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Effects of family mobility and maternal attitude on adolescent personality

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EFFECTS OF FAMILY MOBILITY AND MATERNAL ATTITUDE ON ADOLESCENT PERSONALITY

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State College
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Psychology

by
Jean M. Irwin
March 1978
EFFECTS OF FAMILY MOBILITY AND MATERNAL ATTITUDE ON ADOLESCENT PERSONALITY

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Approved by:

[Signatures and dates redacted]
ABSTRACT

The effects of mobility on 173 adolescent members of U. S. Forest Service families are assessed using The Adjective Check List (ACL). Subjects were classified by rate of family mobility and by maternal attitude toward moving, as determined by questionnaires completed by the mothers. Mobility rate did not significantly affect ACL scale scores. Subjects whose mothers had a positive attitude toward moving obtained higher scores on ACL scales of Personal Adjustment and Self-confidence than those whose mothers had a negative attitude. No difference was found in scores on the scale Self-control. Limitations of the study are discussed.
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INTRODUCTION

Americans have become an increasingly mobile people. In former times, generations of families lived in the same ancestral home, but today about one-fifth of all Americans move one or more times each year (U. S. Census, Note 5). Many families move, not because of any desire to live in a different house or area, but because the primary wage-earner has been asked, or required, to move by an employer. The military services, large corporations, and many government agencies, transfer employees every few years, or oftener.

Many parents who face frequent moves worry about the consequences to their children. Often the mother and father had a much more stable childhood, growing up in one house, or in one town, until adulthood. These parents feel anxious because they are unable to provide the same stable environment for their children.

This study was conducted to determine if any significant differences in personality characteristics occur in adolescents who have moved frequently during childhood, as compared with other adolescents who have lived for a longer period of time in one place.

Review of Literature

The problems of people who move have been of interest
for generations. In an 1897 issue of the *American Journal of Sociology*, H. A. Mills said that localities are not responsible for the care of those who are not residents (Tropman, Note 4). During the early part of the twentieth century a number of social analysts studied mobility and concluded that mobility is a disruptive force in society (McKenzi, 1921). Later sociologists looked for a possible relationship between mobility and mental illness (Tietze, Lembau, & Cooper, 1942; Malzberg & Lee, 1956; Chesteen, Bergeron, & Addison, 1970).

In recent years popular authors such as Vance Packard (1972) and Robert Seidenberg (1975) have written about the problems encountered by families faced with frequent moves. Increasing mobility in our society is seen by them as having a deleterious effect on family life and is blamed for widespread loneliness, immorality, and even for a higher crime rate.

Packard (1972) compared the personal relationships of people in a "high-mobile" town (Azusa, California) with those of people in a "stable" town (Glen Falls, New York). He found: "In general a stable environment is more conducive to the development of shared concern, helpfulness in emergencies, and close friendships" (p. 227). However, he was surprised to find people in Azusa maintaining as close attachments to kinfolk as residents of Glen Falls.

Seidenberg (1975) is a psychologist who has counseled
many corporate wives suffering the ill effects of frequent moves. He states that a man can transfer his "credentials" when he moves, while his wife and children cannot. According to Seidenberg, they suffer a loss of identity and status which leads to great distress and unhappiness.

A number of psychologists have reported on children they have seen who suffered from experiences in moving (Evers, Forman, Switzer, Hirschberg, Meyers, & Gray, 1961; Hirschberg, Note 3; Seidenberg, 1975). Elizabeth Barnett (cited in Seidenberg, 1975, p. 63) contends that any move "... entails a built-in and undesirable sense of loss" and depression is unavoidable.

Hirschberg (Note 3) described a number of cases from child guidance clinics in which a child suffered trauma as the result of a family move. One of the effects cited was that value is placed by the child on the ease with which new ties are made, rather than on the depth of a relationship.

Evers et al., (1961) believes a child suffers at least a temporary impairment in the ability to cope with life, whenever a move occurs. However the impairment occurs, not from the move itself, but from the loss of parental attention that is experienced because the parent is less readily available to the child during the time of a family move.

