

FEELINGS ABOUT MOVING IN AN INNER CITY COMMUNITY*

David P. Varady**

Anti-poverty programs (such as job training) must be designed so that the intended client groups are actually served. One factor contributing to the difficulty of serving low income individuals is their continual "drifting" between locations inside the ghetto. As a result of these frequent moves, some individuals are not at any one location long enough to be provided with the benefits of specific programs. Others may be enrolled in a program and then drop out after they move.

Some researchers have argued that social welfare programs will have very little potential for success in inner city communities until these areas are stabilized (e.g., the turnover rate substantially reduced [9]). However, at the present time it is not known what types of policies (e.g., housing, income transfers) will be most successful in fostering residential stability. In order to promote the goal of stabilization, additional research is needed on the factors affecting the moving decisions of these inner city residents. In order to shed some light on this problem this article focuses on the importance of residents' perceptions of inadequate housing conditions, as compared to certain personal characteristics (including indicators of life cycle position) in explaining intra-metropolitan moving plans.²

Relationship to Previous Research

There is a significant body of research on intra-metropolitan residential

*The author wishes to acknowledge the helpful comments of Kenneth E. Corey, Graduate Department of Community Planning, University of Cincinnati, Samuel B. Sherrill, Institute for Metropolitan Studies, University of Cincinnati, and the statistical assistance provided by Al Tuchfarber, Behavioral Sciences Laboratory, University of Cincinnati.

**Graduate Department of Community Planning, University of Cincinnati.

¹A recent newspaper article [7] has pointed out the detrimental effects of rapid residential mobility in inner city areas. Big city school systems have been hindered in their efforts to raise low reading scores by the mobility of so many of the pupil's families.

²This report examines the determinants of moving plans, rather than moving behavior. It would have been desirable to conduct a longitudinal residential mobility analysis (testing the relationship between plans and actual behavior but this was beyond the scope of the original study. Despite the shortcomings of the intentions to move variable, it can be of considerable value in mobility research (see for example [5]).

mobility (what types of households move and why, see for example [2, 3, 8, 10, 11, 13]). Six broad factors have been hypothesized to influence the choice of when to move: (1) life cycle position, (2) life style, (3) social mobility and mobility aspirations, (4) social and locality participation, (5) the home and residential environment, and (6) available financial resources. Researchers have generally found that for the metropolitan area as a whole, the most important determinant of voluntary moves is housing needs generated by life cycle changes [13, p. 636]. For example, the child bearing stage of the life cycle is one of rapid family growth, and is often accompanied by a high propensity to move into more spacious quarters.

The above conclusion, stressing the importance of the life cycle factor, is likely to be more appropriate for suburban (or suburban type) areas than inner city communities. Firstly there is some evidence [6, pp. 452-4] that forced moves -- resulting from eviction, dwelling unit destruction, land taken by eminent domain, etc. -- occur more frequently in inner city than suburban areas. Secondly, it would seem likely that perceptions of inadequate housing conditions would play a more important role in explaining voluntary moves in inner city areas (than has been shown in suburban areas) because of the higher concentration of substandard housing found at inner city locations.

Some researchers have previously hypothesized that substandard housing conditions are important in explaining inner city mobility (see for example Moore, et. al. [9] -- but they have not explicitly dealt with the significance of these conditions in relation to the life cycle factor. Some limited evidence of the importance of substandard housing conditions has been provided by research showing blacks to have higher intra-metropolitan mobility rates than whites [1, 6, 14]. These differences have been attributed to the concentration of blacks in deteriorating inner city areas. Nevertheless, there has been little research employing multivariate techniques directly testing for the relative importance of perceived housing conditions as compared to the life cycle position in explaining the moving plans of inner city residents.

Methodology, Definitions of Variables, and Hypothesized Relationships

The analysis in this report is based on interviews with 509 residents of Cincinnati's Model Neighborhood conducted in the summer and fall of 1971.³ The interviews were originally conducted as part of a larger study seeking to measure the overall impact of Cincinnati's Model Neighborhood Program.

³The Cincinnati Model Neighborhood encompassed three adjacent communities in the inner part of the city: The West End, Over-the-Rhine, and Mt. Auburn. The majority (approximately 70 percent) of the residents of the Model Neighborhood are black but there is a significant white Appalachian minority -- particularly in the Over-the-Rhine section. A more detailed description of the study methodology is provided by Sherrill [12].

A multi-stage sampling procedure (stratified by race) was used to select a probability sample of housing units in the area. One respondent was objectively selected for interviewing from each occupied housing unit.⁴ In order to explain variations in moving plans among Model Neighborhood residents, regressions were run using intra-metropolitan moving plans as the dependent variable and the variables described in the next section as the independent variables.

