfaction and structural variables. Nevertheless, two broad conclusions can be made. First, levels of housing and neighborhood satisfaction are better predictors of mobility desires than mobility expectations. Mobility desires are largely unconstrained preferences, whereas expectations reflect what is perceived as likely over a specified time interval (Desbarats 1983; McHugh 1984). In this study, we examine mobility expectations because of their stronger links with behavior.

A second conclusion is that some structural variables affect mobility predispositions and behavior over and above the influence of residential satisfaction. Landale and Guest (1985), for example, found in their survey of Seattle households that age, change in household size, income, housing tenure, and proportion of friends in the area affect "thoughts of moving" after controlling for levels of housing and community satisfaction. They also found that housing tenure and duration of residence have direct effects on actual mobility over a 1-year period. Their findings indicate that structural variables, including position in the life cycle (age and change in household size), financial constraints (income), and community attachments (housing tenure and proportion of friends in the area), influence thoughts of moving and/or behavior over and above the effects of residential satisfaction.

Surprisingly little attention has been given to the time-dependent nature of relationships between residential satisfaction, structural variables, and mobility expectations. An exception is Michelson's (1977) longitudinal study of residential satisfaction and mobility of home owners and apartment dwellers in Toronto. He argued that people evaluate residential satisfaction on the basis of what is currently attainable rather than on long-term aspirations. As people progress through the life cycle, they move toward long-term housing and residential goals if and when they obtain the necessary resources.

Drawing on Michelson's distinction between short-run residential satisfaction and long-run aspirations, we hypothesize that housing and neighborhood satisfaction will be stronger predictors of short-term mobility expectations than of long-term moving expectations. Levels of housing and neighborhood satisfaction trigger moves in the near term, but long-term moving expectations reflect structural factors, including position in the life cycle and housing aspirations subject to constraints: Will we be satisfied living in this housing in this neighborhood in X years? Will we be able to realize a move that leads to greater residential satisfaction within X years? Structural variables like age, duration of residence, housing value, and household income are expected to predict long-term mobility expectations independent of their effects on current residential satisfaction.

Controlling for short- and long-term expectations, we hypothesize that the role of satisfaction vis-à-vis structural variables is also a function of housing tenure. Speare et al. (1975) found that the relative importance of various locational and household attributes

differed for home owners and renters. In this study, we test models of short- and long-term mobility expectations for home owners and renters separately to more clearly isolate the role of residential satisfaction and structural variables in the mobility process. We anticipate that the mediating role of satisfaction will be weaker among renters than home owners.

We argue that renters may be highly satisfied with their current accommodations and still anticipate moving, especially in the long term. Kendig (1984) found that relocations among renters were less related to housing adjustments—moving into potentially more satisfying units—and more a function of life-cycle events such as marriage, job changes, and completing school. Moreover, the preference for home ownership is very strong in the United States (Sternlieb & Hughes 1986). Young renters may be satisfied with their current housing but anticipate a move to home ownership as their incomes and family circumstances change.

Our models will attempt to unravel the effects of time frame and housing tenure on satisfaction as a mediating variable between structural variables and mobility expectations. We anticipate that the short-term home owner model will work much as Speare envisioned. Structural forces such as age, income, household size, and duration of residence influence residential satisfaction, which, in turn, influences mobility expectations. When either a longer-term perspective or rental status is introduced, as in the case of long-term home owners and short-term renters, the role of satisfaction as a mediating force should decline in relative importance. When the influences of rental status and a longer time frame are simultaneously examined, we expect residential satisfaction to forfeit its role as an intervening variable between structural factors and mobility expectations.

Research Design and Survey Data

This study is based on survey data obtained for a sample of Phoenix area households. Surveys were mailed to 1,336 households in six randomly selected census tracts in the Phoenix metropolitan area. We sampled households in six random tracts rather than through-out the metropolitan area because of the need to field check apartment numbers for all households residing at addresses with three or more housing units. The 1,336 households represent a 10% random sample in each tract. Sample households were drawn from the *Cole Directory for Phoenix and Suburbs* (1987), an annual publication that enumerates all residences in metropolitan Phoenix by census tract.

We avoided use of the term "household head" in our survey instructions because of gender and age biases. We asked that the questionnaire be completed by the adult member of the household (18 years of age or older) who most recently had a birthday. This aids in obtaining a representative sample of adult males and females of all ages.

We used Dillman's total design method (TDM) to achieve the highest possible response rate (Dillman 1978, 1983). Over a 7-week period, February–March 1988, sample households received up to three survey packages and a reminder postcard after the initial mailing. We received 580 questionnaires with usable information for an overall response rate of 43%. The lower than expected response rate stems from high population turnover in Phoenix, especially in the rental sector. In a study of four U.S. cities, Moore and Clark (1986) found rates of mobility to be significantly higher in Phoenix than in Detroit and Philadelphia and somewhat higher than in Atlanta. High turnover reduced the probability that an individual identified from the *Cole Directory* in summer would be at the designated address in winter.