Much of the literature on moving comes from uncontrolled, clinical observations. Carefully conducted studies
are relatively few, and comparison between them is difficult. Various types of populations are studied, mobility is defined in different ways, and a variety of outcome measures are employed.

The effects of moving that have interested social scientists generally fit within the categories of (a) interpersonal relationships or (b) mental illness in adults, (c) school achievement or (d) personality traits in children and adolescents.

Studies of interpersonal relationships have generally shown no adverse effects from moving (Litwak, 1960; Litwak & Fellin, 1963; Freedman, 1950; McAllister, Butler, & Kaiser, 1973). However, Packard (1972), in contrast, did find that mobility had adversely affected interpersonal relationships. Because these studies are quite diverse, not easily compared, and have minimal relevance to the present research, a description of methodology and subjects used has not been included here.

Research has been conducted seeking to determine if a relationship exists between mobility and mental illness. Malzberg and Lee (1956) studied rates of admission to a mental hospital and found a higher rate of psychosis existing in persons who had recently migrated from another state than in persons born in-state.

Tietze, Lemkau and Cooper (1942) studied a mental hygiene survey done by the Eastern Health District of
Baltimore and found a greater number of mental disorders among people who had moved frequently than those in the population who had moved less often. Tietze et al., raise, but do not answer, the question: "Do people with mental problems move more, or does moving cause the problem?"

A more recent study (Chesteen, Bergeron & Addison, 1970) looked at first admissions to a state hospital and a mental health center and found a greater number of admissions among those who had never moved than among persons who had moved frequently. They were surprised that their results did not agree with other studies and suggest that it is perhaps healthier to move than to stay in one place too long.

A number of studies concerned with the effects of moving on children have focused on school achievement. These studies also obtained differing results. Beach and Beach (1937) examined the school records of mobile children from 100 families who had registered during the current semester and had moved at least four times recently. These children were found to be somewhat below "normal" in scholarship.

Long (1975) also found a relationship between mobility and poor scholarship. The children in his study who had lived outside the state of their birth in 1965 and in another state in 1970 were more likely to be below the modal grade for their age if their parents were not college
educated. However, for the population as a whole, including those whose parents were college educated, this did not hold true. Long states that interstate migration is more likely for the well-educated, and these children are less likely to be behind in school than less mobile children.

Other studies have found differences between mobile and nonmobile groups of children favorable to the mobile group regarding both academic achievement and social acceptance. Evans (1966) studied pupil records and found mobile children had better scores in reading and science with little difference in other subjects.

Downie (1953) compared intelligence test scores of children who had moved a great deal with those of children who had been in continuous residence and found no differences. In addition, he measured social acceptance using a sociometric technique and found that one or two moves, or being in the school system one-to-three years after moving, led to greater social acceptance than having been in the same school all one's life, having moved quite a bit, or being in the system less than one year.

A number of studies have been concerned with the effects of moving on personality traits and behavior in children, adolescents, and young adults. However, comparison between studies is generally difficult because of different methodologies used, different traits examined, different definitions of mobility, and other major differences.
However, two studies that can be compared are by Mann (1972) and Sticht and Fox (1966). Each had anxiety as one dependent variable, and each used undergraduate college students as subjects.

Mann divided his subjects into two groups. One group, who had lived in four to 13 residences were classified high-mobile. The low-mobile group had lived in one-to-three residences. Using the Omnibus Personality Inventory, Form C, he found the high-mobile group had a greater tolerance for new situations, were more autonomous, had less anxiety, and were more socially mature than the low-mobile group. He also found more schizoid functioning in the low-mobile group.

