Family and Friends Living Nearby, Neighborhood Satisfaction, and Residential Mobility

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Abstract
This study draws on panel data from the Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey (N = 1,128) to examine whether and how family and friends living close-by are associated with individuals’ interneighborhood residential mobility. Additional analyses tap into why individuals’ proportion of nearby kin and friends are linked to their mobility. The results suggest that individuals’ perceptions of their neighborhood are patterned by whether or not they have family—and to a lesser extent friends—who live locally. The absence of nearby family is associated with leaving the neighborhood, but the direct effects do not hold for nearby friends. However, the role of friends does become important in the absence of family ties. The results also indicate that having nearby friends moderates the relationship between neighborhood satisfaction and moving away.

Keywords
neighborhood satisfaction, social ties, family ties, residential mobility

INTRODUCTION
Residential mobility is a complex process that includes individual agency and constraints as well as institutional and structural forces. In the United States, issues of income, social class, race/ethnicity, gender, and ability all play a dynamic role in shaping who can move and who can stay in their homes and neighborhoods. As it is often overlooked in migration studies, researchers have recently called for a stronger focus on the role of personal relationships in individuals’ mobility behavior (e.g., Mulder 2018). Although housing adjustments and area-related reasons are the most common motives for short-distance moves, social reasons are also important (Thomas, Gillespie, and Lomax 2019). In particular, friends (i.e., social ties beyond nonresident family) are an important form of location-specific capital, yet very little is known about their role in residential mobility (see, for example, Belot and Ermisch 2009).

There are several ways that individuals’ personal relationships might be linked to their residential mobility—one of those ways is via individuals’ perception of their neighborhood. Having family and friends living close by might help individuals form attachments...
to their communities, facilitating place satisfaction and rootedness (Oh 2003). These ties might also reflect the local area’s collective efficacy, a characteristic of close-knit communities, whereby individuals exchange information and resources with each other (Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls 1999). Thus, insofar as having nearby ties is a reflection of collective efficacy, a lack of ties might also signal diminished (or disrupted) neighborhood satisfaction, leading to out-mobility.1 At the same time, having nearby kin and friends might lead individuals to evaluate their environment differently. In either case, it stands to reason that proximate family and friend networks are linked to residential mobility by way of neighborhood satisfaction.

Drawing on longitudinal data from the Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey (LAFANS) and examining interneighborhood residential mobility, I test the family-led migration framework for residential mobility. I also examine the effect of having nearby friends on individuals’ decisions to stay or move out of their neighborhood. In other words, I examine the effect of intra-neighborhood personal relationships on inter-neighborhood mobility. Subsequent analyses explore the ways that nearby family and friends impact residential mobility, particularly through individuals’ perceptions of their neighborhood.

BACKGROUND AND THEORY

The Role of Nearby Family and Friends in Residential Mobility

Classical models of residential mobility generally focus on how individuals’ decisions to relocate are based on cost–benefit analyses of moving versus staying. Individuals will consider a move—and potentially follow through on it—when the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs. In this way, residential mobility and internal migration are important mechanisms for making advantageous adjustments, especially housing realignments associated with life course transitions, such as relationship dissolution or having children (Geist and McManus 2008; P. H. Rossi 1980). Of course, other factors can also inspire the decision to move, including changes in employment, child care/schooling considerations, and neighborhood and housing market conditions. Recently, research and theory have pointed to the importance of family for long-distance moves (Mulder 2018).

The idea that individuals’ nonresident family can impact their relocation decisions is rooted in the notion that family is an important type of location-specific capital—resources that are bound to a specific area. These non-transferable assets, which are maintained in shared spaces (C. S. Fischer 1982), would be lost with relocation (P. A. Fischer and Malmberg 2001). As such, the “magnetizing effect” of family serves as an attraction for individuals to remain in an area or move elsewhere (Mulder and Gillespie 2021), including returns to one’s birth region after moving away or toward other places close to family (e.g., Gillespie, Mulder, and von Reichert 2021; Hedman 2013; Mulder, Lundholm, and Malmberg 2020; Spring et al. 2017).

