RACIAL DIFFERENTIALS IN THE DETERMINANTS OF PROSPECTIVE MOBILITY

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Because traditional definitions of migration included only intercommunity spatial movement, generalizations on geographic mobility are applicable primarily to the white middle-class families predominant in these long-distance moves (Lansing and Mueller, 1968: 263). Furthermore, most residential mobility studies have centered on the factors associated with local moves for white families. This emphasis on whites has been due in part to the nature of sample areas selected in those studies. Peter Rossi's Potential Mobility Index was based on four white census tracts selected to represent upper and lower SES levels and high and low mobility areas in Philadelphia (Rossi, 1955). Wendell Bell's analysis of familism, consumerism, and career mobility drew from families in two Chicago suburbs (Bell, 1958). Leslie and Richardson's life-cycle determinants were based on a sample from a LaFayette white middle-class housing development (Leslie and Richardson, 1961). Despite the fact that the frequency of Negro intracommunity moves exceeds that of whites and that local moves account for 80 to 85 per cent of residential exchanges in the United States, little attention has been given to the relevance of existing theoretical mobility explanations for Negro moves.[1]

Implicit in most general discussions of geographic mobility is the idea that similar causal factors operate in the decision to move for Negroes as for whites but that racial mobility differentials are a consequence of the Negro's less advantaged socioeconomic position and the "hedonistic" values associated with inadequate short-run decision-making which Beshers imputes to this social strata (Beshers, 1967: 135). If this is true, it is expected that the pattern of mobility determinants for Negro families would be similar, if not identical, to that for whites after the effects of SES variables are controlled. Such is the speculation which directed the primary purpose of this paper to test whether a theoretical prospective mobility model synthesizing the findings of earlier mobility research will apply to moving propensity for urban Negro families. More specifically, the task outlined is to discern significant differences in the patterns of prospective mobility determinants among white and Negro families when SES levels are held constant.

The Prospective Mobility Model

Previous studies of residential mobility have shown the family's propensity to move to be a function of previous moving experience, duration of residence, housing tenure, relative dissatisfaction with dwelling unit and neighborhood, size of family - particularly in the early stages of the family life-cycle -- and the age and career mobility of the household head.[2] Drawing on the findings of these studies, the theoretical prospective mobility model included four sets of independent variables: retrospective mobility, i.e., characteristics of the last move; dissatisfaction with present dwelling unit and neighborhood; family status variables; and dwelling status variables (Figure 1). The dependent variable, prospective mobility, conceptualized as the propensity to move, is indicated by the prefer-