In contrast, Sticht and Fox found higher anxiety among high-mobile college students. Subjects in the high mobility group had made 7-20 moves, while the low mobility group had moved one to three times. The Rokeach Dogmatism E scale and the Taylor Manifest Anxiety Scale were used. The authors found the high mobility group scored higher on dogmatism and anxiety. It is difficult to know whether the differing results are due to the different tests used, or some other factor. One possible explanation may be that the population in the Mann study (1972), because it was done at a later period of time than the Sticht and Fox study (1966), were more accepting of mobility, reflecting a society which increasingly sees mobility as the norm.
A study done by Wooster and Harris (1972) compares boys from service families (designated mobile group) and boys from a civilian population (designated stable). Subjects were shown photos of boys unknown to themselves and told to rank them on numerous constructs, tell which boy was seen to be "most like yourself," and which boy is "most like what you would like to be." The stable group was significantly better able to make clear judgments involving self-reference and self-concept. The authors failed to note those cultural differences between military and civilian families not related to mobility which may have affected the boys' judgments.

Kantor (1965) studied the effects of moving on personality adjustment in children by looking at behavioral differences as reported by mothers. In her study of 440 families, mobility was defined as a difference in address at the end of the study period (two years in duration) from that given at the beginning of the study. Such behaviors as eating, sleeping, relationships with other children and adults, nervousness, crying, and other symptoms were examined. She found residential change alone was not sufficient to raise or reduce children's disturbance level.

One of the variables mentioned in research concerned with the effects of mobility on children and adolescents is the parental attitude toward moving. Several authors cite the importance of parental attitude in determining the
impact the move will have on the family involved (Gutman, 1963; Jones, 1973; Schorr, 1956; Stubblefield, 1955). However, only two studies were found which treat attitude as a variable.

Pederson and Sullivan (1964) studied the interrelatedness of geographical mobility, parental attitude, and emotional disturbance in children. Their subjects were 11-to-15 year old males. Twenty-seven were from an emotionally disturbed group of children. Thirty were from a group defined as normal (having good achievement in school, with no disruptive behavior). Both groups had approximately the same incidence of mobility, but differed in respect to parental attitudes toward mobility. Mothers of the children in the normal group scored significantly higher than mothers of disturbed on the Acceptance of Mobility scale. There were no differences on scores between the two groups of fathers. Both mothers and fathers of normals scored higher than parents of disturbed children on a scale of identification with the military.

In contrast, Barrett and Noble (1973) found that the attitude toward moving made no difference in their subjects. They studied the effects of a long-distance move on children between three and 18 years of age. Questionnaires were used to probe the reasons for moving, attitudes of family members toward moving, adjustment of family members to the move, and parental judgment of effects on children. They
used the Louisville Behavior Check List to measure degree of emotional disturbance. They found little evidence of negative effects due to moving, and small differences in percentage of disability due to parental attitudes.

The apparent contradiction between these two studies may be due to differences in incidence of mobility. The study by Barrett and Noble focused on families who had recently moved. No appraisal was made of how many times the families had moved. The normal children in the Pederson and Sullivan study, however, had lived in an average of 10.5 residences, while the patient group had a mean of 9.1 residences since birth. It may be that parental attitude becomes more important when more moves are experienced by the child.

Studdfield (1955) feels the attitude of the entire family, siblings as well as parents, is important. He looked at individual cases of emotional problems in children caused by lack of help from either school or family in adjusting to a move. He suggested that if the father's transfer by the company means a better way of life for the family, the child will be more likely to respond to the general enthusiasm of the family about the new venture.

Perhaps family attitude toward moving, and effects of the move, may have reciprocal influences. That is, if the family has a positive attitude toward moving, the effects of the move may be beneficial to the family. At the same
time, if the perceived effects of the move, such as a better job, better home, better neighborhood, are seen as beneficial by the family, they would likely have a positive attitude toward moving. This reciprocal effect could help explain why studies of mobility arrive at differing conclusions. Results may vary depending upon the group under study and their reasons for moving.

Gutman (1963) found that middle-class movers assimilate better than lower-class movers. They are more inclined to take the initiative for becoming acquainted with new neighbors than lower classes, who expect others to "make the first move." Middle-class movers also are likely to move for different reasons than lower-class movers, for instance, because of a transfer to a better job. The result is a different attitude toward moving and better assimilation.

