DEMOGRAPHY © Volume 16, Number 4 November 1979

RESIDENTIAL PREFERENCES, COMMUNITY SATISFACTION, AND THE INTENTION TO MOVE

Tim Heaton
Department of Rural Sociology, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin 53706

Carl Fredrickson
Department of Rural Sociology, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota 55108

Glenn V. Fuguitt
Department of Rural Sociology, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin 53706

James J. Zuiches
Department of Sociology, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824 and National Science Foundation, Washington, D.C.

Abstract—This paper explores the role of size of place residential preference in the evolution of the intention to move out of the present community using data from the March 1974 NORC Amalgam Survey. People who prefer to live in a community having different size or location characteristics than their present residence are five times more likely to intend to move than those who have attained their preferred type of residence. Within these two groups, however, the particular configuration of current and preferred residence has no significant effect on the likelihood of intending to move. This finding justifies the creation of a simple dichotomous variable, preference status, contrasting these two groups. Community satisfaction and preference status are highly interrelated and each has an independent effect on intentions to move. Moreover, the effect of preference status on mobility intentions is somewhat larger than that for community satisfaction, indicating that residential preference plays a significant role in the decision-making process regarding migration.

INTRODUCTION

Recent alterations of migratory patterns in many industrial societies have focused attention on how little mobility processes are understood (Goldstein, 1977). Both policy and theoretical interest have centered upon the appearance of net migratory growth in the smaller and more isolated locales of the United States and of several Western European societies (Beale, 1975; Beale and Fuguitt, 1978; Tucker, 1977; Wardwell, 1977). Related to this "turnaround," surveys of residential preferences have reported that some combination of a rural environment and access to a metropolitan center are frequently desired residential attributes (Zuiches and Fuguitt, 1972; Fuguitt and Zuiches, 1975; Dillman and Dobash, 1972; De Jong, 1974). While attempts to explain the growth in previously declining areas have included the suggestion that persons may be increasingly able to realize their preferences, limited attention has been given to the role of residential preferences in the mobility decision-making process (De Jong, 1977).

Searching for attitudinal determinants of migration has not been a predominant mode of analysis, but as classic economic constraints to mobility decrease (Carpen-

ter, 1977), the noneconomic aspects of migration decisions take on new relevance. The recent work of Speare, Goldstein and Frey (1974) emphasized evaluation of residential satisfaction as one stage in a sequential series of decisions regarding mobility. In this way, they focused on attitudes toward the place of origin. In our research we incorporate residential size of place preference as a measure of attitudes toward places of potential destination into a model predicting migration intentions. We then examine the relationships between residential preferences, community satisfaction and migration intentions.

RESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE AND THE INTENTION TO MOVE

It has been noted elsewhere that migration may be increasingly influenced by preferences in recent years (Fuguitt and Zuiches, 1975; Zuiches and Rieger, 1978). Miller (1977) argues that the "preferences" of a highly mobile segment of American society may have more strongly affected interstate migration differentials in the 1965–70 period than in the previous decade. Longitudinal studies suggest that recent mobility is "consumption" rather than "production" oriented (Duncan and Newman, 1975; Roistacher, 1975). Various changes in the demographic and economic structure could account for the importance of noneconomic determinants of migration. As more people retire at earlier ages, a larger segment of the population is not dependent on the location of employment opportunities. Affluence and leisure time have created recreational growth in rural settings (Fuguitt, 1977; McCarthy and Morrison, 1978). Moreover, improvements in transportation and communication networks have made it possible for residents in previously remote areas to enjoy many benefits formerly restricted to urban centers (Phillips and Brunn, 1978).