Comparing our sample with characteristics of the Phoenix metropolitan population derived from a 1985 special census shows that our sample underrepresents younger adults, renters, and minorities. Forty-one percent of the sample respondents are less than 45 years old in comparison with 54% of householders in the Phoenix population in 1985, and 70% of our respondents own their dwelling unit in comparison with 63% of households in the

1985 census. We correct for age and housing tenure in statistical analyses by weighting the sample according to population characteristics from the 1985 special census (Arizona Dept. of Economic Security 1986). This is necessary given the importance of age and housing tenure as structural determinants of mobility.

In terms of race and ethnicity, the sample underrepresents blacks and Hispanics. Slightly more than 3% of the Phoenix metropolitan population is black compared with just under 1% of our sample, and 13% of the Phoenix population is Hispanic compared with 3% of sample respondents. The small number of black and Hispanic households in the sample precludes meaningful use of statistical weighting; thus, our sample is representative of the Phoenix Anglo population only.

We ascertained four types of survey information: (1) *household change*—changes in living arrangements and household composition over the 2-year period prior to our survey (1986–1988); (2) *geographical mobility*—number of years at the current residence, mobility over the 2-year period (1986–1988), and expectations of moving in 1 year and 5 years; (3) *residential satisfaction*—measures of overall housing and neighborhood satisfaction; and (4) *housing and sociodemographic characteristics*—a standard battery of housing attributes and sociodemographic characteristics.

Expectations of moving within the Phoenix metropolitan area in the next year and in the next 5 years were measured on 5-point likelihood scales, with values ranging from 1, "very unlikely," to 5, "very likely."

Overall level of satisfaction with the housing unit and neighborhood were measured on 7-point satisfaction scales, with values ranging from 1, "extremely dissatisfied," to 7, "extremely satisfied."

Bivariate Relationships

Bivariate relationships between mobility expectations and levels of housing and neighborhood satisfaction indicate that respondents with low levels of satisfaction are significantly more likely to expect to move in 1 year and 5 years than those who are highly satisfied, although these relationships are far from perfect (Table 1). As expected, housing and neighborhood satisfaction are more strongly related to 1-year than 5-year mobility expectations (Table 1), and housing tenure is strongly related to mobility expectations (Table 2). Fewer than 5% of home owners are very likely to move in 1 year compared with 26% of renters; and 20% of home owners are very likely to move in 5 years compared with 60% of renters.

Path Models of Mobility Expectations

We use path analysis to test causal relationships among the variables constituting four models of mobility expectations (Asher 1976). We test short-term and long-term models for home owners (Figs. 1 and 2) and renters (Figs. 3 and 4).[1] The distinction between short-term and long-term models is the time interval used in measuring mobility expectations—all other variables are identical. Thus only paths to mobility expectations will differ for short-term and long-term models.

Path coefficients are estimated by using ordinary least squares regression, an appropriate estimation procedure given the quasi-interval dependent variables. In these models, all possible causally prior paths are tested; paths statistically significant at the .05 level or better are shown in the diagrams. Path coefficients are equivalent to standardized regression coefficients; they indicate the relative importance of predictor variables, holding the remaining independent variables constant.

The global measures of housing and neighborhood satisfaction are specified as intervening variables between background structural characteristics and mobility expectations in the path models. This follows Speare et al. (1975), except we use separate measures of housing and neighborhood satisfaction rather than a single index of residential satisfaction.[2]

Table 1. Mobility Expectations by Housing and Neighborhood Satisfaction (%)

Expectation of moving	Total	Housing satisfaction			Neighborhood satisfaction		
		Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
A. 1-Year Mobility Expectations							
Very unlikely	57.9	33.3	38.8	68.3	35.1	45.9	69.2
Uncertain	29.2	30.6	39.5	24.8	31.6	40.0	22.0
Very likely	12.9	36.1	21.7	6.9	33.3	14.1	8.8
χ^2			63.6			52.2	
Significance			.0000			.0000	
Cramer's V			.240			.216	
N			551			560	
B. 5-Year Mobility Expectations							
Very unlikely	31.1	16.7	17.2	38.4	16.1	22.2	39.3
Uncertain	33.7	30.6	29.1	35.9	32.1	34.0	33.3
Very likely	35.2	52.8	53.6	25.7	51.8	43.8	27.4
χ^2			46.6			28.9	
Significance			.0000			.0000	
Cramer's V			.206			.161	
N			549			559	

Note: Recoding of variables for bivariate analyses: Respondents labeled as having "uncertain" mobility expectations are those who respond somewhat unlikely, don't know, or somewhat likely. Low satisfaction includes respondents who are quite or extremely dissatisfied. Medium satisfaction includes those who are slightly dissatisfied, neither, or slightly satisfied. High satisfaction refers to respondents who are quite or extremely satisfied. In each panel, columns may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Based on previous studies, we include three categories of structural variables in the analyses (Table 3). Expected signs indicate the hypothesized direction of relationships between structural variables, the satisfaction measures, and mobility expectations, although we do not anticipate that all variables will be statistically significant in all models.