Although popular opinion regards mobility as an aspect of modern-day life that is deleterious, a review of the literature fails to support this view. While some studies do point toward negative effects, such findings are not consistent, and other studies suggest that too little mobility may be as bad as too much.

As emphasized previously, direct comparison of studies is not possible because of the differing aspects of the problem explored, differing types of populations studied, and the variety of outcome measures used. Kantor (1965)
has suggested that variations in findings may also be related to such factors as the time or age at which mobility occurs, the distance of the move, or the measures of mobility and disturbance used. As has been stated, the reasons for moving may also affect outcome, and reasons for moving will differ between populations under study.

Definition of Problem

Many American families are necessarily mobile. This condition is not likely to change significantly in the near future. Therefore, families who move frequently should be aware of problems of adjustment which their children may face. If there are factors other than the frequency of moves (which may be beyond their control), which influence the effects of a move, these factors should be known by the parents.

Unfortunately, as the previous review indicated, relatively little research has been conducted which significantly increases our knowledge about the problem. Studies that have been conducted to date have been necessarily clinical and retrospective. Obviously, experimental research where independent variables are manipulated as desired by the experimenter is impossible in this area, since subjects cannot be relocated at varying frequency rates. Instead the researcher must study populations who have moved and draw conclusions from what is found.
Many public agencies find it necessary to transfer employees and their families from one location to another in order to effectively match employee skills and experience with work to be performed. The U. S. Forest Service is one such agency.

As the wife of a Forest Service employee, I participated in a panel discussion at an employee orientation session. At that time I became aware of the concern felt by many employees and their spouses regarding the effects of moving on their children. The present research was conducted in an effort to help answer employee questions regarding moving and, at the same time, offer information useful to management in making policy decisions regarding transfer of employees and their families.

This study examined the effects of moving on personality traits of adolescent Forest Service family members as measured by selected scales of *The Adjective Check List*. A group of high-mobile teenagers was compared with a group of low-mobile teenagers.

Some of the research literature reviewed suggested that the mother's attitude toward moving effects the child's experience, either positively or negatively. Therefore, the mother's attitude toward moving was included in this research.

This study had two independent variables: mobility rate and maternal attitude.
Mobility Rate

Various perspectives have been used in the study of mobility. Mobility has been defined in terms of communities rather than individuals. That is, a community containing a mobile population is contrasted with a community having a more stable population (Gordon & Gordon, 1958; Packard, 1972). Some studies examine the effects of a recent move (McAllister, Butler & Kaiser, 1973; Weissman & Paykel, 1972)) or a change of address during a certain period of time (Kantor, 1965; Malzberg & Lee, 1956).

Other studies have defined mobility in terms of frequency of moves. Tietze et al., (1942) divided their study population into three groups: one with residence in the same house for ten years or more, one in the same residence two-to-nine years, and one in residence for one year or less. Chesteen et al., (1970) used five categories for the population in their study: those subjects with an average rate of one move per year, a move every two years, every five years, every 10-to-20 years, or never moved.

In some research concerned with frequency of moves, populations have been divided into high-mobile and low-mobile groups. Mann (1972) defined college students who had lived in one-to-three residences as low-mobile, while the high-mobile group were those who had lived in four-to-thirteen residences. Sticht and Fox (1966) classified as high-mobile, those subjects who had moved seven-to-twenty
times during their lifetime. His low-mobile group had moved one-to-three times. By excluding those who had moved four-to-eight times, only the extremes at each end of the continuum of mobility were studied.

No precedent has been established in the literature for defining mobility. The designation of high or low mobility, or levels between, seems to have been done in an arbitrary manner, with no justification given for the categories established (Chesteen et al., 1970; Tietze et al., 1942; Sticht & Fox, 1966; Mann, 1972).

One logical method of approaching the problem would be to use a mobility rate equal to the national average in establishing high and low mobility groups, designating as high-mobile those groups having a frequency rate higher than the national average, and as low-mobile, those below the national average. However, mobility rate can be seen as a distinct trait of the particular population under study. When studying such a population it would be misleading to use national averages in establishing high or low mobility groups, if the population under study had a mobility rate with an average higher than the national average.

