Describing Patterns in Neighborhood Transitions by Age, Marital Status and the Presence of Children, 1970 – 2010.

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Abstract

The age profile, prevalence of marriage and rates of households with children have changed dramatically in the United States since 1970. Despite these changes, we know relatively little about the segregation of individuals according to key demographic characteristics--age, marital status and the presence of children. We know even less about how differences in mobility patterns contribute to the residential distribution of people who differ in age, marital status and family composition. In this paper I focus explicitly on these three basic demographic characteristics in order to describe residential mobility. I combine data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics and the U.S. Census from 1970 – 2010 to describe neighborhood transition probabilities and flows for groups categorized according to the aforementioned variables. This paper provides description of mobility patterns, historical changes in these patterns and further insight into the extent to which individual demographic characteristics may interact with neighborhood level characteristics to influence residential mobility and ultimately shape neighborhood composition.

Introduction

In the past four decades the United States' population has grown older, the proportion of the population that is married has declined and the proportion of households with children has declined. Despite these changes and a rich history of residential mobility and segregation scholarship, we know relatively little about the segregation of individuals according to key demographic characteristics--age, marital status and the presence of children. We know even less about how differences in mobility patterns contribute to the residential distribution of people who differ in age, marital status and family composition. Some research has explored the intensity of age segregation and factors associated with age segregation. Younger and older adults are moderately segregated between blocks within counties in the United States and this segregation has increased over time (Winkler and Klaas 2012). Furthermore, the value of rental housing and suburbanization are positively related to age segregation (Lagory, Ward and Juravich 1980). This work does not describe mobility patterns of different age groups or consider differences between the married and unmarried and those with children and those without. To advance understanding of the segregation of these groups and how it comes about, it is crucial to describe how people in different life stages move between residential neighborhoods and to what degree individual mobility is influenced by the age and household characteristics of a neighborhood.

Age, marital status and the presence of children in a household are important factors that influence whether and where someone moves. In this paper I focus explicitly on these three basic demographic characteristics and combine data from the US Census and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) for the years 1970-2010 in order to describe residential mobility patterns between neighborhoods classified according to age distributions, proportion of population married and proportion of households with children.

While many studies consider age, marital status and the presence of children on the individual level, few have considered how these variables may interact with neighborhood characteristics to influence mobility or how they can be used to describe mobility patterns at different points in life. On account of this neglect, our understanding of how the young and the old, the married and the unmarried and households with children and those without are distributed in residential space is incomplete. Learning which types of neighborhoods retain or attract residents as they grow older, marry and bear children can provide a foundation for discussions and further empirical investigation of residential segregation of age groups and household types and how intergenerational contact will change as populations' age distributions and household characteristics change.

Three general questions guide the analysis proposed in this abstract:

1. How do individuals of different ages and household characteristics move between residential neighborhoods with different age distributions and household characteristics?
2. Are individuals more likely to move to neighborhoods with high proportions of others with similar age and household characteristics than they are to neighborhoods with low proportions of others who share their age or household characteristics?
3. How have mobility patterns in terms of age and household characteristics changed between 1970 and 2010?

Background

Previous scholarship has discussed the influence of age, marital status and having children on rates of residential mobility. Mobility varies with age; it is generally highest during the late teen and young adult years, but declines and remains low in adulthood until a slight rise in the advanced ages (McFalls 2007). Marriage, the presence of school-aged children and family size suppress mobility (Spilembergo and Ubeda 2002) though family size has also been shown to increase mobility and explain a family's mobility inclination (Rossi 1980). Despite generally low mobility in later adulthood, recent retirement and widowhood increase the likelihood of making a residential move (Longino et. al. 2008).