The first set of structural variables are housing attributes, including (1) a space index that measures the degree of crowding in the dwelling unit, (2) the age of the dwelling unit,

Table 2. Mobility Expectations by Housing Tenure (%)

Expectation of moving	1 year			5 years		
	Total	Renter	Owner	Total	Renter	Owner
Very unlikely	58.4	33.6	73.6	31.4	15.9	40.8
Uncertain	28.6	40.0	21.7	33.4	23.6	39.4
Very likely	12.9	26.4	4.7	35.2	60.5	19.7
χ^2		102.6			101.9	
Significance		.0000			.0000	
Cramer's V		.421			.419	
Total N		580			580	
Owners		360			360	
Renters		220			220	

Note: Columns in upper portion may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Table 3.   Structural Variables and Hypothesized Relationships With Residential Satisfaction and
Mobility Expectations

Variable name	Operationalized variable	Surrogate for	Expected relationship	
			Residential satisfaction	Mobility expectations
Space Index	Rooms per person	Degree of crowding	+	−
Year Dwelling Unit Built	Year built	Newness of unit/age and location of neighborhood	+	−
Value of Home/ Monthly Rent	$ value of unit/ monthly rent	Quality of housing and neighborhood	+	−
Recent Mover	Whether moved in last two years (1 = yes; 0 = no)	Likelihood of being in sync with current housing needs	+	−
Duration of Residence	No. of years at current residence	Community ties	+	−
Age	Age of respondent	Stage in life cycle	+	−
Household Income	Household income	Financial resources available to household	+	+
Household Size	No. of persons in household	Married couples with children/presence of extended family members	−	−
Increase Household Size	Household size has increased in last 2 years (1 = yes; 0 = no)	Crowding, stress in unit/new household formation or change in composition	−	+
Decrease Household Size	Household size has decreased in last 2 years (1 = yes; 0 = no)	Excess capacity, too much space/new house or household formation, or change in composition	−	+
Child < 6 yrs.	One or more children < 6 yrs. (1 = yes; 0 = no)	Changing housing and neighborhood needs	−	+
Child 6–18 yrs.	One or more children 6–18 yrs. (1 = yes; 0 = no)	Presence of school- aged child(ren)	−	−

and (3) the value of housing. The second set of structural variables serves as a proxy for the degree of residential inertia and attachment: (1) whether the individual has moved in the last 2 years and (2) the number of years at the current residence. Seven sociodemographic characteristics constitute the third set of variables: (1) age of the respondent, (2) household income, (3) household size, (4) whether household size has increased in the last 2 years, (5) whether household size has decreased in the last 2 years, (6) the presence of one or more children less than 6 years old, and (7) the presence of one or more children between the ages of 6 and 18 years.

The zero-order correlation coefficients underlying the path models are shown in Table 4. These represent the simple relationships between independent variables and satisfaction measures and mobility expectations for both home owners and renters. In several instances

Table 4. Zero-Order Correlations Between Independent Variables and Residential Satisfaction and Mobility Expectations: Home Owners and Renters

Independent variable	Residential satisfaction		Mobility expectations	
	Housing	Neighborhood	1 year	5 years
A. Home Owners				
Housing satisfaction	—	.565	−.362	−.281
Neighborhood satisfaction	.565	—	−.316	−.259
Space index	.171	.100	−.052	−.100
Year dwelling built	−.126	−.009	.130	.093
Value of home	.148	.205	−.063	−.085
Recent mover	.080	−.004	.011	.074
Duration of residence	.134	−.034	−.075	−.157
Age	.183	.206	−.160	−.338
Household income	.004	.057	.010	.073
Household size	−.126	−.107	.025	.100
Increase household size	−.139	−.050	−.001	.156
Decrease household size	.040	−.075	−.054	−.085
Child < 6 years old	−.112	−.090	.018	.113
Child 6–18 years old	−.103	.163	.083	.119
B. Renters				
Housing satisfaction	—	.452	−.298	−.112
Neighborhood satisfaction	.452	—	−.293	−.197
Space index	.149	.038	−.226	.096
Year dwelling built	−.020	−.180	−.055	.065
Monthly rent	.152	.114	−.067	.051
Recent mover	−.133	−.116	.209	.230
Duration of residence	.097	.177	−.223	−.296
Age	.045	.056	−.126	−.240
Household income	.058	.018	.033	.082
Household size	−.088	−.054	.063	−.055
Increase household size	−.143	−.160	.111	−.045
Decrease household size	.049	−.134	.037	.205
Child < 6 years old	−.137	−.091	.119	.023
Child 6–18 years old	−.123	−.111	.109	.046