For instance, Allied Van Lines reports that corporate managers in marketing and engineering have been moving every two and a half years (Packard, 1972). A study of the children of these managers might logically use the average of a move every two and a half years as a median point,
classifying those above as high-mobile and those below as low-mobile.

The subjects in this study are from a relatively homogeneous group and, therefore, high and low mobility was defined in terms of this group. Those subjects with a higher mobility rate than the population average were defined as high-mobile, while those at or below the average mobility rate were defined as low-mobile.

Another factor that has been of interest in mobility research is the distance of the move. Some studies have been limited to moves which entail a move in or out of a city, county or state (Freedman, 1950; Long, 1975; Malzberg & Lee, 1956). Other studies have been concerned with any change of residence, regardless of distance moved (Mann, 1972; Tietze et al., 1942; Sticht & Fox, 1966; Chesteen et al., 1970).

Nelson and Clews (1973) believe you cannot simply look at the number of moves in studying mobility. They suggest that the distance involved in a move is important to the total effect. In a study that examined differences in religious behavior as associated with mobility, they used an index of geographical mobility which was $GM = \frac{D \times P}{N}$

where $D =$ distance moved, $P =$ period of residence at a given address, and $N =$ number of years since leaving parents home.

Butler (Note 1) disagreed that the number of miles moved is important. He stated:
In effect the residential change within the metropolitan area effects the life of an individual . . . to the same degree as a much longer distance move. The outcome of the move can be considered the same even though different factors may be needed to explain the move in the first place (p. 4).

Neither Nelson and Clews (1973) who believe distance is important, nor Butler (1970) who believes it is not, gave evidence in support of their position.

In deciding whether to use an "index of geographical mobility" or simply a frequency count in determining mobility rate, I interviewed a number of Forest Service employees and their spouses. The interviews took place at a Forest Service training session where problems related to mobility were discussed. Among those persons I talked to, the consensus of opinion, based on their personal experiences, was that the effects of a move were virtually the same whether the move had been within the same state or across country.

One employee had moved his family between several states, including Alaska, Washington, D.C., and California. He felt his long-distance moves had made no more impact on his family than moves of a much shorter distance. The important elements, in his opinion, were the change of schools, churches, and friends, that take place even when distances are relatively short (Hickman, Note 2). However, I talked to several employees who had changed residence while in the same job. In these instances, the children did not
change schools and there was no disruptions in friendships. In order to eliminate such moves from a frequency count of moves, subjects in this study were told to disregard any moves that had been less than five miles in distance.

In summary, the variable "Mobility Rate" was defined as follows: high-mobility is a mobility rate higher than the average rate of the subject population. Low-mobility is a mobility rate at or below the average rate of the subject population. Moves of less than five miles distance were not counted in determining frequency of moves.

Maternal Attitude

The other independent variable in this study was the attitude of the mother toward moving. While Seidenberg (1975) talked to women who had found moving distressful, Gutman (1963) says that some women seem to flourish as the consequence of a move.

Among Forest Service families, some mothers worry about frequent changes of schools for their children, while others report that mobility has apparently made their children more resilient and adaptable. The former group is resistant to moving, while the latter is acceptant. The mother's attitude toward moving may be expected to affect the child's adjustment to a new area and new people.

Although the previously cited studies by Pederson and Sullivan (1964) and Barrett and Noble (1973), focused on the attitudes of both parents, more studies have been concerned

Traditionally mothers have borne the brunt of blame for their children's emotional problems. This may be questionable in many circumstances where, logically, the father should share in being held responsible for the results of child-rearing practices. However, in the case of family mobility, the mother seems more likely to exert differential influence, either positively or negatively because, in most cases, it must be assumed that the father is favorable toward a family move. Either he has accepted a job in a new location which he believes will be an advancement to his career, or he has accepted employment in an organization in which frequent transfers are the norm, such as in military service. In any case, he is less likely to feel resentment about having to move.