In addition to the relationship between basic demographic characteristics and the likelihood of making a residential move, age, marital status and the presence of children can also influence where one chooses to live. According to Settersten (2003), "the life course is conceptualized as a series of age-linked transitions, times when identities are in flux" (p. 85). Changes in identity may be accompanied by changes in what is viewed as important for one's residential location. Individuals may at different times value different types of housing units, different perceived levels of safety, proximity to schools, entertainment options and employment opportunities. For example, central city neighborhoods attract those in their early 20's, but people tend to move to suburban neighborhoods as they approach their mid 50's, get married and bear children (Boustan and Shertzer 2013). Marriage and family expansion coincide with moves to higher income neighborhoods (Sampson and Sharkey 2008).

Data and Methods

I combine individual and aggregate level data from the PSID and the US Census, respectively, for the years 1970-2010. The PSID is a longitudinal survey that has followed

families and individuals since 1968 when a probability sample of 18,000 individuals in 5000 families was selected for the collection of social, economic and health information. I use the PSID to characterize individuals, their household contexts and their residential histories. At each available interview wave and for individuals between 18 and 75, I observe an individual's age, marital status, whether or not they live in a household with a related individual under 18, whether they have made a residential move since the last interview and, using the PSID geocode match file, the individual's census tract of residence, a proxy for thier neighborhood.

To describe the demographic characteristics of the neighborhoods in which the PSID respondents live, I compiled a dataset of census tract characteristics from the Geolytics Neighborhood Change Database, the Longitudinal Tract Database and the 2010 US Census Summary File 1 to derive measures of the age distribution, proportion of adults married and proportion of households with a child present in a census tract. I use linear interpolation to estimate census tract characteristics for intercensal years.

I translate my aforementioned focus on three basic demographic characteristics into a classification system that is used to describe individuals and neighborhoods. I categorize individuals in terms of their membership in broad age categories, their marital status and whether they live with children. Through combinations of these basic variables I can capture people in a number of simplified stages of life that are associated with changes in mobility rates. Individuals are classified by their age at the time of each survey interview as between 18 and 64 or 65 and older, roughly corresponding to the "working ages" and "non-working ages." Marital status simply determines if one is married or unmarried and does not include cohabitation. Whether one lives with children is determined by whether or not an individual lives with at least one related individual under the age of 18. Similarly, neighborhoods are classified according to the proportion of their population between 18 and 64 and 65 and older, the proportion of the adult population married and the proportion of households with children. While I recognize that this classification system is simplified and that norms relating to adulthood, retirement and family formation have changed between 1970 and 2010, it allows me to avoid small samples in the subgroups that are formed from combinations of these variables. Furthermore, I believe it will still yield meaningful results and I remain open to modifications as my analysis proceeds.

I follow a similar analytical plan to that which Lincoln Quillian used to decompose the rise in high poverty neighborhoods in the United States (1999). I calculate transition probabilities and net mobility flows for each combination of my three independent variables between neighborhoods categorized according to their age composition, presence of married adults and presence of children characteristics. I will determine the precise values of each characteristic that will be used to categorize neighborhoods as I further examine the distribution of traits across census tracts. I compare 18-64 year olds to those 65 and older, the married to the unmarried and those with children to those without. I distinguish between transitions between neighborhood types that occur as the result of residential moves and those that result from neighborhood change around non-movers. To describe changes in mobility patterns over time, I conduct the analysis described above, but separately for each decade between 1970 and 2010. This approach will describe how the different categories of individuals transition through neighborhoods with different compositions and will offer direct evidence for the effect of an interaction between individual characteristics and neighborhood characteristics.

Expected Findings

I generally anticipate that patterns of residential mobility will vary among the different groups. Mobility to areas with high proportions of like individuals will be highest among married people with children. I expect that changes in mobility patterns will be observed over time.

I anticipate that adults 18-64 years old living in households with children will exhibit high flows into and between neighborhoods with higher proportions of households with children, married individuals and older individuals, primarily from neighborhoods with higher proportions of under 65 unmarried and married individuals. Adults living with children likely have mobility motivations related to goals they have for the development of those children or norms they hold about the appropriate environment or type of housing unit in which to live at certain points in one's life and, if able, may adjust their residence to situate themselves in such environments.