Thus, having relatively few family members living in close proximity might produce less resistance to moving away compared to a community of nearby relatives. In much the same way, the qualitatively separate issue of having no family members nearby (vs. having even just a few) will also inspire a move elsewhere. So, I expect individuals with no (or fewer) nearby family members in the area to be more likely to move to a new neighborhood than those with (more) family members nearby (Hypothesis 1).

However, people do not base “social” reasons for moving exclusively on family. While a large amount of recent research has examined the impact of nonresident family on moving, far less is known about the effect of nearby friends. Of course, friendships—which are often rooted in reciprocal benefits and obligations—are also an important form of location-specific capital. Indeed, researchers have examined how peers and social networks—generally speaking—impact other
important life outcomes, such as educational aspirations and choice of college major (Antonio 2004; De Giorgi, Pellizzari, and Redaelli 2007), occupational choices (Marmarosa and Sacerdote 2002), and international migration (Massey and Espinosa 1997). These findings are not surprising because friends play an important role in individuals’ everyday lives through the provision of social and emotional support, companionship, and instrumental support (Gillespie et al. 2015). However, we still know relatively little about whether and how nonfamilial social ties (i.e., friends) are associated with individuals’ mobility. This is possibly because surveys rarely ask about friends; friendship is notoriously difficult to measure; and the role of friends—as a form of location-specific capital—is easily conflated with other nearby social relationships, namely, the family (Gillespie and Mulder 2020).

Of those who have examined the relationship between nearby friendship ties and migration, the measurements, approaches, and results have differed. For example, some have examined “social reasons” as a general motive for moving, among which friends and family are included (Niedomysl 2011; Thomas et al. 2019). Within Seattle, researchers (Connerly 1986; Landale and Guest 1985) found that individuals’ proportion of nearby friends—including having no friends in the area at all—was associated with mobility intentions, but not actual mobility. Using the Child Development Supplement of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (which includes only families with children), Dawkins (2006) found that local social ties, including children’s peer networks, deterred residential mobility, particularly for low-income families. In a British Household Panel Study examination of how close friendships impact migration, Belot and Ermisch (2009) found that individuals who identified up to three local friends were less likely to move over 20 miles away. Taken together, these results support the idea that nonfamilial social ties are linked to individuals’ residential mobility. Accordingly, I expect those with no (or few) nearby friends to be more likely to move to a new neighborhood than those with (more) friends nearby (Hypothesis 2).

The roles of family and friends for residential mobility are likely to differ, not least because family members are a more prominent feature of social networks, especially in the provision of emotional and instrumental support (A. Rossi and Rossi 1990; Wellman and Wortley 1990). In a study of the effect of religious ties on moving away, S. M. Myers (2000) found some “migration-discouraging” effects for families without children. These effects operated largely through the presence of nearby family (within a one-hour drive), but the findings did not hold for local friends. Using the same data as the current study, Sharp and Warner (2018) found that the absence of family—as a major component of social isolation—was associated with residential mobility. Other factors, including fear of the current neighborhood and the absence of friends, were not significant in their final models.

Of course, there is likely to be some overlap between familial and nonfamilial networks in the neighborhood and, consequently, individuals will be less likely to move away from places with high proportions of both and possibly more likely to move away from areas with neither. Building on the earlier work of Sharp and Warner (2018), I therefore propose a separate hypothesis that the role of local friends and family for residential mobility operate in tandem—and that the absence of family will reinforce the role of friends. In other words, the relationship between local friendship ties and residential mobility will vary based on individuals’ amount of nearby family (Hypothesis 3).

Because very little research has been done on the topic, little is known about whether and how the role of family versus friends for residential mobility differs based on other sociodemographic characteristics, particularly age, which is an important correlate of social ties (Gillespie et al. 2015). One study drew on a cross section of data and found
that for return migration to the municipality where an individual grew up (compared with migration elsewhere), the importance of friends increased with age while the importance of family decreased (Gillespie, Mulder, and von Reichert 2021). These results were consistent with more general findings about the changing roles of social ties over the life course. Still, there is little reason to believe these findings would hold for the importance of local ties for intracity mobility in a densely populated urban area. Thus, without a priori expectations, I propose an exploratory question: (How) does the effect of nearby kin and friends on residential mobility differ by respondents’ age?