For the wife's part, she is expected to go willingly with her husband to the new location. However, she may feel unexpressed resentment toward her uprooting and, even though possibly unexpressed, her resentment may influence her own adjustment to the new situation and that of her children.

McKain (1973) studied relocation in the military and found a relationship between feelings of alienation and problems with moving. The wives in the study who had a high degree of identification with Army life experienced fewer move-associated family problems. Another study found that
women who tried to keep up with the husband's job activities were better at becoming integrated into a new neighborhood (Litwak & Fellin, 1963). Both studies (McKain, 1973; Litwak & Fellin, 1963) support the view that a woman's attitude will affect adjustment by her and her family to a move.

One reason the mother's attitude may be more important than her husband's is that she is more involved in the planning, arrangements, and actual work of the move. While the husband is immersed in learning aspects of his new job situation, he will likely leave to his wife most of the problems associated with relocation. These problems include helping the children adjust to their new location. The women in a study conducted by Jones (1973) support this view. They felt the wife played the key role in establishing a new home and making the move successful. In families who had moved once or twice, 60% of respondents expressed this view. The percentage holding this view increased to 85% for those who had moved 16 or more times. The more families move, the more women see their own role as pivotal.

In keeping with the view of woman's role being pivotal, the maternal attitude toward moving was treated as an independent variable in this study.

**Dependent variable.** Although, as was seen in the literature review, social scientists have been concerned with a variety of effects arising from mobility, the focus
of this study was on adolescent personality. The questions I was interested in helping to answer were those I had heard voiced by numerous concerned parents: "Will moving have a bad effect on my child's personal adjustment? Will moving make my child more likely to be shy or less self-confident?"

The literature has failed to answer these questions. Several studies concerned with the effects on children were concerned with educational achievement (Beach & Beach, 1937; Downie, 1953; Evans, 1966). Moreover, studies which were concerned with personality adjustment, found conflicting results. For example, while Wooster and Harris (1972) found an advantage for stability over mobility, studies by Kantor (1965) and Barrett and Noble (1973) revealed no ill effects due to moving. No conclusions, therefore, may be drawn.

In both the Kantor study and that of Barrett and Noble, a behavior check list was used to indicate symptoms of problems. While useful as a check for disorder, these check lists give no measure of comparative psychological well-being. My interest was not in just the presence or absence of problem symptoms, but in the overall level of functioning. Further, the population I was interested in studying was that of adolescents who had had the opportunity to experience a number of moves in their lifetimes. Children are very adaptable and changeable. While some clinicians report an emotional disturbance in children following a
family move (Evers et al., 1961; Hirschberg, Note 3; Stubblefield, 1955), we do not know if the disturbances were long-term. Experiences that can be considered pertinent to their development are those which result in lasting influence on their personality. By studying effects of moving on adolescents, we are better able to determine the effects over a longer period of time, as opposed to the immediate effects on a young child. Therefore, the population used in this study were teenagers 14 years of age or older.

Personality adjustment was defined in terms of scores obtained on The Adjective Check List scales of Self-confidence, Self-control and Personal adjustment.

Hypotheses

It was my belief that the effects of moving on personality adjustment would be due more to the attitude of the mother toward moving than to the relative frequency of the moves. Specifically, my hypotheses were:

1. There will be no significant differences between mean scores of the high and low mobility groups, as measured by The Adjective Check List scales of Self-confidence, Self-control and Personal adjustment.

2. Adolescents whose mothers have a positive attitude toward moving will have significantly higher mean scores, as measured by The Adjective Check List scales of Self-confidence, Self-control and Personal adjustment than those groups whose mothers have a negative attitude.
METHOD

This study was conducted with the cooperation of the U. S. Forest Service. Subjects in the study were members of Forest Service families.

Selection of Subjects

Letters were sent to all U. S. Forest Service employees in Region 5 (State of California), known to have one or more children 14 years of age or older living at home. The letters (Appendix A) asked for the cooperation of the employee in obtaining data to be used in a study of the effects of mobility on Forest Service families. Enclosed with the letter was a set of instructions, an Opinion Survey, The Adjective Check List, and two return envelopes.