Although size of place of preferred residence is not always strongly related to the mobility measures (Zuiches, 1977), the bivariate relationship between preferences and mobility overlooks an important aspect of the decision-making process: it is not preferences per se that motivate migration but a discrepancy between a preference and actual location. The concept of "preference status" indicating the discrepancy between actual and preferred location is easily measured by examining a matrix of current residence size-classes by preferred residence size-classes. In its simplest form, on-diagonal respondents reflect no discrepancy (yet may still feel dissatisfied with their current place) and off-diagonal respondents prefer another size-location type of community (yet may be satisfied with their current location). We anticipate that persons on the diagonal of this matrix (those whose current and preferred location coincide) are less inclined to move than those off the diagonal, but persons having particular combinations of current and preferred residence within these two broad categories may exhibit unusually high or low propensities of moving. Thus, the first step of our analysis will be to identify configurations of current and preferred residence with different likelihoods of moving.

In the second section of the analysis we incorporate a respondent's residential preference status and community satisfaction into a simple model of migration intentions. At issue here is the degree to which preference status measures an important aspect of factors affecting migration intentions, over and above a global measure of community satisfaction. As a starting point the mobility model derived by Speare (1974) and his predecessors Wolpert (1965; 1966) and Brown and Moore (1970) stresses the importance of community satisfaction in the decision to move. Because their analysis was based on mobility in a single labor market, however, the authors acknowledged that the selection and location of alternative communities remained an undeveloped portion of their theory (Speare et al., 1974, p. 181). Our inclusion of size of place preference status adds information on the role of perceptions of the alternatives to cur-

rent place of residence in the decision to migrate.

In generalizing to a broader class of moves, Speare et al. (1974, p. 181) suggest that the territorial scope of the search for alternatives may extend beyond the searcher's personal experience. Unlike the search for alternative sites in intra-urban moves, there is little actual discovery and evaluation of alternatives in the migration process. As Lansing and Mueller (1967, p. 210) have observed, only a minority of moves involve active consideration of multiple sites and fewer still are preceded by actual evaluation via trips to the proposed destination. Much knowledge used in the evaluation of alternative community locations is acquired secondhand from friends or relatives, or drawn from a set of pre-existing values about the characteristics of broad types of communities. Some alternative choices may be based on the broad set of societal assumptions about the community ambience associated with sites of a certain size and location (Blackwood and Carpenter, 1978; Hadden and Barton, 1973).

By inquiring of persons what community residence they most prefer, we attempt to discover the size and location of a community from which they feel they will derive the most satisfaction of all size-location combinations offered. The primary consideration is the degree to which discrepancy between this preferred alternative and current residence is related to satisfaction with the community of residence and alters the respondent's intention to move.

DATA AND METHODS

The data reported here are from NORC's Amalgam Survey of the total noninstitutional U.S. population aged 18 and over, conducted in March, 1974. The question added to this survey by Fuguitt and Zuiches which concerned preferred types of residence was worded as follows:

"We are also interested in the kind of community you would prefer to live in now, if you had your choice.

Thinking in terms of both size and location, which of these types of community would you like best to live in?

A. In a large metropolitan city (over 500,000 population)
B. In a medium-sized city (50,000 to 500,000 population)
C. In a smaller city or village, but within 30 miles of a large or medium-sized city (under 50,000 population)
D. In a smaller city or village, more than 30 miles from a large or medium-sized city (under 50,000 population)
E. In the country, outside of any city or village, but within 30 miles of a large or medium-sized city
F. In the country, outside of any city or village, more than 30 miles from a large or medium-sized city."

A similar question yielded classifications with the same categories for present residence. In a previous survey those interviewed appeared to have little difficulty in accurately reporting the size and location of current residence. (For details, see Fuguitt and Zuiches, 1975).

Our satisfaction variable was created by having respondents rank themselves on a scale of satisfaction with their community of residence. The five-category scale ranged from "a very great deal of satisfaction" to "no satisfaction." We dichotomized this ranking into groups of relatively satisfied and relatively dissatisfied persons by splitting the scale at its approximate midpoint. This was between persons expressing "quite a bit of satisfaction" and only "a fair amount of satisfaction" with the community.