Local Ties, Neighborhood Satisfaction, and Residential Mobility

Nearby family members and friends (“local ties”) do not operate within a vacuum in setting the groundwork for staying or leaving. Places are the context in which those social and familial interpersonal relationships are enacted—and people form attachments to those people and places. In this way, personal relationships can be seen as important facilitators of neighborhood satisfaction. As Mesch and Manor (1997:507) identified from the literature, “local social involvement, in particular with friends and kin, is the most consistent and significant cause of attachment to place.” And one common way researchers have operationalized place attachment has focused on people’s perceptions of the quality of their environment, that is, their neighborhood satisfaction (e.g., Jones and Dantzler 2021; Sharp and Warner 2018).

Recent research has found that the presence of local ties influences individuals’ perceptions of their neighborhood (Crowe 2010)—and having more nearby family is linked to higher neighborhood satisfaction (Fitz, Lyon, and Driskell 2015). As a form of location-specific capital, local ties can directly impact residential mobility but local ties might operate indirectly by way of neighborhood satisfaction. For example, the absence of local ties might affect decisions to move or stay by facilitating harsher assessments of one’s overall environment (i.e., dissatisfaction). And having many local ties might strengthen an individual’s place-based satisfaction. Indeed, in their concluding remarks, Mesch and Manor (1997:518) asked, “Would individuals with and without social ties but equivalent satisfaction with the local area express the same degree of attachment?” Therefore, I expect a lack of kin and friends to intensify neighborhood dissatisfaction and its subsequent effect on residential mobility.

The relationship between local ties and neighborhood satisfaction for residential mobility might not be so straightforward. First, it is possible to be satisfied with where one lives yet not be particularly attached to the place. Second, local ties might serve as a “compensating differential” (Rosen 1986), whereby individuals will sacrifice living in a more satisfying environment to remain close to their family and friends in the area.

Individuals who are unhappy with their housing or neighborhood may remain merely because of their proximity to their family and friends (see Landale and Guest 1985). This corresponds with classical stress models of residential mobility, which argued that compounded environmental grievances, usually based on life-cycle changes, led to a move once a certain “stress threshold” was reached (Wolpert 1965). Later models proposed that environmental dissatisfaction (vis-à-vis stress) was the mechanism through which life-cycle changes led to subsequent mobility (Speare 1974). Thus, in addition to the mediation effect, I also expect nearby family and friends to moderate the relationship between neighborhood satisfaction and residential mobility. Specifically, I expect fewer nearby kin and friends to lead to an increased likelihood of moving among those who report greater dissatisfaction with their neighborhood (Hypothesis 4).

Altogether, adapting recent calls to incorporate nonresident family into migration models (Mulder 2018; Mulder and Cooke 2009), I examine the importance of nearby family and friends on local residential mobility. I also explore whether individuals’ assessment
of their environment (via neighborhood dissatisfaction) varies based on whether or not they have a nearby kin network and/or social circle. Following from the research, five main hypotheses are considered:

**Hypothesis 1:** Individuals with no (or few) nearby family members in the area will be more likely to move to a new neighborhood than those with (more) family members nearby.

**Hypothesis 2:** Individuals with no (or few) nearby friends will be more likely to move to a new neighborhood than those with (more) friends nearby.

**Hypothesis 3:** The relationship between local friendship ties and residential mobility will vary based on individuals’ amount of nearby family.

**Hypothesis 4:** A lack of kin and friends will intensify neighborhood dissatisfaction and its subsequent effect on residential mobility.

**Hypothesis 5:** Having fewer nearby kin and friends will lead to a higher likelihood of residential mobility among those who report greater dissatisfaction with their neighborhood.

To test these hypotheses, I draw on two waves of panel data from Los Angeles County—the region includes 88 separate cities and many unincorporated areas spread over 4,083 square miles.

The Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey (LAFANS) sample includes a diverse set of neighborhoods, varying from densely populated central city areas to relatively rural mountain and desert areas to the more suburban neighborhoods of the San Fernando Valley and the Pacific coast. The high rates of residential mobility coupled with social and spatial inequality within the dense, urban, geographically sprawling, and ethnically diverse Los Angeles landscape make it an interesting context for studying local ties and residential mobility.

