Mobility, Mixing, and Neighborhood Change: A British Perspective

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The articles in this symposium highlight three important areas of inquiry related to residential mobility—what constitutes mobility, the processes of mobility, and the effects of mobility on different groups and locations. In each of these areas, the challenge of understanding becomes more difficult as research reveals the complexity of the underlying processes. Further, our consideration of these challenges helps to identify the integral link between residential mobility studies and research on neighborhood effects (Hedman and van Ham, 2012).

The first area of inquiry is about what constitutes mobility. This area may seem straightforward but is complicated by two dimensions additional to that of the household move. First, the composition of the household may change before, during, or after a move, so saying who has moved and who has not is not simple. Allied with this factor is the reality that households may retain close connections to their previous neighborhood after a move, so that the key factors of neighborhood exposure or dosage (Galster, 2012) and place attachment, both functional and psychological (Bailey, Livingston, and Kearns, 2012), are difficult to describe or measure in investigations of neighborhood effects.

The second area of inquiry concerns the increasing research interest, in both the United States and Europe, in the processes of mobility: How do households arrive at decisions to move? How do households make choices about when and where to go, with or without the help of others? How do counseling and support services provided to poorer households, both before and after a move, influence the human, social, and economic outcomes. The psychological dimensions to these processes—particularly the interactions between variations in personality, underlying individual values, experiences during mobility, and cognitive processes related to an understanding of the move and its likely consequences—are currently underresearched. People are much more complex and dynamic than our usual means of describing them. We are only beginning to appreciate that residents' attitudes to the restructuring of their old neighborhoods affect their views about their own relocation; for example, "Was it worth it? Will regeneration be fully accomplished?"

The third area of inquiry examines the research agenda in relation to the effects and outcomes of residential mobility, which has broadened to include both disadvantaged and more advantaged groups; both movers and nonmovers; both origin and destination neighborhoods; and both

urban-level and neighborhood effects, such as those on patterns of spatial inequality across cities. Here, in both the United States and Europe, the evidence on issues such as negative spillover, or *waterbed*, effects arising from the reclustering of those relocated in other areas (for example, effects on property values, crime, school performance, and local community conflict) has yet to catch up with the theory (Kleinhans and Varady, 2011). To these areas of inquiry, we should add an interest in the potential societal-level effects of mobility—certainly if it results in more residential mixing— on political attitudes; for example, attitudes regarding the causes and desirability of social diversity and (in)equality, which may or may not be very evident to people, depending on where they live.

The advent of integrated neighborhoods, either produced through policy intervention or arising through organic, or market, processes of mobility, raises interesting questions about their effects. Whether looking at economically or racially integrated neighborhoods, much inquiry has been concerned with whether, and to a lesser extent how, more disadvantaged individuals might gain from "rubbing shoulders" with more advantaged neighbors; for example, in terms of their orientation toward education or awareness of employment opportunities—so-called social-interactive mechanisms (Galster, 2012). Less research has focused on the effects of residential mixing on the more advantaged group, in situations both where it is the majority and the minority. In the case of economically integrated, or *mixed income*, communities, effects have also been hypothesized on the economic and political vitality of the communities concerned, the former having been examined occasionally and found wanting, and the latter having been assessed rarely (see Sautkina, Bond, and Kearns, 2012, for a review of U.K. evidence).

As a result of occasional disturbances between ethnic groups in specific towns or cities (for example, in the United Kingdom), policymakers have proposed racially integrated neighborhoods and schools as means to overcome so-called "parallel lives" (Phillips, 2006) and thus reduce the potential for local conflict, presumably through greater tolerance as a result of contact (Allport, 1954), although the mechanisms involved are usually unstated. This approach, however, has tended to focus on the behavior (that is, potential mobility) of the minority group(s) rather than asking questions of the host majority group; the majority are not expected or asked to move and integrate, yet it is they who often effectively protect their own "enclaves"—although, being predominantly White areas, they are not called that. This example effectively illustrates how policy and research attention that is centered only on the identified mover group may result in a lack of attention to the influence of the nonmovers and potential receivers, whose effects on mobility and its consequences also require research.

Research is also welcome on the psychology of mobility and mixing, as in the role played by "cognitive constraints" on moving, reported in this symposium. In relation to mobility that produces more mixing, interesting connections remain to be explored between community- and societal-level effects. From a well-being perspective, one would wish to know whether the psychosocial pathway between inequality and health—due to stress caused by subordination, lack of control, and status anxiety (Kawachi and Kennedy, 1999)—operates at a neighborhood as well as at a societal level. In other words, is relative deprivation (Runciman, 1966) a potential outcome of any mobility that results in social mixing? More research on the mental health and well-being outcomes of mobility would help provide an answer to this question.

Beyond studying effects on individuals, an interest in mobility and its consequences extends to the issue of whether integrated or mixed neighborhoods also have societal-level effects on social and political attitudes (which is possibly more likely in societies with interventionist or welfare states). Previous research has argued that societal inequality reduces empathy between groups so that people have to fend for themselves more (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009), which raises two interesting questions for neighborhood research. First: Can residential mixing serve to change social and political attitudes over time (for example, on questions of the causes of poverty and the desirability of social assistance) or, even more fundamentally, by lowering people's anxiety about difference (Sennett, 2012)? Can other groups become more accepted as a legitimate and welcome presence? Second: Could such effects arise from the co-presence of groups within neighborhoods, or do they also require social interaction, or "contact," and, if so, of what type (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2005)?

Studying residential mobility is complex and fascinating in itself, but extending that interest to its effects on not only individuals but also on neighborhoods, cities, and societies brings home the importance of *where* we live for *how* we live in the modern world.

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