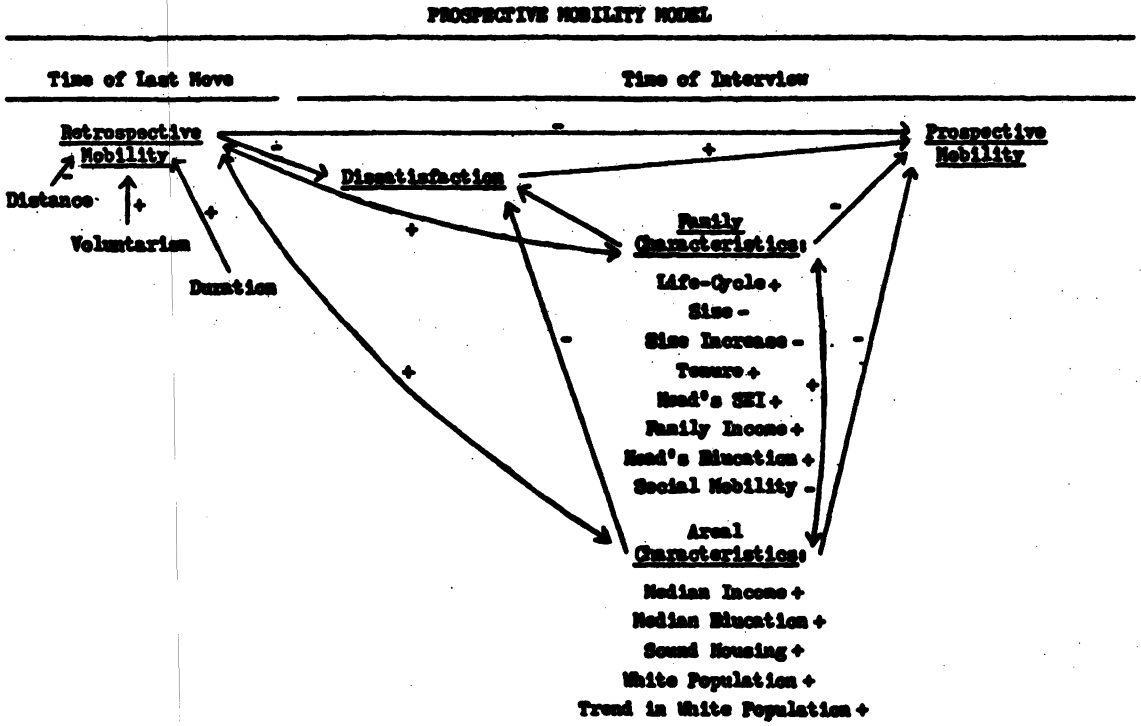

Figure 1. Hypothesized Relationships For Retrospective and Prospective Mobility With Dissatisfaction With Present Location, Family and Areal Characteristics.

ences and/or intentions to move in the near future. Consideration of exchange of dwelling unit, actual search for alternative locations, the desire if given the choice, and actual plans to move are all dimensions of this moving propensity.

The structure of relationships outlined in this model proposes first that prospective mobility depends upon retrospective mobility. Voluntarism, the degree of control the family had in the last decision to make the last move and in the selection of the present dwelling unit, will decrease the degree of moving propensity (Rossi, 1955). The distance over which the family traveled in the last move was expected to constrain the amount and accuracy of knowledge of destination opportunities, housing types, and neighborhood qualities and hence increase prospective mobility (Westefeld, 1947; Ladinsky, 1967). Duration of residence is expected to reduce moving propensity as in Land's axiom of cummulative inertia, "The probability of an individual continuing in a state -- residential area -- increases with increasing length of previous residence" (Land, 1969 : 133). Second, prospective mobility is expected to depend upon the degree of dissatisfaction with present location, the variable hypothesized to intervene in the relationships of retrospective mobility, family and dwelling status variables to prospective mobility. Third, characteristics of the family unit, such as stage in family life-cycle, size, income, education and occupation of the household head, tenure and social mobility commitment were expected to determine prospective mobility both indirectly through the degree of dissatisfaction, and directly or independent of the degree of dissatisfaction. Finally, the qualities of the urban environment were expected to influence the degree of moving propensity, again, indirectly through dissatisfaction, and directly despite the degree of dissatisfaction of the family unit.

Methodology

A national survey of metropolitan households (N=1476) in 1966 provided the data for testing the prospective mobility model.[3] Interviews centered on objective and attitudinal dimmensions of the present and previous dwelling units and neighborhoods, on consideration, choice and plans to move in the future, and characteristics of the members of the household unit. The responses of a subsample of recent urban movers (237 white and 117 Negro households in Central City Tracts who had exchanged dwelling units since 1960 and whose head was a full-time worker are analyzed in the following sections to provide the comparison of white and Negro prospective mobility determinants. Because the original question posed for research required an examination of net relationships, path analysis was employed to permit examination of the nature of relationships between any two variables while controlling simulaneously for the effects of all other variables in the model.

Racial Differentials in Prospective Mobility

The responses of recent movers into the urban segments of the metropolitan areas to the four questions indicating moving propensity showed significant racial differentials (Table 1).

Table 1. Per Cent Distribution of Urban Respondents on Mobility Criteria for White, Negro, and All.

Mobility Criteria	White	Negro	All
(N)	(237)	(117)	(354)
Have considered moving again:			
No	63.6	51.4	59.5
Yes	36.4	48.6	40.5
. . . and looked for another place:			
No	15.4	20.6	17.1
Yes	21.0	28.0	23.4
If had choice, would move again:			
No	53.2	35.0	47.2
Don't Know	2.1	2.6	2.3
Yes	44.7	62.4	60.6
Actually plan to move in next year:			
No	67.5	57.3	64.1
Don't Know	8.0	4.3	6.8
Yes	24.5	38.5	29.1

Almost half (48.6%) of the Negro respondents, as compared to a third (36.4%) of the whites had considered moving again. Furthermore, more Negroes had actually searched for alternative housing (Negro, 28.0%; white 21.0%). The restlessness of the urban Negro is apparent on the last two question as well. Almost two-thirds said they would move if they had their choice. Not quite half of the whites expressed this desire. As to actual plans to move -- the most reliable indicator of moving behavior -- thirty-eight per cent, almost double the national moving rate, said they expected to relocate in the year following interview (Van Arsdol, Sabagh, Butler, 1968). In contrast about one-fourth (24.5%) of the whites planned to move. The Negro-white differential in moving propensity over all criteria is clearly apparent in the comparison of distributions of respondents on the summary prospective mobility score (Table 2).