**DATA AND METHOD**

This study draws on restricted-access data from the Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey, a two-wave panel survey based on a diverse stratified random survey of 65 census tracts in Los Angeles County. The first wave of data captured information from 3,085 households in Los Angeles between April 2000 and January 2002 with 2,620 primary respondents. The data were designed to represent adult residents of Los Angeles County at the time of the survey.

Data collection was based on a multilevel stratified sampling design that sampled tracts within strata, blocks within tracts, households within blocks, and respondents within households with an oversampling of individuals in poverty as well as households with resident children. Using state and county administrative data, Los Angeles County’s Urban Research Division developed three strata based on tract-level estimates of percent in poverty in 1997. These strata were used for the tract sampling, based on tract poverty levels (nonpoor, poor, and very poor). The primary respondents were full-time, noninstitutionalized residents of Los Angeles County who spoke either English or Spanish. Residential mobility was among the primary topics the survey was designed to explore. For a detailed report on the LAFANS design, sampling, and implementation, see Sastry et al. (2006).

Wave 2 data were collected between August 2006 and December 2008 and captured reinterview information from primary respondents at Wave 1. Among those in the original sample, 1,177 individuals were interviewed for Wave 2. All panel respondents who still lived in Los Angeles County were eligible for an in-person interview, regardless of where they lived in Los Angeles County (even a tract considered “noneligible” in Wave 1). Individuals from the original sample who were living outside Los Angeles County at Wave 2 were eligible for a telephone interview.

To tap into tract-level attractions, data from both waves were linked to the Los Angeles Neighborhood Services and Characteristics (LANSC) data. The LANSC is a database of contextual data files for Los Angeles County with information from a variety of sources on neighborhood services, population
characteristics, housing characteristics, family and household socioeconomic status, and social services and facilities (Peterson, Pebbley, and Sastry 2007).

Owing to cases with missing data \((n = 49)\), the final sample for the current analysis is 1,128. Retention differed along several sociodemographic characteristics. Employed respondents, women, and those with higher education and income were more likely to participate in both waves of data collection. Individuals who reported being single at Wave 1 were less likely to participate in the follow-up survey wave. Panel weights account for nonresponse attrition between waves and oversampling based on poverty status and children in the household. In addition, to be consistent with the LAFANS sampling strategy, the census tracts use 1990 tract boundaries.

**VARIABLES**

All independent variables in the models were measured at Wave 1. The dependent variable, interneighborhood residential mobility, was measured retrospectively at Wave 2. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the entire sample, which was about half female and ranged in age from 21 to 92 years. Summary statistics are also presented separately for nonmovers and movers. Additional bivariate analyses are discussed in the results section but not shown in tables.

**Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable—interneighborhood residential mobility—identified whether primary respondents relocated to a different Census tract between Waves 1 and 2.4

**Independent Variables**

The interviewer prefaced items about nearby kin and friends with the following lead-in: “My next questions are about relatives or friends who live in this neighborhood, but who do not live with you.” And to provide some geographic standardization, respondents were asked to think of their neighborhood as “the block or street you live in and several blocks or streets in each direction.” The items followed: “How many of your relatives or in-laws live in your neighborhood? Would you say none, a few, many, or most?” The same question, with the same response options, was then asked about nearby friends. Because of the qualitative difference between having even some nearby kin and friends compared with having none, results are also presented for a dichotomous measure that identifies the presence versus absence of nearby relatives and friends.

Additional measures provided information at the individual, household, and neighborhood levels. At the individual and household levels, I included information on respondents’ age and sex \((\text{female} = 1)\). Respondents’ race/ethnicity was coded as white, black, Latino, Asian, or another racial/ethnic classification. Respondents’ marital/cohabiting status marks whether the individual was married, cohabiting, or neither. An ordered measure indicated the respondent’s number of children.

Separate dichotomous variables reported whether or not the respondent was enrolled in school and/or was employed. An ordered measure for education identified individuals as having completed (1) less than high school, (2) high school or the equivalent, (3) some college, (4) college, or (5) a postgraduate degree. Respondents’ self-reported health was classified as (1) poor, (2) fair, (3) good, (4) very good, or (5) excellent.