Included on the instruction sheet (Appendix B) was a permission slip to be signed by one of the parents, giving permission for their son or daughter to participate in the study. The instructions stated that if there was more than one teenager willing to participate, they should ask the one nearest to 16 years of age to respond.

The age of 16 was selected in a somewhat arbitrary manner. As old a subject-age as possible was desired, so as to have a population that had had sufficient years to experience the effects of moving. However, if instructions
were given to have the oldest child presently in the household participate, this might have tended to result in a preponderance of first-born children in the study. It was also hypothesized that if no instructions were given, there might be a tendency to pick the eldest child (seen as more responsible) or the youngest (who might be more compliant and willing to participate). Since birth-order influences personality development (Smith & Goodchilds, 1963), a population heterogeneous as to birth order was seen as most desirable.

The Opinion Survey (Appendix C) called for a listing of children by age, sex, and number of times each had moved over a distance of five miles.

The letters and enclosures were sent to the employees at their work stations and they were asked to take the materials home for completion by the appropriate family members. In order to preserve anonymity, as required by the Forest Service, they were told to return the signed permission slips in one envelope and the other material, on which no names were needed, in the other envelope.

The subjects in this study were all those from whom correctly completed copies of The Adjective Check List, Opinion Survey, and permission slip were received. There were 101 female and 72 male subjects with an age range from 14 to 19 and a mean age of 15.8 years.

Assignment to groups. Assignment to groups was done on
the basis of information obtained from the completed Opinion Surveys.

After attitude scores were computed and mobility rates calculated, subjects were divided into four groups: Group 1—Low mobility children whose mothers have a positive attitude toward moving, Group 2—High mobility children whose mothers have a positive attitude toward moving, Group 3—Low mobility children whose mothers have a negative attitude toward moving, Group 4—High mobility children whose mothers have a negative attitude toward moving.

Definition of Terms

The independent variables of "Mobility rate" and "Attitude of mother" were operationally defined in the following manner.

Mobility Rate

The mobility rate of each subject was determined by dividing a subject's age by the number of times he/she had moved, plus one. That is, a 15-year-old subject who has moved four times has lived in a total of five residences, including the one of his birth. The mobility rate for such a subject would be three, having lived in each residence an average of three years.

After computing each subject's mobility rate, the population mean was determined. The high-mobility group were those subjects who had, on the average, been in any
one residence for a shorter time than the population mean. The low-mobility group were those subjects who had been in residence for a length of time equal to, or longer than, the population mean.

**Maternal Attitude**

The positive or negative attitude of the mother was assessed by a questionnaire specifically designed for this study (Appendix C) and was validated (Appendix D) on a group of 22 women members of the Riverside Newcomers Club.

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of eight statements on which the respondent was to indicate her degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement. Each statement was scored from 0 to 5. A score of 0 was given for each statement favorable toward moving which was checked "Strongly Disagree" and for each statement unfavorable toward moving checked "Strongly Agree." A score of 5 was given for each statement favorable toward moving checked "Strongly Agree" and for each statement unfavorable toward moving checked "Strongly Disagree." Scores of 1 through 4 were possible when responses between the two extremes were checked. The range of possible total scores was 0 to 40.

When the questionnaires were validated, half the scores were in the 0 to 20 range, and the remainder were above 20. Therefore, scores of 0 to 20 were considered as reflecting a negative attitude, while scores of 21 to 40 were considered
as reflecting a positive attitude.

The second part of the questionnaire was not scored, but was used as additional information and verification. It contained three paired statements of conflicting feelings. The respondent was asked to check the one statement from each pair which best described her feelings toward moving.

**Measuring Instrument**

The choice of a psychological test was limited due to the design of this study. Ethical considerations precluded the use of many widely-used tests, since the tests had to be sent by mail to prospective subjects.

It was deemed desirable to use a test that could be completed in a relatively short length of time, since it would more likely receive acceptance and elicit cooperation from a teenage subject than would a more lengthy test.