the zero-order correlations and path coefficients differ in magnitude or direction, indicating the importance of controlling for other variables in isolating independent effects.

Home Owners: Short-Term Mobility Expectations

Housing and neighborhood satisfaction are significant determinants of short-term moving expectations for home owners (Fig. 1). As expected, both are negatively related to mobility expectations: the likelihood of moving declines with rising levels of housing and neighborhood satisfaction. The path coefficients indicate that housing satisfaction exerts a somewhat stronger influence on moving expectations than neighborhood satisfaction. This is consistent with reason-for-moving studies that have found housing adjustment to be more important than neighborhood dissatisfaction (Clark & Onaka 1983).

It is important that the two satisfaction measures mediate the effects of structural variables on mobility expectations, except for age. The likelihood of moving in the near future declines
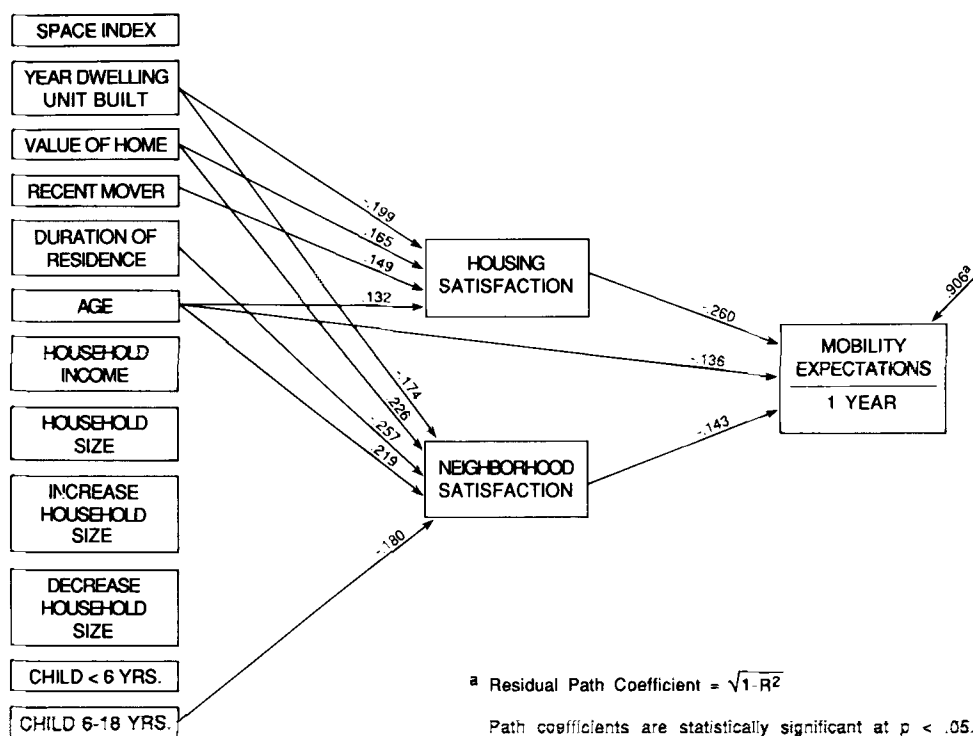
Figure 1.   Path Model of Short-Term Mobility Expectations: Home Owners (N = 341)

with age, even after controlling for levels of housing and neighborhood satisfaction and other structural variables.

Housing satisfaction is related to four structural variables: age of housing, value of housing, recent mobility status, and age of respondent. Not surprisingly, home owners in more highly valued housing, recent movers, and older respondents are more satisfied with their homes than owners in units of lesser value, those who have not moved recently, and younger persons. We believe the one counterintuitive finding, that owners in older housing have higher levels of satisfaction than those in newer homes, stems from the youthful, sprawling nature of Phoenix. Housing built before the mid-1960s is considered old by Phoenix standards. Phoenicians who express satisfaction with older housing are reacting to dwelling units considered young in most cities. Dissatisfaction associated with very young housing in Phoenix may be partly an outgrowth of its location. New housing is at the periphery of the Phoenix metropolis, inaccessible to some urban services and amenities, and distant from employment centers.