A logged measure of household income was taken in the year prior to Wave 1. Housing tenure indicated whether the residential unit was owned \((1)\), else \((0)\). To control for the fact that individuals who reside in an area for a longer period of time likely develop social ties in the area, an additional measure captures the duration of time \((0–15 + \text{years})\) at their residence at Wave 1. This measure is based on the interview year and the year the respondent reported moving into their current residence.
Individuals’ self-reported neighborhood satisfaction indicated whether the respondent was (1) very dissatisfied, (2) dissatisfied, (3) neutral, (4) satisfied, or (5) very satisfied with their neighborhood. A tract-level variable measured the neighborhood poverty rate in 1997. The tract-level estimates of percent in poverty correspond with tracts that were very poor, poor (reference), and nonpoor.
Based on Census data, several tract-level variables identified other neighborhood dynamics in 2000 (set to 1990 tract boundaries). Population density was measured as the tract’s population divided by its area in square miles; to facilitate interpretation, the measure was divided by 1,000. A proportional measure of overall tract racial/ethnic diversity is based on the formula: diversity = 1 – (white002 + black002 + latino002 + api002 + other002). A neighborhood context variable tapped into the median household price in the tract (logged). Residential stability identified the percentage of individuals in the neighborhood living in the same residence in 2000 as in 1995.

**Analytic Strategy**

To test the first two hypotheses, Model 2.1 (Table 2) presents a logistic regression model with direct effects for all independent variables (odds ratios presented). In addition to exploring individuals’ proportion of local ties, Model 2.2 uses dichotomous measures for the presence/absence of nearby family or friends. To test Hypothesis 3, Model 2.3 includes an interaction between nearby family and nearby friends.

To test Hypothesis 4, Table 3 presents a KHB decomposition of the effect of local ties on residential mobility using neighborhood satisfaction as the mediator (Breen, Karlson, and Holm 2013). The KHB mediation analysis compares the coefficients of two nested nonlinear probability models controlling for all covariates in Table 2. The method decomposes the total effect of the independent variables, nearby kin and friendship ties, into direct and indirect effects on residential mobility (Kohler, Karlson, and Holm 2011). The resulting coefficients are unbiased by issues related to the cross-model comparisons of nonlinear models. Models 3.1 and 3.2 present the mediating effects of the proportion of nearby relatives and friends, respectively. Models 3.3 and 3.4 assess the mediating effect of the absence of nearby family and friends.

To test Hypothesis 5, a final model includes an interaction between nearby social and family ties and neighborhood satisfaction. The results of additional analyses (interactions between local ties and age) to address the exploratory question are discussed in the text but not presented in additional tables. These models included all of the controls in Table 2.

**Model Diagnostics**

For all multivariate analyses, there was no severe multicollinearity in the models. Analysis of a correlation matrix (Supplemental Appendix A) indicated that none of the observed relationships between the independent variables in the models were very strong. The strongest relationship (0.53) was between education and median tract-level housing costs.

**RESULTS**

**Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Analyses**

Because of the wide time frame between waves (six to eight years), much of the sample (62 percent) moved to a new tract between Waves 1 and 2. The average proportion of nearby relatives ($M = 0.4, SD = 0.7$) and friends ($M = 0.9, SD = 0.8$) is small. The percentage of individuals with no nearby relatives (68.7 percent) or friends (28.5) is more substantial. This discrepancy is likely due to the distribution of the measures for nearby family (skewness = 1.6, kurtosis = 5.6) and friends (skewness = 0.8; kurtosis = 3.7). As mentioned, descriptive statistics for the rest of the independent variables—including differences between movers and nonmovers—are presented in Table 1.

In bivariate results (not shown in the tables), individuals’ proportion of nearby relatives is significantly and positively associated with their proportion of nearby friends ($r = .23, p < .001$). The proportion of nearby friends is positively associated with neighborhood satisfaction ($r = .13, p < .001$), whereas the relationship between neighborhood satisfaction
and nearby family is negative ($r = -0.07$, $p < 0.05$). The baseline effect of nearby family on residential mobility is nonsignificant (odds ratio $= 1.01$, $p = 0.49$); however, the proportion of nearby friends is negatively associated with moving away (odds ratio $= 0.77$, $p < 0.05$).