To ascertain migration intentions, respondents were asked how likely it was that they might move out of the present community in the next three years. Those who reported that they definitely would move and those who reported that they probably would move were coded as intending to move. Those replying that they might move (50-50 chance), probably

Table 1.—Observed Frequencies of Intentions to Move by Current and Preferred Type of Residence and Observed Odds of Intending to Move

Current Residence	Preferred Residence: City over 500,000	City 50,000 to 500,000	Within 30 Miles of City: Small city or village	Within 30 Miles of City: Rural area	More than 30 Miles from City: Small city or village	More than 30 Miles from City: Rural area
	Observed frequencies					
	INTEND TO MOVE					
City over 500,000	10	7	14	20	7	15
City 50,000 to 500,000	3	11	14	28	7	11
Within 30 miles: Small city	2	1	22	24	7	14
Rural area	1	0	3	20	3	6
More than 30 miles: Small city	1	5	4	16	11	5
Rural area	0	0	1	0	0	4
	DO NOT INTEND TO MOVE					
City over 500,000	100	17	29	38	4	12
City 50,000 to 500,000	3	120	46	48	18	12
Within 30 miles: Small city	2	7	203	48	12	14
Rural area	0	5	6	123	4	12
More than 30 miles: Small city	2	11	15	19	108	15
Rural area	0	0	2	7	0	72
	Odds of intending to move					
City over 500,000	.10	.41	.48	.53	1.75	1.25
City 50,000 to 500,000	1.00	.09	.30	.58	.39	.92
Within 30 miles: Small city	1.00	.14	.11	.50	.58	1.00
Rural area	--	.00	.50	.16	.75	.50
More than 30 miles: Small city	.50	.45	.27	.84	.10	.33
Rural area	--	--	.50	.00	--	.06

Table 2.—Log-linear Models of Association between Current (C) and Preferred (P) Residence, Intentions to Move (M), and Location (L_1 or L_2) in the Current-Preferred Classification

Model	Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square	Degrees of Freedom	Probability
1. (C) (P) (M)	1547.96	60	<.001
2. (CP) (M)	181.19	32[a]	<.001
3. (CP) (CM)	158.12	27[a]	<.001
4. (CP) (PM)	147.37	27[a]	<.001
5. (CP) (CM) (PM)	82.66	22[a]	<.001
6. (CP) (L_1M)	43.04	31[a]	>.050
7. (CP) (L_2M)	40.31	30[a]	>.050
Comparison of Models			
8. 6 vs 2 (test for the effect of (L_1M))	138.15	1	<.001
9. 7 vs 6 (test for the effect of (L_2M) net of (L_1M))	2.73	1	>.050

a--Three degrees of freedom are lost because the (CP) marginal contains three empty cells.

would not move, or were very unlikely to move, were coded as not intending to move.

RESULTS

Intentions to Move by Current and Preferred Type of Residence

Table 1 reports the observed frequencies for a cross-classification of current residence by preferred residence by intentions to move, and the observed odds of intending to move. Restated, the problem is to identify differences in the odds of intending to move for various combinations of current and preferred residence. Table 2 compares various log-linear models which might describe the association among current (C) and preferred (P) residence, and intentions to move (M). (See Fienberg, 1977; Goodman, 1978, for a discussion of log-linear models.) Model 1 illustrates that the hypothesis of simple independence does not fit the data. Much of the remaining association can be attributed to the fact that persons living in different types of places have different preferences independent of intentions to move (compare Model 2 with Model 1). Still, Model 2 does not provide an acceptable fit, indicating that intentions to move are associated with current and preferred residence. Models 3, 4 and 5 show that not all of this association can be attributed to either or both of the main effects of current and preferred residence on intentions to move. One might conclude at this stage that the three-way interaction (CPM) is necessary to account for the pattern of association in the table. That is equivalent to saying that unique combinations of current and preferred residence have different ratios of movers to nonmovers. The subsequent

Table 3.—Odds of Expecting to Move by Preference Status and Community Satisfaction

Community Satisfaction	Correspondence of Current and Preferred Location	Expect to Move		Odds of Expecting to Move
		Yes	No	
High	Yes	49	580	.084
	No	72	225	.320
Low	Yes	29	145	.200
	No	147	183	.803

analysis reported in Table 2 shows that a simpler interpretation can be given to the data.