Dissatisfaction with newness carries over to the neighborhood as well. The year the dwelling unit was built is negatively associated with neighborhood satisfaction, indicating that respondents express greater satisfaction with older neighborhoods than newer ones. Older neighborhoods in Phoenix are more established in a community sense and are in better locations relative to jobs and services. In contrast, new neighborhoods contain fluid populations with weak community ties.

Four additional structural variables condition neighborhood satisfaction: value of housing, duration of residence, age of respondent, and the presence of school-aged children. Owners in high-value homes tend to report greater levels of neighborhood satisfaction than those in lower-value homes. This is not surprising given that the value of housing is commonly indicative of neighborhood quality.

That duration of residence is negatively related to neighborhood satisfaction runs counter to the argument that satisfaction increases with time, owing to the accumulation of social and psychological ties. It is consistent, however, with the argument that residential stress increases over time as households grow out of sync with their neighborhood and residential setting—the cumulative stress hypothesis (Huff & Clark 1978).

Age positively influences both housing and neighborhood satisfaction among home owners, indicating that the well-documented decline in mobility with age is partly attributable to the attainment of higher levels of residential satisfaction with progression through the life cycle. The indirect effects of age on mobility expectations through housing satisfaction $(-.048)$ and neighborhood satisfaction $(-.029)$ are weaker than the direct effect of age $(-.136)$.[3]

The negative association between the presence of a school-aged child and neighborhood satisfaction is also life-cycle related. Home owners with school-aged children evaluate the neighborhood more critically as children place greater demands on neighborhood services such as schools and parks and also increase sensitivity to aspects of neighborhood quality such as traffic, noise, and safety.

Overall, short-term results for home owners support Speare's contention that residential satisfaction is a key intervening variable in the mobility process. Background characteristics, with the exception of age, shape mobility expectations indirectly through their influence on housing and neighborhood satisfaction.

Home Owners: Long-Term Mobility Expectations

Neighborhood satisfaction drops out of the long-term model, and housing satisfaction has a smaller path coefficient, indicating an attenuated influence over the 5-year period (Fig. 2). This supports our hypothesis that current levels of satisfaction are weaker predictors of long-term than of short-term mobility expectations.

Age exerts a much stronger direct effect on long-term mobility expectations than on short-term expectations. Age is the most important predictor of 5-year moving expectations among home owners. This supports the hypothesis that position in the life cycle is a dominant influence when examining mobility expectations over longer time frames. In addition to a strong direct effect $(-.314)$, age exerts an indirect effect on long-term mobility expectations through housing satisfaction $(-.028)$.

Last, a decline in household size dampens 5-year moving expectations among home owners. A variety of life-course events underlie these declines: children leaving the parental home, divorce and separation, changes in nontraditional families, individuals splitting off from nonfamily households, and death of a household member. One interpretation is that the increase in space per person relieves pressure on the household, thus reducing the likelihood of moving.

Renters: Short-Term Mobility Expectations

In contrast to the short-term home-owner model, there are many direct structural relationships in the short-term model for renters (Fig. 3). Five structural variables directly affect moving expectations over and above the influence of housing and neighborhood satisfaction.

Two housing attributes have direct effects on short-run moving expectations among renters: the housing space index and age of the dwelling unit. Renters with more spacious accommodations are less likely to move than renters living under more crowded conditions, and renters in more recently built housing are less likely to move than those in older housing.