Multivariate Analyses

Table 2 presents the results of a logistic regression for the relationship between local ties and residential mobility. While there was no direct support for Hypothesis 1 that having
fewer relatives or friends nearby would be associated a higher likelihood of mobility, having no nearby relatives is associated with a higher likelihood of moving (Model 2.2). Based on these results, there is no direct support for Hypothesis 2—that nearby friends are associated with interneighborhood residential mobility net of nearby family. However, the results of Model 2.3 indicate that the relationship between nearby friends and residential mobility is attenuated by nearby family. In other words, friends deter interneighborhood mobility when individuals have fewer family members living nearby. In auxiliary analyses (not shown), the interaction between individuals’ proportion of nearby friends and the absence of nearby relatives is also significantly associated with moving away (odds ratio = 0.52, \( p < .05 \)). This highlights the contextual importance of friends for residential stability—they are indeed important, particularly when there are few or no relatives living nearby.

The results in Table 3 are based on the KHB test for mediation. Based on the results of each model in Table 3, there is no evidence that individuals’ proportion of nearby kin and friends fully or partially mediate the relationship between neighborhood satisfaction and mobility. Therefore, the results do not provide support for Hypothesis 4.

Table 4 displays findings in support of Hypothesis 5. The direct effect of nearby friends is significant, indicating that having more nearby friends is associated with a lower likelihood of moving away. However, the interaction term between nearby friends and neighborhood satisfaction is also significant—so, friends attenuate the relationship between neighborhood satisfaction and residential mobility. At the lowest levels of neighborhood satisfaction, an increase in nearby friends leads to a lower likelihood of moving away. A graph of the average marginal effects of social ties on moving at each level of neighborhood satisfaction is presented in Figure 1. Results for interactions between no nearby family/friends and neighborhood satisfaction are presented in Supplemental Appendix B.

The results for the control variables are in line with expectations based on previous research and theory. The well-known correlates of moving—age, home ownership, and residential duration—are all associated with a significantly lower likelihood of moving (\( p < .001 \)). Neighborhood satisfaction and tract-level residential stability are also associated with staying (\( p < .05 \)).

Last, I examined interactions between nearby kin and friends and age to address my open-ended exploratory question about the changing role of family/friends with age. Because the control variable results to address the question do not differ from those in other models, I only discuss the substantive results in the text (but they are available in Supplemental Appendix C). However, all additional analyses are available upon request. The results indicate that the role of nearby family members for residential mobility decreases.

### Table 3. KHB Mediation Model for Neighborhood Satisfaction and Residential Mobility (\( N = 1,128 \)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Family ties</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>No family</th>
<th>No friends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mediation Full effect</td>
<td>–0.31**</td>
<td>–0.33**</td>
<td>–0.31**</td>
<td>–0.34**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct effect</td>
<td>–0.31**</td>
<td>–0.31**</td>
<td>–0.33**</td>
<td>–0.33**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect effect</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>–0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>–0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. All Model 2 controls included. Weighted data and standardized variables. The models for friends control for family ties and models for family ties control for friends. **p < .01.
with age ($p < .001$). These same results did not hold for nearby friendship ties.

### Sensitivity Analyses

A number of sensitivity analyses were run to check the robustness of the results. First, the primary independent variables—nearby kin and friends—were run as dummy variables.