From Table 1 we observe that people on the main diagonal are less likely to intend to move (odds = 78/726 = .107) than those off the diagonal (odds = 219/408 = .537). Using techniques described by Hauser (1978), a fourth variable (L_1) is introduced which is scored 0 for persons on the main diagonal and 1 for those whose current and preferred residence diverge. By specifying an association between this new variable and mobility intentions we obtain a model of quasi-independence (Model 6) which fits the data well while retaining several degrees of freedom. According to this model persons who have not achieved their preferences are five times more likely to intend to move than those who have (odds = .537/.107 = 5.02), but within these broad categories the particular configuration of current and preferred residence has no significant effect on intentions to move. In dividing the difference between Model 2 and Model 6 (see line 8) by the total association in Model 2, it is evident that 76.6 percent of the effect of combinations of current and preferred residence on intentions to move is due to the differences in mobility intentions between those on or off the main diagonal. (See Blackwood and Carpenter, 1978, for an alternative interpretation of similar data.)

A continuing concern is the ability of preferences to predict the direction of potential mobility. Are people who prefer smaller places more likely to move there than those who prefer larger places? De Jong (1977) suggests the reverse is the case in Pennsylvania. Examining, with our data, the odds of moving for those preferring a smaller place (182/329 = .553) and a larger place (37/79 = .468) seems to show a slight tendency for a greater movement down the urban hierarchy. In Model 7 a revised variable, L_2, is calculated, which allows persons above and below the diagonal to have different odds of intending to move. The comparison of Models 6 and 7 (line 9) indicates that this added information does not provide a significantly better fit, so we prefer Model 6 for its simplicity as well as its good fit.

Relationships between Preference Status, Community Satisfaction, and Intentions of Moving

Does preference status, conceptualized as agreement or discrepancy between actual and preferred type of residence, influence the expectation of moving independent of community satisfaction? Data reported in Table 3 indicate that both preference status and community satisfaction influence the expectation of moving. Among persons who prefer their current type of residence and who are highly satisfied with their local community, only eight do expect to move for every one hundred who do not. In contrast, among the dissatisfied who prefer a different type of residence, for every eight who expect to move ten do not. Thus comparing the

most and the least adjusted groups, there is a striking ten-fold difference in the odds of expecting to move. Moreover, differentials between levels of preference status are larger than those between levels of community satisfaction.

More explicit tests for relationships among variables were carried out by fitting a saturated log-linear model to these data. The model indicates a positive association between community satisfaction and preference status (the additive effect parameter lambda = .302, standard error = .038) which illustrates that those who are satisfied with the community they live in are less likely to prefer one of a different size and location, and vice versa. The expectation of moving is negatively affected by community satisfaction (lambda = −.223, standard error = .038) and attainment of preference (lambda = −.340, standard error = .038), with preference status having the larger effect. The three-way interaction, however, is not significant (lambda = −.007, standard error = .038). In sum, although preference status and satisfaction are highly correlated, the strong association between preference status and the expectation of moving remains when satisfaction is controlled.

DISCUSSION

This paper explores the role of residential preferences in the evaluation of the intention to move out of the present community. People who prefer to live in a community having different size or location characteristics than their present residence are five times more likely to intend to move than those who have attained their preferred type of residence. Within these two groups, however, the particular configuration of current and preferred residence seems to have little effect on the likelihood of intending to move. This finding justifies the creation of a simple dichotomous variable, preference status, contrasting these two groups. We argue that, like community satisfaction, preference status does influence intentions to move. Unlike community satisfaction, however, it reflects a more direct awareness that other sizes of communities in different locations might be more desirable than the present residence. Results support this proposition. Community satisfaction and preference status are highly interrelated while each has an independent effect on intentions to move. Furthermore, the effect of preference status on mobility intentions is somewhat larger than that for community satisfaction.