The dependent Variable: Intention to move. It was not possible as part of the original study to obtain data on actual mobility. Instead a question was included on moving intentions: "Are you planning to move in the next month, next six months, or next year, (or by implication not at all)?"⁵ The next question asked the respondent whether he planned to move someplace else in the neighborhood, someplace else in the Cincinnati area, or outside the Cincinnati area. Those respondents who indicated that they planned to move outside the Cincinnati metropolitan area are excluded from the analysis in this paper. It is likely that moving intentions do not correlate exactly with actual moving behavior. Nevertheless this type of question has been shown to be effective in distinguishing movers from nonmovers [3, p. 142].

Life cycle position. The age of the respondent and the age of the oldest child were used as indicators of life cycle position. Previous research has indicated that "for typical families, mobility propensity is highest during the family formation, child bearing and child launching stages (of the life cycle) and least marked during the child rearing period --especially when the child is in school." [11, p. 92]. Other factors being equal, one might assume that young adults and those whose oldest child is below school age, would be most likely to be in the mobility prone stages of the life cycle -- and as a result, have the most rapid moving plans.

Life style. Sociologists have frequently used tenant status as an indicator of the individual's life style. Home ownership reflects a commitment to a life style centered around the home and the family and would be expected to be positively associated with the intention to remain.

The great majority of the Model Neighborhood residents rent (rather than own) their dwellings. As a result current renters were asked whether they would be interested in purchasing a home in the immediate neighborhood. It was anticipated that the interest in purchasing a home in the area would be positively correlated with the intention to remain.

⁴For a detailed explanation of this method, see [4, Section C]. The response rate in this survey (78 percent) compares relatively favorably with the rates in the surveys conducted in nine other Model Neighborhoods by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan.

⁵It would have been desirable to distinguish between those who anticipated that they would move voluntarily and those who expected to be forced to move. Unfortunately, the original interview schedule did not include a question to enable this distinction to be made.

Social and locality participation. It was anticipated that those who participated most actively in the neighborhood would develop the strongest ties to the location and would be the least likely to move. The interview schedule included a number of behavioral indicators of neighborhood participation -- the number of friends who lived in the neighborhood, the number of times per week the respondent spoke with neighbors, whether the respondent read the community newspaper and whether he perceived that he contributed to neighborhood decision making. The schedule also included a more indirect measure of participation -- the number of years the respondent had lived at his current address. Sabagh et. al. [11, p. 93] has suggested that long term residents are more likely to interact frequently with neighbors and as a result have stronger ties to the location.

Social mobility and mobility aspirations. Educational level and current employment status were utilized to indicate expectations of future occupational mobility. Researchers have suggested that moves often take place in response to job promotions. For example, Rossi [10, p. 179] has asserted that household heads "use residential mobility to bring their residence into line with their prestige needs." Consequently it was expected that respondents who were relatively highly educated or fully employed would be the most optimistic about future job promotions -- and as a result would have the most rapid moving plans.

The stated aim of many of the social welfare agencies in the Model Neighborhood is to promote social mobility. Therefore, it would be expected that those participating in particular programs would be more likely than non-participants to be experiencing social mobility and thus also have more rapid moving plans. Two separate scales were utilized to measure program participation. The first measured the number of city-wide social welfare agencies that the respondent had contacted. Respondents were asked a series of questions as to whether they had contacted particular programs - the Welfare Department, the State Employment Service and the Legal Aid Society. Responses to each question were coded yes or no and the number of "yes" responses were added. Respondents were also asked whether they had contacted one of a number of different neighborhood multi-service centers located throughout the Model Neighborhood. They were classified in terms of whether they had (or had not) contacted the one in their neighborhood.

Housing and neighborhood conditions. Two types of scales were utilized to measure the respondent's level of satisfaction with housing and neighborhood conditions. The first scale consisted of a single question. Respondents were asked about their overall level of satisfaction with their home: "Is the home you are living in satisfactory for your family's needs?" Two other scales measured the number of perceived problems with sanitary conditions inside the home and in the immediate neighborhood. Five separate questions asked the respondents whether they had any trouble with particular housing conditions (e.g., bugs, rodents). Two other questions asked about particular neighborhood conditions: (the number of trash pick-ups, upkeep by neighbors). The responses to these questions were coded as follows: no problem, some problem, or serious problem. The number of responses indicating "some problem" or a "serious problem" were summed for the housing questions and the neighborhood questions,

to form the two scales (one dealing with housing conditions and the other dealing with neighborhood conditions). It was anticipated that there would be a negative correlation between the number of perceived housing and neighborhood problems and intentions to remain at the current location.