Three sociodemographic variables are significant predictors of moving expectations: household size, household income, and a school-aged child in the household. Household size has a particularly large influence, with renters in large households much less likely to
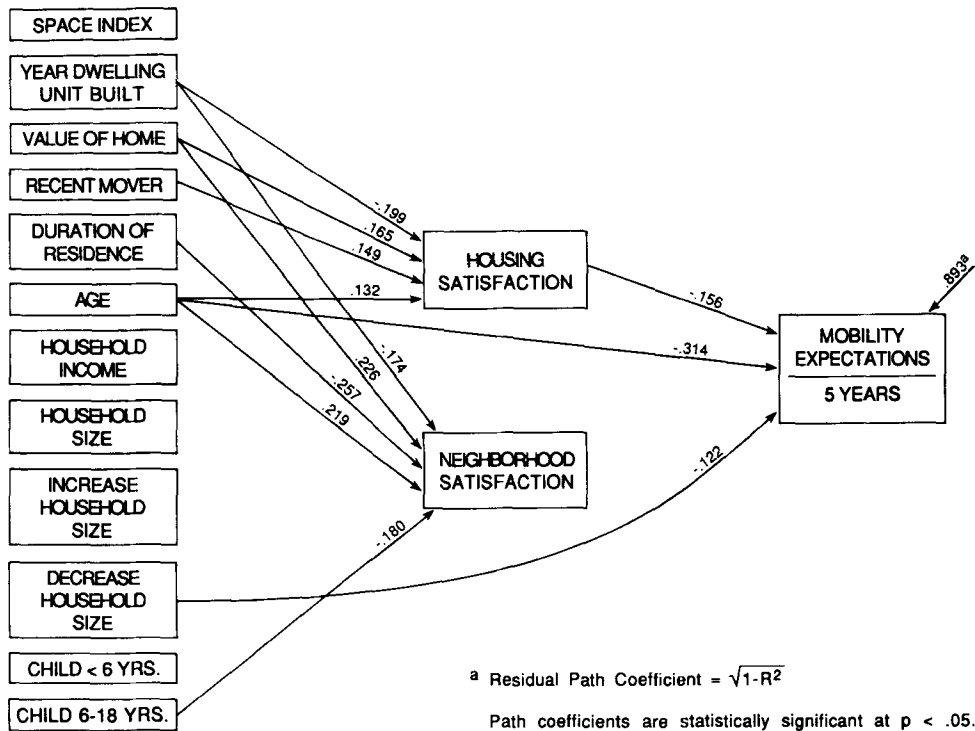
Figure 2. Path Model of Long-Term Mobility Expectations: Home Owners (N = 341)

move than those in small households. This relationship is partly attributable to a close association between household size and type: family households, which tend to be large, are less mobile than singles and nonfamily households. Income and the presence of a school-aged child are both positively associated with moving prospects. Income provides the financial means to move. The presence of a school-aged child, usually thought to dampen mobility propensity, heightens mobility expectations among renters.

Renters with one or more school-aged children are also less satisfied with their housing than those without school-aged children. Renters with school-aged children are likely to hold strong desires for ownership and thus express lower levels of satisfaction with their current housing.

The level of housing satisfaction among renters is also related to monthly rent and recent mobility status. As expected, renters who pay higher rents are more satisfied with their housing than those who pay lower rents. Renters who moved in the past 2 years are less satisfied with their housing than renters who did not move. This runs counter to a housing adjustment view of mobility, which holds that people move to attain better or more suitable housing. Our findings indicate that mobility for most renters is more strongly related to life-cycle transitions than to improvements in housing. This is consistent with Kendig's (1984) findings for renters in Adelaide.

Level of neighborhood satisfaction among renters is related to monthly rent, age of housing, and change in household size. Neighborhood satisfaction is, as expected, positively associated with monthly rent. That renters are more satisfied with older than newer neighborhoods is consistent with our findings for home owners. In addition to the explanations offered earlier, we believe that older rental housing in Phoenix is more desirable because it is small in scale (single-family homes, duplexes, bungalow courts, and other small units)
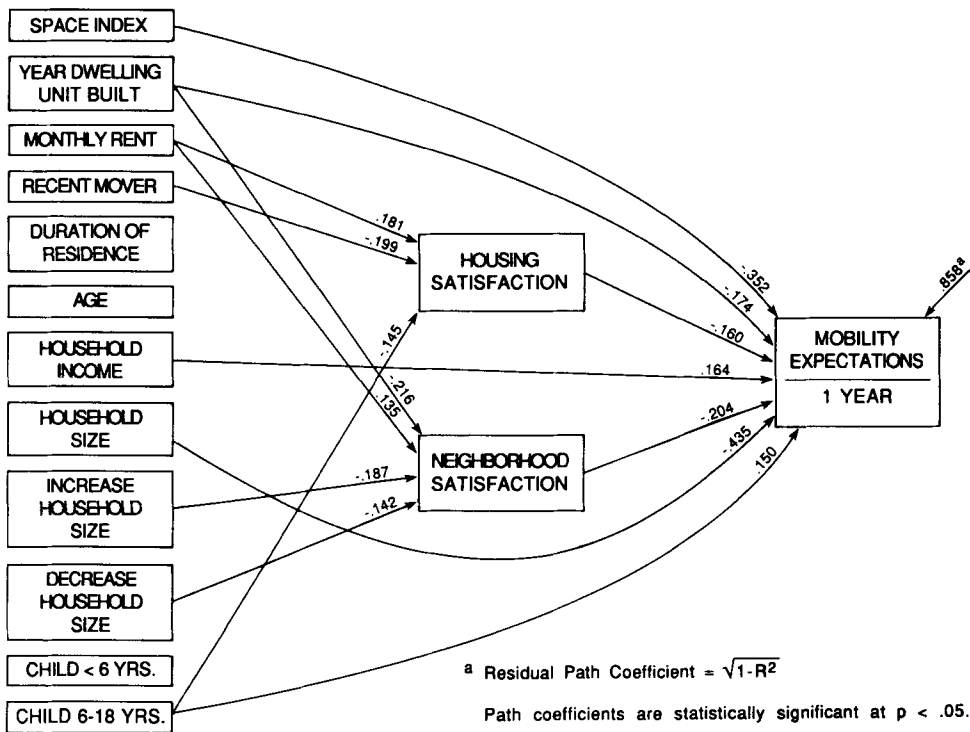
Figure 3. Path Model of Short-Term Mobility Expectations: Renters (*N* = 208)