Throughout this analysis we have neglected the link between migration intentions and migratory acts. Speare et al. (1974, p. 229) observed that not all who intend to move do so and not all movers originally intended to move. This, they add, does not diminish the appropriateness of their model of migratory processes as a sequential series of decisions. It is possible that the linkage between intended and actual mobility may be broken once the costs of the move are considered (Speare et al., 1974, p. 183). Further, preferences probably play a lesser role in the choice of destination for unanticipated migration. We have indicated that persons appear to utilize size of place preferences in the formation of their migration intentions. One question which necessarily remains unanswered in this analysis is the degree to which the model containing preference status explains the variation in actual migration.

A second unresolved issue follows from this. If it is true that individuals tend to utilize size of place preferences in the decision to move, does the pattern of residential preferences allow us to say with any confidence what combination of locations will be chosen as destinations for these migrants? The recent inmigration to previously declining areas of the nonmetropolitan United States makes speculation on the affirmative side of this issue appealing. For example, Morrison and Wheeler (1976) suggest that the growth of these areas may be a partial consequence of the increasing freedom of people to select destinations which are not necessarily attractive as employment centers. Con-

sumption factors reflecting available recreation resources, low density, and community stability are envisioned as causing growth in these areas (Morrison and Wheeler, 1976, p. 21; McCarthy and Morrison, 1978).

In sum, research reported here implies that residential preferences play an important role in the decision to move and as such are relevant for population redistribution trends. The growing body of research, to which the present paper contributes, is beginning to reveal the complexity of the relationships between background factors, residential preferences, community satisfaction, migration intentions, and actual migration. Continuing in this vein will improve our theoretical and empirical understanding of population distribution and migration at a time when many assumptions in this field are being given new scrutiny and may also yield information of value to those wishing to take residential preferences into account in implementing public policy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research has been supported by the Economic Development Division, Economics, Statistics, and Cooperatives Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and by the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison, through a cooperative agreement, as well as by Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station (Journal article #8583) and the College of Social Sciences, Michigan State University, and by the Center for the Study of Metropolitan Problems, NIMH. Analysis was aided by a Center for Population Research grant No. HD05876 to the Center for Demography and Ecology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, from the Center for Population Research of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. We also wish to thank Dennis Hogan and anonymous reviewers for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

REFERENCES

Beale, Calvin. 1975. The Revival of Population Growth in Nonmetropolitan America. ERS-605. Washington, D.C.: Economic Research Service, Department of Agriculture.

———, and Glenn V. Fuguitt. 1978. The New Pattern of Nonmetropolitan Population Change. Pp. 157–177 in Karl E. Taeuber, Larry L. Bumpass and James A. Sweet (eds.), Social Demography. New York: Academic Press.

Blackwood, Larry G., and Edwin H. Carpenter. 1978. The Importance of Anti-Urbanism in Determining Residential Preferences and Migration Patterns. Rural Sociology 43:31–47.

Brown, Lawrence, and E. G. Moore. 1970. Intra-Urban Migration Process: A Perspective. Geografiska Annaler, Series B. 52:1–13.

Carpenter, Edwin H. 1977. The Potential for Population Dispersal: A Closer Look at Residential Location Preferences. Rural Sociology 42:352–370.

De Jong, Gordon F. 1974. Residential Preference Patterns and Population Redistribution. In Wilbur Zelinsky et al., Population Change and Redistribution in Nonmetropolitan Pennsylvania, 1940–1970. Report Submitted to the Center for Population Research, National Institutes of Health, Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Washington, D.C.

———. 1977. Residential Preferences and Migration. Demography 14:169–178.