Race. Earlier, we noted that black intra-city mobility rates have generally been found to be higher than for whites -- and that this finding was explained in terms of the concentration of blacks in inferior inner city housing. This would suggest that if the mobility rates of blacks and whites living in the same inner city areas are compared (as is possible in Cincinnati's Model Neighborhood) -- there would be no significant differences between members of these two racial groups.⁶

In order to determine the extent to which perceived housing discrimination affected the moving plans of blacks, respondents were asked: "Do you feel a black family is discriminated against when they go to find a home in the Cincinnati area?" And if an affirmative reply was obtained: "Do you feel this happens seldom, sometimes, or often?" It was anticipated that the extent to which the respondent perceived discrimination in the housing market would be positively correlated with the intention to remain.

Available financial resources. Current family income was utilized as an indicator of available financial resources. It was expected that the level of family income would be positively correlated with the ability of the respondent to translate moving wishes into moving plans.

Findings

Life cycle. Table 1 suggests that the life cycle position of the respondent is of considerable importance in explaining intra-city residential mobility. There is a strong positive correlation between the age of the respondent and the amount of time he intended to remain at his current location. Apparently many of the intended moves can be explained by the fact that the respondents were in mobility prone stages of the life cycle (e.g., family formation, child bearing)-- where the need for more space by a growing family provided a strong incentive to move.

There is no evidence that families with school age children have particularly low potential mobility rates -- as was suggested by previous research. There is a very weak positive relationship between the presence of school age children and the intention to remain.

⁶Other researchers have suggested however, that to the extent blacks face housing discrimination, they would move less frequently than whites. Both of these alternative hypotheses will be tested.

TABLE 1: Regression Results: Moving Plans with Selected Personal Characteristics for Model Neighborhood Sample

Variable ^a	R Square Change	Unstand-ardized Regression Coefficient	Standard Error of Unstand-ardized Regression Coefficient	Standardized Regression Coefficient
Housing Satisfaction	.1274	.1357	.0415	.2748 ^b
Housing Problems	.0576	-.1715	.0590	-.2515 ^b
Age	.0356	.0109	.0044	.2237 ^b
Neighborhood Problems	.0067	.1555	.1065	.1251 ^b
Neighborhood Friends	.0070	-.0880	.0826	-.0859
Anti-Black				
Discrimination	.0050	-.0420	.0404	-.0868
School-Age Child	.0049	.1613	.1843	.0775
Working Now	.0033	-.1458	.1623	-.0727
Income	.0033	-.0097	.0116	-.0669
Buy Home in Area	.0024	.0171	.0262	.0502
Fit into Neighborhood	.0022	-.0529	.1142	-.0379
Community Newspaper	.0027	-.0387	.0499	-.0605
Race	.0016	-.1167	.1937	-.0539
Years at Address	.0011	.0043	.0080	.0452
Neighborhood Center	.0012	.0763	.1987	.0299
Social Agencies	.0007	.0289	.0892	.0265
Frequency of				
Discrimination	.0005	-.0336	.1153	-.0227
Tenant Status	.0002	.0086	.0486	.0135
Talk to Neighbors	.0001	-.0065	.0577	-.0088
Education	^c	^c	^c	^c

Constant: 3.7394

DF: 154^d

R²: .2632

F Ratio: 2.5391

(Footnotes continued on following page)

^aDefinition of Variables: Moving plans -- amount of time intend to remain at current location; (1) Less than 1 month, (2) One month to less than six months, (3) Six months to less than one year, (4) One year or longer. Housing satisfaction -- whether the home is satisfactory for the family's needs (1) No, (2) Yes; Housing Problems -- the number of stated problems with the physical condition of the home (the problems include heating, noise, privacy, insects, and rodents); Age -- age of respondent in number of years; Neighborhood Problems -- the number of stated problems with the immediate neighborhood (the problems include inadequate upkeep by neighbors, and an inadequate number of trash pickups); Neighborhood Friends -- number of friends in the immediate area; Anti-Black Discrimination -- perception of whether blacks experience discrimination when they look for a home (1) No, (2) Yes; School-Age Child -- age of oldest child, (1) Below School Age, (2) Of School Age; Working Now (1) Yes, (2) No; Income -- family income of respondent; Buy Home in Area -- interest in purchasing a home in the neighborhood (1) No, (2) Yes; Fit into Neighborhood -- extent to which respondent perceived that he contributed to neighborhood decision making; categories are in descending degrees of participation; Community Newspaper -- whether or not the respondent reads the newspaper (1) No, (2) Yes; Race, (1) Black, (2) White; Years at Address -- number of years respondent has lived at current address; Neighborhood Center -- whether or not the respondent received assistance from the multi-service center in his neighborhood, (0) No, (1) Yes; Social Agencies -- the number of social welfare agencies that respondent had contacted (these agencies include the Hamilton County Welfare Department, the Ohio State Employment Service, and the Cincinnati Legal Aid Society); Frequency of Discrimination -- perception of how often blacks experience discrimination (categories reflect an increasing frequency of discrimination); Tenant Status, (1) Rent, (2) Own; Talk to Neighbors -- number of times per week talk to neighbors (categories reflect an increasing level of contact); Education -- highest grade completed by respondent.