and is integrated into single-family neighborhoods. Newer rental housing, on the other hand, is located primarily in large complexes in suburban apartment districts. These large apartment districts are, by definition, the antithesis of neighborhoods.

Change in household size in the last 2 years—an increase or decrease—dampens neighborhood satisfaction among renters. Changes in household size come about through the addition or subtraction of children, other family members, or roommates. These transitions place households out of sync with their housing or neighborhood, as when, for example, a couple living in a large apartment complex has a child or when children leave the parental home.

Renters: Long-Term Mobility Expectations

As hypothesized, long-term moving expectations among renters are unrelated to current levels of housing and neighborhood satisfaction (Fig. 4). Five structural variables are significant predictors of long-term moving expectations: age, duration of residence, young children, school-aged children, and monthly rent. Only one of these variables is significant in the 1-year model for renters (school-aged children), demonstrating the time-specific nature of mobility determinants among renters.

Age and duration of residence dampen long-term moving expectations, whereas children and higher rents enhance 5-year moving expectations. These results indicate that subgroups of renters exhibit varying mobility propensities. For example, young renters with weak residential ties display high moving expectations, whereas older renters are much more stable. High expectations for moving in 5 years among renters with children is probably driven by their desire for home ownership. Last, renters who pay high monthly rents possess the financial resources to realize a move in 5 years.
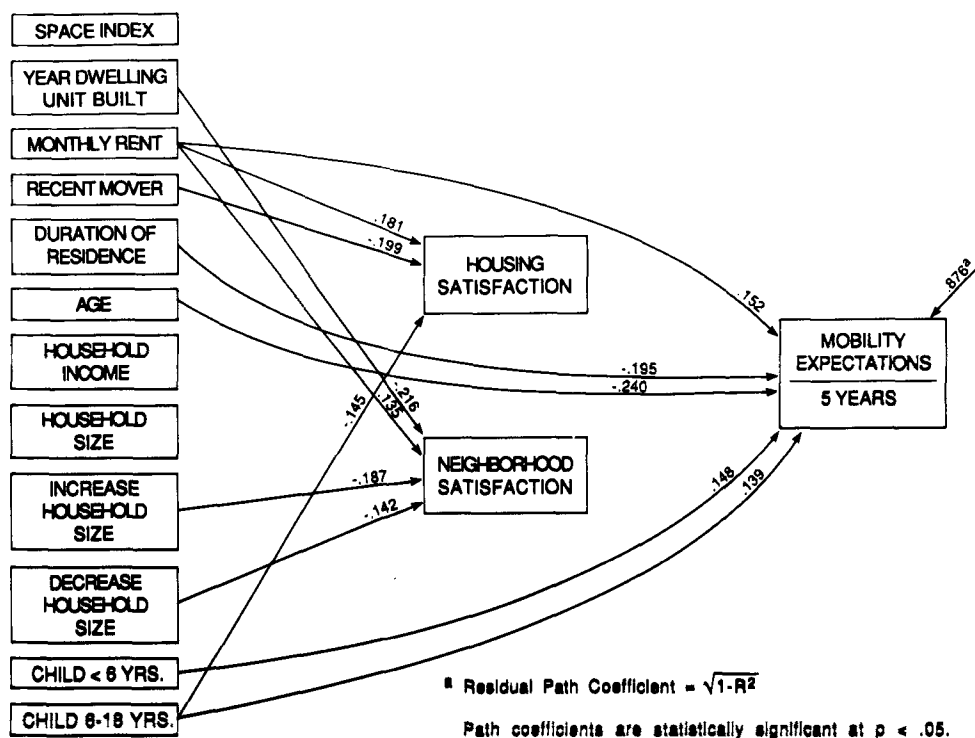
Figure 4.   Path Model of Long-Term Mobility Expectations: Renters ($N = 208$)

Conclusions

The purpose of this article was to unravel the role of residential satisfaction and structural factors in the mobility process. We draw three conclusions regarding this debate. First, the importance of residential satisfaction as an intervening variable between structural characteristics and mobility expectations is time dependent. Housing and neighborhood satisfaction are significant antecedents of short-term moving expectations but are only weakly associated with long-term mobility expectations. Structural variables, particularly those that tap life-cycle influences and residential ties, directly determine long-term moving expectations.