Dillman, Don A., and Russell P. Dobash. 1972. Preferences for Community Living and Their Implications for Population Redistribution. Washington Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 764. Pullman: Washington State University.

Duncan, Greg, and Sandra Newman. 1975. People as Planners: The Fulfillment of Residential Mobility Expectations. Pp. 279–318 in Greg Duncan and James Morgan (eds.), Five Thousand American Families—Patterns of Economic Progress, Vol. III. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Survey Research Center, University of Michigan.

Fienberg, Stephen. 1977. The Analysis of Cross-Classified Categorical Data. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Fuguitt, Glenn V. 1977. Recent Trends in Nonmetropolitan Net Migration. Paper presented at the annual meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Denver, Colorado.

———, and James J. Zuiches. 1975. Residential Preferences and Population Distribution. Demography 12:491–504.

Goldstein, Sidney. 1977. Facets of Redistribution: Research Challenges and Opportunities. Demography 13:423–434.

Goodman, Leo A. 1978. Analyzing Qualitative Categorical Data. Boston: Abt Associates.

Hadden, Jeffrey K., and Joseph J. Barton. 1973. An

Image that Will Not Die: Thoughts on the History of Anti-Urbanism Ideology. Urban Affairs Annual Reviews 7. Beverly Hills, California: Sage.

Hauser, Robert M. 1978. Some Exploratory Methods for Modeling Mobility Tables and Other Cross-classified Data. CDE Working Paper 78–19. Madison, Wisconsin: Center for Demography and Ecology, University of Wisconsin.

Lansing, John B., and Eva Mueller. 1967. The Geographic Mobility of Labor. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Survey Research Center, University of Michigan.

McCarthy, Kevin F., and Peter A. Morrison. 1978. The Changing Demographic and Economic Structure of Nonmetropolitan Areas in the 1970's. Rand Corporation Paper 6062. Santa Monica, California.

Miller, Ann R. 1977. Interstate Migrants in the United States: Some Social-Economic Differences by Type of Move. Demography 14:1–18.

Morrison, Peter A., and Judith P. Wheeler. 1976. Rural Renaissance in America? The Revival of Population Growth in Remote Areas. Population Bulletin 31, number 3.

Phillips, Phillip D., and Stanley D. Brunn. 1978. Slow Growth: A New Epoch of American Metropolitan Evolution. Geographical Review 68:274-292.

Roistacher, Elizabeth. 1975. Residential Mobility: Planners, Movers, and Multiple Movers. Pp. 259–278 in Greg Duncan and James Morgan (eds.), Five Thousand American Families—Patterns of Economic Progress, Vol. III. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Survey Research Center, University of Michigan.

Speare, Alden Jr. 1974. Residential Satisfaction as an Intervening Variable in Residential Mobility. Demography 11:173–188.

———, Sidney Goldstein, and W. H. Frey. 1974. Residential Mobility, Migration and Metropolitan Change. Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger.

Tucker, C. Jack. 1977. Changing Patterns of Migration Between Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Areas in the United States: Recent Evidence. Demography 13:435–443.

Wardwell, John. 1977. Equilibrium and Change in Nonmetropolitan Growth. Rural Sociology 42:156–179.

Wolpert, Julian. 1965. Behavioral Aspects of the Decision of Migrate. Papers of the Regional Science Association 15:159–169.

———. 1966. Migration as an Adjustment to Environmental Stress. Journal of Social Issues 22:92–102.

Zuiches, James J. 1977. Mobility and Preferences: A Review. Paper prepared for the meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Denver, Colorado.

———, and Glenn V. Fuguitt. 1972. Residential Preferences: Implications for Population Redistribution in Nonmetropolitan Areas. Pp. 617–630 in Sara Mills Mazie (eds.), Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, Vol. V, Population Distribution and Policy. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

———, and Jon H. Rieger. 1978. Size of Place Preferences and Life Cycle Migration: A Cohort Comparison. Rural Sociology 43:618–633.