^bSignificant at 5 percent level.

^cVariable not included in the regression equation because the F level or the tolerance level was insufficient for further computation.

^dWhile 509 individuals were interviewed in the survey, only 154 responses are examined in this analysis. The remaining 355 respondents include those who planned an intermetropolitan move or who gave an unanalyzable response to a question measuring a variable included in the regression equation.

Life style. The results suggest that the life style orientation of the respondent (as measured by his tenant characteristics) is of little importance in explaining variations in moving plans. Contrary to what was expected, there was no correlation at all between current tenant status and moving plans. This result may be due, in part, to the fact that such a small proportion of the respondents owned their own homes. The desire to purchase a home in the immediate area is of somewhat greater explanatory importance -- but there is only a weak positive relationship between this attitude and the intention to remain in the area.

Social and locality participation. The results provide little support for the hypothesis that active neighborhood participation is correlated with an interest in remaining at the current location.

The only support that is provided for this hypothesis is the weak positive correlation between the duration of residence at the current address and intentions to remain. Contrary to what was expected, there were weak negative correlations between three other indicators of locality participation and moving plans (the number of neighborhood friends, the perceived fit into the surrounding neighborhood and whether the respondent read the community newspaper). These results indicate that active neighborhood residents were more likely to have rapid moving plans (rather than less likely, as was anticipated).

Social mobility and mobility aspirations. There is no evidence that the educational level or the employment status of respondents contributes significantly toward explaining moving plans. There is no correlation at all between educational level and the intention to remain. Contrary to what was anticipated, there is only a weak negative correlation between current employment status (e.g., the fact that the respondent is not employed) and the intention to remain. That is, those who were not employed were somewhat more likely than those employed to have rapid moving plans (even though it was presumed that the former would be less likely to have such rapid moving plans).

The above results may be explained in terms of the educational and employment characteristics of most Model Neighborhood residents. Those who have a relatively high educational level in terms of the Model Neighborhood have at most a high school degree. In today's job market such a level of formal educational attainment is not likely to contribute significantly to the prospects for future occupational mobility. Similarly many of those who are employed are likely to be in low paying "dead end" jobs, where the prospects for future mobility are relatively small. The very weak correlations were thus probably attributable to the fact that respondents varying by educational level and employment status did not have significantly different expectations about future job mobility.

The results provide no support for the hypothesis that participation in Model Neighborhood social welfare programs promoted rapid residential mobility. No significant correlations are shown between moving plans and either (1) the number of city-wide social welfare agencies the respondent had contacted or (2) whether the respondent had contacted the local neighborhood multi-service center. One possible explanation for these findings is that respondents

generally had only limited contact with these programs, and as a result these programs did not significantly affect their social or residential mobility rates. It is not possible however to test for the validity of this explanation since the respondents were not asked about their level of participation in specific social welfare programs. Instead they were only asked whether or not they had contacted them.

Housing and neighborhood characteristics. As expected the respondent's level of satisfaction with his current home is of considerable importance in explaining moving plans. There is a strong positive correlation between the belief that the current home meets the family's needs and the intention to remain. It appears that in evaluating the adequacy of their housing, Model Neighborhood residents are concerned with two broad types of factors: (1) the extent of overcrowding (note the above discussion of the importance of the life cycle factor) and (2) the perception of the number of housing problems threatening the family's health. The importance of the latter type of perception is shown by the finding that those who had the most complaints about sanitary conditions inside the home (e.g., rodents, bugs) tended to have the most rapid moving plans. On the other hand, complaints about neighborhood sanitary conditions (the upkeep by neighbors and the frequency of trash pick-ups) are of considerably less explanatory importance. There is a weak positive correlation between the number of perceived neighborhood problems and the intention to remain -- rather than the negative relationship which was anticipated. This perception (of inadequate neighborhood sanitary conditions) may be of less importance than expected because these conditions do not pose as serious and as immediate a threat, as those occurring inside the home.