18-64 year old individuals living in households with children may also show high flows to and low flows from neighborhoods with high proportions of the population older than 65 and without children, as housing turnover may allow them to purchase homes formerly owned by elderly residents. Individuals in family units with children may not wish to move from neighborhoods with higher proportions of those 65 and older because they may be areas in which their parents and their children's grandparents live. High flows from and low flows to neighborhoods with high proportions of 18-64 year old unmarried individuals without children may be observed.

Unmarried 18-64 year olds with children may face financial barriers to residential mobility and I expect that their mobility will show less sensitivity to neighborhood context than that of married individuals living in family units with children.

I anticipate that individuals 65 and above will exhibit lower flows than other groups into neighborhoods with higher proportions of the population under 65 and not living with children, but will have low mobility from and high mobility into neighborhoods with high proportions of the population 65 and above and low proportions of households with children. These flows maybe lower for those 65 and above living with children than those not living with children and for those who are married than those who are unmarried.

The mobility of married individuals under 65 living without children may be similar to that of individuals in family units with children, as marriage is often followed by childbearing and married couples may make mobility decisions with future family composition in mind. I expect those under 65 and childless to be the most mobile with the highest flows between neighborhoods with low proportions of the elderly and households with children and perhaps medium flows from neighborhoods with high proportions of working age adults without children.

Preliminary Descriptive Tables*

Person Years by Age Category

Age Category	Person Years	Percent of PY
18-64	512,931	93.00
65+	38,144	6.92
Total	551,517	100

Person Years by Presence of Children

	Person Years	Percent of PY
No Children	243,896	45.10
Child Present	296,941	54.90
Total	540,837	100

Marital Status 1970 - 2007 (Person Years)

	Freq.	Percent
Unmarried	172,205	38.32
Married	277,127	61.68
Total	449,332	100

Mobility by Year (Person Years)

	1970	**1971**	**1972**	**1973**	**1974**	**1975**
No Move Observed	7,347	7,520	7,867	7,992	8,300	8,671
Move Observed	1,878	2,058	2,157	2,394	2,403	2,388
Total	9,225	9,578	10,024	10,386	10,703	11,059
	1976	**1977**	**1978**	**1979**	**1980**	**1981**
No Move Observed	8,840	9,075	9,266	9,424	9,657	10,033
Move Observed	2,439	2,453	2,555	2,683	2,745	2,468
Total	11,279	11,528	11,821	12,107	12,402	12,501
	1982	**1983**	**1984**	**1985**	**1986**	**1987**
No Move Observed	10,241	10,453	10,318	10,204	10,508	10,242
Move Observed	2,509	2,534	2,756	2,994	2,561	2,757
Total	12,750	12,987	13,074	13,198	13,069	12,999
	1988	**1989**	**1990**	**1991**	**1992**	**1993**
No Move Observed	10,318	10,438	10,441	14,018	14,974	14,918
Move Observed	2,724	2,555	2,744	3,345	3,278	3,428
Total	13,042	12,993	13,185	17,363	18,252	18,346
	1994	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**
No Move Observed	15,675	15,852	12,660	9,911	9,093	10,961
Move Observed	3,717	3,012	2,510	1,371	1,436	1,760
Total	19,392	18,864	15,170	11,282	10,529	12,721

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
No Move Observed	10,220	11,624	10,439	11,720	10,751	12,095
Move Observed	1,752	2,088	2,402	2,792	2,599	2,882
Total	11,972	13,712	12,841	14,512	13,350	14,977
	2006	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**Total**
No Move Observed	11,305	12,300	11,634	14,813	11,409	443,527
Move Observed	2,831	3,116	2,735	1,205	2,680	103,694
Total	14,136	15,416	14,369	16,018	14,089	547,221

*These tables are preliminary. Minor coding issues remain which account for the discrepancy in sample sizes across the variables.

Citations

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