Table 2. Per Cent Distribution of Urban Respondents on Prospective Mobility Score for White, Negro, and All.

Prospective Mobility Score	White	Negro	All
(N)	(237)	(117)	(354)
0	42.2	30.8	38.3
1 - 12	28.2	30.8	38.3
13 - 24	18.9	23.0	20.5
25 - 36	10.5	19.7	13.5
(Mean)	(9.17)	(13.15)	(10.49)
(Standard Deviation)	(11.04)	(13.22)	(12.16)
(Median)	(3.40)	(6.62)	(3.73)

Negro and White Prospective Mobility Models

Submission of the data gathered from these metropolitan households to path analysis permitted the empirical test of the theoretical prospective mobility model deduced from previous studies of white residential mobility.[4] As expected, among urban white families, the pattern of relationships followed rather closely the hypothesized model (Figure 2). In terms of net relation ships, the propensity to move again was determined by the degree of dissatisfaction with the present dwelling unit and neighborhood. Dissatisfaction was highest in areas of lower family incomes with larger shares of non-white population for households in the early stages of family life-cycle who were committed to upward social mobility. Socioeconomic variables influenced this scheme only to the degree that they inhibited the acquisition of ownership of the dwelling unit.

The findings above are congruent with those of previous studies of white mobility. Moving propensity for white families was primarily due to the dissatisfaction with present dwelling unit and urban enviroment, and despite the relative level of satisfaction cr dissatisfaction, their desire to own a home of their own. Prospective mobility appears to be a function of upward career mobility for those families in the expansion stages when they are expecting to achieve new dwelling status to match anticipated higher social status.

The empirical prospective mobility model for urban Negro families shows several points of contrast to that for whites (Figure 3). First, only one of the three paths of direct influence to prospective mobility, dissatisfaction with present location stemmed from the family unit itself. The other paths were from areal characteristics such that prospective mobility was more probable from census tracts with higher education levels and from those which showed the least invasion of non-whites between 1950 and 1960.

Retrospective measures showed fewer but clearer indirect paths through dissatisfaction and family characteristics for Negro families than for white families. Distance influenced only through its correlation with voluntarism and so directly through greater dissatisfaction to greater prospective mobility. Voluntarism linked directly to dissatisfaction and on to prospective mobility. In addition, it was correlated with tenure and so co-varied with dissatisfaction and prospective mobility in the same direction. Duration had a direct path to dissatisfaction and an indirect one as well through size of family. For this subsample, the relationship of duration is a clear negation of the axiom of cummulative inertia. The longer a Negro family had lived at location, the more dissatisfied they tended to be, and hence the more inclined to move again.

The pattern of influence of family characteristics on dissatisfaction -- both direct and indirect -- was identical to that for urban white families. Attention should be called to the inconsistent roles of income, however. Note that one path through its correlation with tenure tended to decrease the level of dissatisfaction and so moving propensity as well, but its second path through areal educational level actually increased the probability of prospective mobility.

Unlike the white model which indicated prospective mobility is associated with anticipated social mobility, the Negro model suggests that anticipated residential mobility is associated with achieved social mobility. When the effects