Race. Race is of no explanatory importance. There is almost no correlation between the race of the respondent and moving plans.

This result provides no support for the hypothesis that blacks had less rapid moving plans because of the discrimination they faced in the housing market. There was a negative correlation between the perception of anti-black housing discrimination and the intention to remain (rather than the positive correlation which was anticipated). It appears that when blacks and whites are in the same neighborhoods (and thus when their housing is comparable) there is little difference in their residential mobility rates.

Available financial resources. Family income is not shown to be an important explanatory variable. There are very weak negative correlations between moving plans and income -- rather than the strong correlations which were anticipated. These results may be due to the fact that such a large proportion of the respondents are renters (and probably intend to remain renters even if they move). Limited means are likely to constitute a barrier to those interested in moving in order to purchase a new home. Low income is not likely to be a barrier to those interested in renting their next dwelling -- as long as they are willing to move to another location inside the Model Neighborhood boundaries (or to

another low income inner city neighborhood). The Model Neighborhood contains a relatively large inventory of rental units within the price range of low income families; and thus facilitates such short moves.

Summary and Conclusions

This paper has sought to shed light on the determinants of intra-metropolitan moving plans in one inner city area -- Cincinnati's Model Neighborhood. Both the life cycle factor and perceptions of unsanitary housing conditions were shown to be of some explanatory importance.

As in most middle class areas, a large proportion of the intended moves in the Model Neighborhood are generated by changes in family size accompanying changes in life cycle position. Housing conditions seem to play a more important role in affecting moving plans in the Model Neighborhood than has been shown in most middle class areas. Many of the families probably expected to be forced to move in the near future as a result of unsanitary conditions. Others are likely to have planned to move voluntarily in order to remove their families from these conditions.

One important implication of the findings is that efforts aimed at improving the housing conditions of inner city residents are likely to substantially increase the stability of these neighborhoods. As a result these housing policies are likely to make it somewhat easier for social welfare agencies to reach and serve low income families.⁷

⁷These implications are tentative since the amount of unexplained variance in the dependent variable in this study was rather large. This article thus represents a step forward in understanding inner city mobility rather than a firm basis for policy design and implementation.

REFERENCES

1. Boyce, Ronald R. "Residential Mobility and Its Implications for Urban Social Change," in Larry S. Bourne ed. Internal Structure of the City. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971. 338-44.
2. Brown, Lawrence A. and Eric G. Moore. "The Intra-Urban Migration Process: A Perspective," in Larry S. Bourne ed. Internal Structure of the City. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971. 200-209.
3. Butler, Edgar W., Georges Sabagh and Maurice D. Van Arsdol, Jr. "Demographic and Social Psychological Factors in Residential Mobility," Sociology and Social Research, 48 (1964), 138-54.
4. Institute for Social Research. Interviewers Manual: Survey Research Center. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 1969.
5. Kasl, Stanislav V. and Ernest Harburg. "Perceptions of the Neighborhood and the Desire to Move Out," Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 38 (September 1972), 318-24.
6. McAllister, Ronald J. "Residential Mobility of Blacks and Whites: A National Longitudinal Survey," American Journal of Sociology, 77 (1971), 445-455.
7. Maeroff, Gene I. "A Solution to Falling Reading Scores Continues to Elude Big City Schools," New York Times, May 27, 1973.
8. Moore, Eric G. Residential Mobility in the City. A. A. G. Resource Paper No. 13. Commission on College Geography, 1972.
9. Moore, Winston, Charles P. Livermore and George P. Galland, Jr. "Woodlawn - The Zone of Destruction," The Public Interest, 30 (1973), 41-59.
10. Rossi, Peter H. Why Families Move. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1955.
11. Sabagh, Georges, Maurice Van Arsdol, Jr., and Edgar Butler. "Some Determinants of Intra-Metropolitan Mobility: Conceptual Considerations," Social Forces, 48 (1969), 89-98.
12. Sherrill, Samuel B. Cincinnati Model Neighborhood Survey: A Statement of Research Objectives and Methodology. Working Paper No. 1. Submitted to the Cincinnati Demonstration Agency. Cincinnati: Institute for Metropolitan Studies, 1972.
13. Simmons, James W. "Changing Residences in the City: A Review of Intraurban Mobility," Geographical Review, 58 (October 1968), 622-51.

14. Straits, Bruce C. "Residential Movements Amongst Negroes and Whites in Chicago," Social Science Quarterly, 49 (1968), 543-592.