Although the continuous variables were not significant in the models testing Hypothesis 1, the categorical versions indicated that the lowest proportion of nearby family (i.e., having few vs. none) was associated with a significantly lower likelihood of moving ($p < .05$). This finding helped justify the

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**Table 4. Logistic Regression for Nearby Family and Social Ties × Neighborhood Perceptions and Residential Mobility ($N = 1,128$).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social ties</th>
<th>0.47</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relatives in the neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends in the neighborhood</td>
<td>0.29*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions (Moderation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Satisfaction × Neighborhood Relatives</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Satisfaction × Neighborhood Friends</td>
<td>1.31*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual and household characteristics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.96***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (Reference)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>0.48†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.13**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabiting</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither (Reference)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in school</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>1.71†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logged household income</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reported health</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeowner</td>
<td>0.35***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration at residence</td>
<td>0.91**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood-level characteristics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood satisfaction</td>
<td>0.54***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood poverty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very poor</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor (Reference)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not poor</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density (1,000s)</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial/ethnic diversity</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logged median housing cost</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential stability (%)</td>
<td>0.96**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Odds ratios presented. Weighted data.

†$p < .1. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.$
analytic decision to explore the dichotomous versions of nearby kin and friends (i.e., having none vs. having any).

The results of the mediation analyses were similar when using the continuous versus categorical measures of nearby kin and friends. The only difference was that the mediating role of nearby family for residential mobility was very marginally significant ($p = .09$). For the moderation analyses, the highest proportion of nearby friends (most or all) significantly moderated the relationship between neighborhood satisfaction and moving when compared with having no nearby friends ($p < .05$). Analyses run using categorical measures of individuals’ health and education did not lead to any changes in the substantive results.

**DISCUSSION**

Most research on personal relationships and internal migration has centered on the role of family, with little attention paid to nonresident friends. I examined the role of both family and friends for interneighborhood residential mobility within Los Angeles County, providing a test of recent family-based migration frameworks for shorter distance mobility. I also examined how individuals’ assessments of their neighborhoods vis-à-vis their nearby kin and friends are linked to residential mobility.

The findings indicate that not having any nearby family is associated with a higher likelihood of leaving the neighborhood. The role of friendships, while less salient, was nevertheless important, but only as it mitigated the effect of family ties on residential mobility. Thus, local ties—a component of location-specific social capital—might help retain individuals in their communities, but in a less straightforward manner than anticipated. Still, the results are in line with recent theorizing on the “magnetic” role of family

![Graph](image-url)
for individuals to remain in an area or move elsewhere (Mulder 2018).

Although the results did not point to any mediating effects, they did suggest that having nearby friends moderates the relationship between neighborhood satisfaction and moving away. Researchers have consistently found that location-specific capital matters for remaining in an area (e.g., Logan and Spitze 1994)—and the results of this study help explain why. Individuals might evaluate their community differently when they have social ties nearby, choosing to remain in an otherwise unsatisfying environment to remain near their friends. Local social ties might also reflect a community’s social cohesion, the social norms, and bonds that enable individuals to trust each other (Buckner 1988).

These findings—along with the results for the covariates—have important implications for community sociology more broadly. In their identification of determinants of “rootedness” in Israel, Mesch and Manor (1997) drew on the competing concepts of the “limited liability” neighborhood and the “liberated” neighborhood. The limited liability notion argues that place attachment is based on local relationships developed through residing in an area over time. On the contrary, the competing concept of the liberated neighborhood posits that social ties, now more geographically widespread than ever before, are less important determinants of place attachment than other factors, namely, individuals’ assessments of their environment. The common thread in both arguments is that both consider place attachment in the context of individuals’ personal relationships (but they depart in their propositions about how geographically dispersed those ties are). My results support their notion of the “limited liability” neighborhood, in that local ties were associated with residential mobility both directly and also indirectly by way of neighborhood satisfaction. I provide some evidence that local relationships—developed over time—facilitate place satisfaction and thereby neighborhood residential stability.

Building on the concept of “limited liability,” I also found support for the longstanding notion that cumulative time in an area helps establish individuals’ “rootedness” (G. C. Myers, McGinnis, and Masnick 1967). Homeownership—which is often linked to place attachment—was associated with a lower likelihood of leaving the neighborhood. In a more obvious way, the results also show that longer duration of residence is associated with a lower likelihood of moving.