Second, the determinants of mobility expectations differ in significant ways for home owners and renters. Speare's (1974) argument that residential satisfaction serves as an intervening variable in mobility is generally supported for home owners, especially in the short term, but is not supported for renters. Structural factors play a direct role in shaping mobility expectations for renters. Michelson's (1977) distinction between short-run residential satisfaction and longer-term housing aspirations is clearly applicable to renters. Failing to model home owners and renters separately confounds relationships among structural variables, residential satisfaction, and mobility expectations.

Third, the strong effects of age in three of the four path models suggests that future studies might disaggregate the sample by age and housing tenure. Our sample size precludes further disaggregation of the path models, but we can disaggregate respondents by age and housing tenure and examine their short- and long-term mobility expectations (Table 5). Among young and middle-aged respondents, housing tenure is the dominant determinant of short-term mobility expectations. Controlling for age, renters are much more likely to expect to move. Among older persons, however, owners and renters show similarly low expectations of moving.

Table 5. Mobility Expectations for Groups Defined by Age and Housing Tenure

Age/housing tenure group	Mobility expectations, mean values		N
	1 year	5 years	
1. Young owners	1.81	3.53	60
2. Young renters	3.06	4.18	143
3. Middle-aged owners	1.64	2.62	145
4. Middle-aged renters	3.28	4.07	47
5. Older owners	1.44	2.19	105
6. Older renters	1.78	2.19	17
F ratio	29.32*	30.81*	
Correlation ratio	.78	.77	
Significant difference (p < .05) between groups	1 and 2	1 and 2	
	1 and 4	1 and 3	
	2 and 3	1 and 5	
	2 and 5	1 and 6	
	2 and 6	2 and 3	
	3 and 4	2 and 5	
	4 and 5	2 and 6	
	4 and 6	3 and 4	
		3 and 5	
		4 and 5	
		4 and 6	

Notes: Expectations of moving were measured on a 5-point scale: 1 = very unlikely; 2 = somewhat unlikely; 3 = don't know; 4 = somewhat likely; 5 = very likely. Young = 18–34 years old; middle-aged = 35–59 years old; older = 60 years and over. Correlation ratio = Between SS/Total SS. All possible pairs of group means were compared by using Scheffe's range test. Pairs indicated are group means that differ at $p < .05$.
*$p < .001$.

When we examine these relationships over the 5-year period, we see that age emerges as an important determinant of mobility expectations. Among owners, moving expectations decline systematically with age. For renters, however, long-term moving expectations remain high through middle-age, and only decline among persons 60 years of age and older. Older renters are more stable than even young and middle-aged home owners, suggesting that they tend to view their current residence as final. A variety of factors, such as financial circumstances, housing preferences, housing availability, and health considerations, underlie the residential stability of older renters.

Our findings also highlight the need for longitudinal studies that incorporate repeated measures of structural variables, residential satisfaction, mobility expectations, and behavior. What structural variables and life-course events are instrumental in leading to a change in housing and neighborhood satisfaction? To what degree do mobility expectations over varying time frames predict behavior? What factors block expected moves and facilitate unexpected relocations? What is the role of in situ adjustment as an alternative to mobility? Sell and De Jong's (1983) 3-year study in Pennsylvania illustrates the potential of longitudinal analyses in mobility. Coming to grips with the complexity and dynamics of the mobility process ultimately requires tracking individuals over the life course.

Notes

[1] We also estimated short-term and long-term mobility expectation models for the total sample. These path models are not included here for the sake of brevity and because our focus is on differences

in the mobility process between owners and renters. Results for the total sample support the hypothesis that housing and neighborhood satisfaction are stronger predictors of 1-year than 5-year moving expectations. Structural variables are important determinants for the total sample, especially housing tenure, which exerts the strongest direct effect on 1-year mobility expectations and the second greatest effect (after age) on 5-year expectations.

[2] Our results show that the measures of housing and neighborhood satisfaction tap unique aspects of residential evaluation. There is a moderate relationship between housing satisfaction and neighborhood satisfaction among both home owners ($r = .565$) and renters ($r = .452$). Tolerance values for the satisfaction measures in the path analyses indicate that each makes an independent contribution.

[3] The total effect of a structural variable such as age can be divided into direct and indirect components (Duncan 1975). Speare, Kobrin, and Kingkade (1982), for example, decomposed direct and indirect effects of background variables in their path analysis of interstate migration. The direct effect is indicated by the path coefficient from the structural variable to the dependent variable. The indirect effect of a structural variable is equal to its zero-order correlation with the intervening variable multiplied by the path coefficient from the intervening to the dependent variable.

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