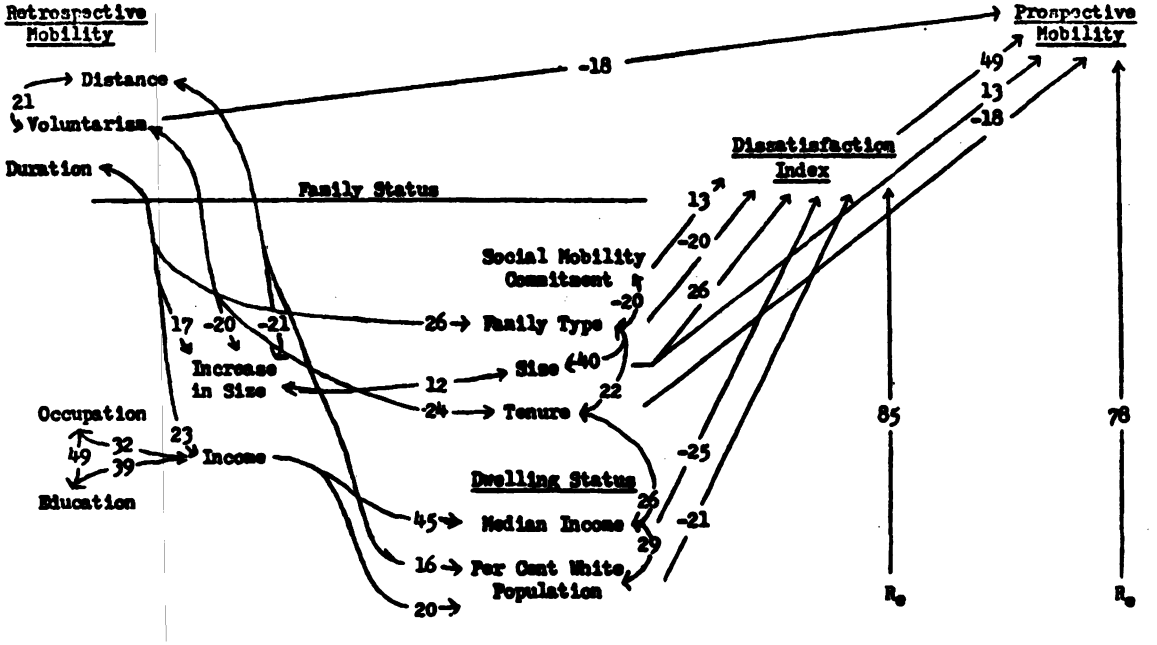

Figure 2. Empirical Model of Retrospective Mobility, Family and Dwelling Status, and Dissatisfaction Determinants of Prospective Mobility for Urban White Families

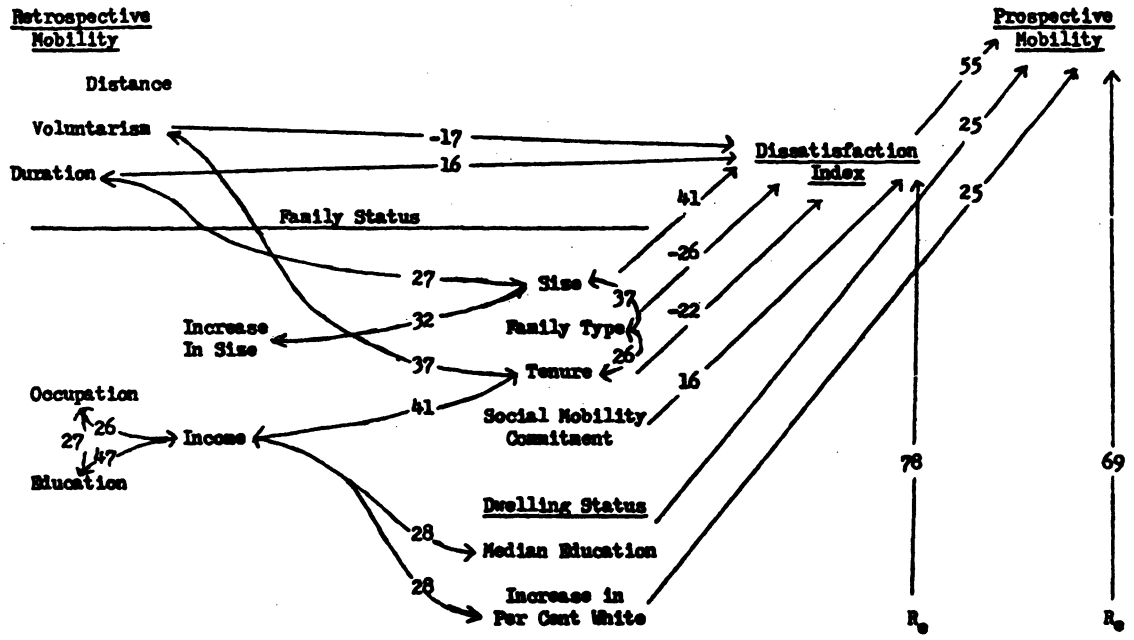

Figure 3. Empirical Model of Retrospective Mobility, Family and Dwelling Status, and Dissatisfaction Determinants of Prospective Mobility for Urban Negro Families

of retrospective mobility, dissatisfaction and family characteristics are held constant, it is the Negroes who have already achieved dwelling status in the more favorable urban enviroments in which Negroes reside that show the higher degree of propensity to move again. Therefore, it is inferred from this analysis that prospective mobility for Negroes is more often a consequence than an antecedent of upward social mobility. Further, it is speculated that the lag in match of dwelling status with other social status dimensions -- occupation , education, and income -- for the socially mobile Negro family is due to the constriction of urban housing opportunities from discriminatory practices such as restrictive housing covenants.