A final broad implication of these findings is that individual-level characteristics are associated with neighborhood satisfaction and subsequent mobility in ways that tract-level characteristics (e.g., population size or residential turnover) are not. Consistent with Kasarda and Janowitz (1974) and more recent findings (Jones and Dantzler 2021), my findings suggest that individual-level characteristics and perceptions are stronger predictors of residential mobility than other neighborhood-level factors.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although these findings help identify the ways social and family ties frame sociospatial constraints and opportunities for individuals’ residential mobility, they are subject to several caveats. One major limitation of the study is the crude measurement of individuals’ local kin and friends. Although I am confident that individuals can approximate—with some reliability—their proportion of nearby close friends and relatives, there is no way to ascertain whether and how my results would differ from those using other measurement approaches, such as a name generator or asking respondents to enumerate their network ties. In the absence of such data, I can only hope that future research will build on these findings with stronger measures of individuals’ local ties.

A related avenue for future research might explore whether and how the quality of individuals’ local ties is associated with moving away. For example, some individuals might move away from negative or ambivalent relationships with their friends and family.
However, recent research on individuals’ self-reported motives for migration suggest that this is a rare occurrence (Gillespie and Mulder 2020). I was also unable to discern between “strong” and “weak” social ties, which tend to differ in purpose, function, and importance (Granovetter 1973). Weak ties are often linked to less social support (and might not necessarily be considered “location-specific capital” to remain in an area). In their joint analysis of friendship formation and residential mobility, Belot and Ermisch (2009) found that identifying up to three close local friends was associated with a lower likelihood of moving 20+ miles—yet the frequency of interactions with those friends was not associated with moving.

An additional limitation is that the survey was conducted in Los Angeles County, which means the results are not generalizable to other parts of the United States or elsewhere. However, at best, family and friendship ties should matter less—if at all—in a single-city study because there are fewer obstacles regarding communication and interaction when compared with longer distance moves away from friends/family.

The results might also be biased because of differences in individuals’ perceptions of their neighborhood boundaries, which may not coincide with Census tracts. However, as part of the interview, respondents were asked to think of their neighborhood as “the block or street you live in and several blocks or streets in each direction.” This provides some degree of geographic standardization for responses that require application of neighborhood boundaries. There are also issues with endogeneity. For example, individuals who are planning to move might invest less effort into making nearby friends. It might be that those who have fewer friends or strained family relationships have similar personality characteristics to those who are more mobile.

CONCLUSION

Local ties are meaningful sources of location-specific capital that can exert influence on individuals’ residential mobility. As buffers of the perceived environment, local ties are also indirectly linked to residential mobility through residents’ neighborhood satisfaction, at least within Los Angeles County. It is worth noting that a move does not necessarily signal a problem with a neighborhood. Indeed, the results support the idea that individuals with fewer local ties might in fact be moving closer to family and friendship ties elsewhere.

In terms of policy, neighborhood development programs—specifically those in high turnover areas—could help facilitate the creation and maintenance of social support among community members, particularly emphasizing policy interventions and strategies to target socially isolated individuals. At the same time, these findings do challenge longtime notions that facilitating the development of local ties will lead to greater place satisfaction. The results suggest that perceptions of the environment might differ based on who lives nearby.

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SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

NOTES

1. This article is about proximity as an important prerequisite for—and facilitator of—close personal
relationships, rather than about relationships themselves. As such, references to “kin and friends” denote the presence of nearby personal relationships.

2. The term social ties broadly refers to nearby ties to both kin and friends.

3. The Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey (LAFANS) staff created an attrition adjustment based on the inverse of the predicted probability of nonresponse (Peterson et al. 2011). The logistic regressions included Wave 1 predictors of nonresponse in Wave 2 among respondents who were not known to be ineligible for an interview at Wave 2 (e.g., deceased or incarcerated).

4. The interview method was different and there was less information collected from those who moved outside of Los Angeles County by Wave 2 (including most of the community-level data, such as neighborhood satisfaction), so they were not included in these analyses. In addition, the LAFANS-allocated data weights apply only to panel respondents living within Los Angeles County. Relatedly, several respondents relocated between waves but remained within the same tract. I did not consider these respondents “movers” based on my (interneighborhood) operationalization of residential mobility. At the shortest distance, these individuals could have relocated into a different apartment within the same building or, at the most extreme, it could be clear across the neighborhood. However, sensitivity analyses indicated that the results did not hold for local moves that took place within the neighborhood.

REFERENCES