Conclusions

The hypothesis that racial differentials in prospective mobility determinants would be minimized when socioeconomic levels were controlled found little support in this analysis. Two points of contrast should be emphasized in comparing mobility determinants for white and Negro families living in the urban area. First, while like white families, dissatisfaction with present location is related to characteristics of the family and less voluntarism in the last move, unlike white families, dissatisfaction for Negro families stems from longer duration of residence but not directly from the attributes of the area in which they live. Second, for Negro families the influence of areal characteristics is directly to prospective mobility where it seems the more desirable the tract -- in terms of societal evaluations -- the greater the probability of subsequent moves. This is in contrast to white families where the pattern indicates the less desirable the tract, the greater the family's dissatisfaction and hence propensity to move again.

It is argued here that these differences were due to the constraints of discriminatory housing practices. Where families were free to move from area to area in order to afford a fit between the desired and their actual dwelling status, the absence of fit was expressed in dissatisfaction among families who reside in the less desirable census tracts. However, when available alternatives were restricted by color considerations, as in the case of Negro families here, after SES characteristics and the degree of dissatisfaction had been controlled, higher degrees of moving propensity could be expected in areas of greater relative rather than greater absolute deprivation. In this study Negro families with greater relative deprivation were those with higher socioeconomic levels who had invaded some of the relatively more desirable central city tracts.

This multivariate analysis of white and Negro moving propensity indicated that racial differentials in mobility patterns cannot be adequately explained solely in terms of the more advantageous position of white middle-class families to utilize occupational and housing opportunity structures available. Furthermore, the implications of the white-Negro contrasts are that decision-making for Negro families is less a matter of "inadequacy" and more a matter of paucity of opportunities to select freely among housing alternatives suitable to their family needs.

Until the constraints of discriminatory housing structures are relaxed, Negro families can be expected to continue their pattern of shelter opportunism.

FOOTNOTES

[1] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census. 1966. Current Population Reports, Series P-20, Number 156, Washington, D.C.

[2] See Kenkel, 1965; Beshers, 1967; Westefeld, 1947; Ladinsky, 1967; Butler, Chapin, et.al., 1968; Land, 1969; Mangalam, 1968; Rossi, 1955; Burchinal and Bauder, 1965; Butler, Sabagh, and Van Arsdol, 1964; Leslie and Richardson, 1961.

[3] In 1965, the Center for Urban and Regional Studies, University of North Carolina, undertook a study of moving behavior and residential choice in metropolitan areas under the auspices of the National Cooperative Highway Research Program of the Highway Research Board. An extensive interview was conducted in 1966 by NORC on a standard multi-stage area probability sample to the "block or segment" level. The universe sampled was composed of all non-institutional metropolitan population of the U.S., 21 years or older. The Primary Sampling Units were 1960 Standard Metropolitan Areas; the Sampling Units, localities or Census Tracts, drawn at random from listings stratified for size and urban type.

[4] Operational measures for the concepts included in the model are as follows: Prospective Mobility Index: score summing responses on consideration, search, choice and plans to move; Dissatisfaction Index: score summing responses on dissatisfactions with number of rooms, number of bedrooms, size of rooms, inside appearance, outside appearance, age of the dwelling unit, and with the kind of people, cleanliness, condition of houses and apartments, and reputation of the neighborhood; Distance of last move; score based on seven "lengths" ranging from moves within same neighborhood to migrations from another state; Voluntarism: sum of scores on a twenty-five point scale based on reasons for last move ordered according to the degree of push from previous origin to degree of pull from destination; Duration of Residence: number of years of residence at present dwelling unit; Stage in Family Life-Cycle: ten categories combining seven family types with age of household head; Size of family: number living in the household; Increase in family size -- difference (if positive) between present number and number in household at time of last move; Tenure: four categories: own, buying, renting, other; Education and Income: U.S. Census classification for household head; Occupation: Duncan's SEI; Social Mobility Commitment: score summing three-point scale for last four of Westoff's items; Dwelling Status: five Characteristics of Census Tracts in sample as obtained from 1960 Census.

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