The **Adjective Check List (ACL)** met the desired criteria. The ACL consists of 300 commonly used adjectives used to describe personal attributes. The respondent marks all the adjectives considered to be descriptive of him/herself.

The ACL was developed as a technique for gathering observations in personality assessment. Four scales were developed by empirical item keying against a criterion of intensive personal observation and evaluation of participants in the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research Assessment (Anastasi, 1968). Of these, three were used in
this study: Self-confidence, Self-control, and Personal adjustment.

Results from test-retest reliability studies are given in the ACL manual (Gough & Heilbrun, 1965). Excerpts from Table 2 of the manual, showing correlation coefficients for ACL scales used in this study, are shown in Appendix E. The three scales used appear to have fairly high reliability over a ten-week interval and adequate reliability over a 5 1/2-year interval.

The ACL manual also gives correlations between ACL scales and those of well-established existing measures. The Self-control scale is correlated (+ .48) with the measure of Self-control from the California Psychological Inventory (CPI). The ACL Self-confidence scale positively correlates with the CPI scales of Self-acceptance (.38), Sociability (.47) and Dominance (.57). Further, ACL Personal adjustment scale correlates negatively with eight of the ten psycho-pathological dimensions on the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory.

While the ACL has been criticized as being an inadequate rating instrument for clinical assessment (Rorer, 1972), others cite its utility for research and its economical assessment of general adjustment (Vance, 1972; Aiken, 1974). Aiken states that the ACL "... has been used extensively in research on personality, and appears to be as valid as many instruments of greater complexity." (Page 250.)
RESULTS

A total of 479 letters, with enclosures, were mailed to Forest Service employees, three of which were returned as undeliverable. Of the 476 employees receiving the mailing, 232 responded, but only 173 qualified for inclusion in this study. (A complete explanation and tabulation of reasons for noninclusion in the data of the other 59 responses is shown in Appendix F.)

The mean mobility rate of the population was 3.6 years in residence, with 57 in the low mobility groups and 116 in the high mobility groups. After calculating attitude scores, 118 subjects were found to have mothers with a positive attitude and 55 had mothers with a negative attitude.

As predicted in Hypothesis 1, no significant differences were found between mean scores of the high and low mobility groups. However, as predicted in Hypothesis 2, differences were found between attitude groups, with positive maternal attitude groups scoring higher than negative attitude groups. Mean scores for both mobility and attitude groups are shown in Table 1.

A two-way analysis of variance was made of the data. As shown in Table 2, scores on ACL scale Self-confidence were significantly higher for positive attitude groups than
Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations of ACL Scores for Mobility and Maternal Attitude Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobility Groups</th>
<th>Low Mobility</th>
<th>High Mobility</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 57</td>
<td>N = 116</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Confidence</td>
<td>48.02 10.44</td>
<td>48.59 9.96</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Control</td>
<td>42.42 9.67</td>
<td>44.41 10.12</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Adjust</td>
<td>46.44 10.07</td>
<td>46.14 9.67</td>
<td>3.717</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maternal Attitude Groups</th>
<th>Positive Attitude</th>
<th>Negative Attitude</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 118</td>
<td>N = 55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Confidence</td>
<td>49.43 9.74</td>
<td>46.20 10.58</td>
<td>5.189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Control</td>
<td>44.22 9.61</td>
<td>42.76 10.78</td>
<td>.643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Adjustment</td>
<td>47.29 9.29</td>
<td>43.98 10.48</td>
<td>4.696</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

for negative attitude groups (F = 5.189, p = .023). Scores for positive attitude groups were also significantly higher on ACL scale Personal adjustment (F = 4.696, p = .030). However, mean scores for Self-control were not significantly different.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Self-confidence</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Self-Control</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Personal adjustment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MS</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td>MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility (A)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>160.067</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.670</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal Attitude (B)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>497.441</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.189**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>64.760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mob X Mat. Att. (AB)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.301</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>97.451</td>
<td>.967</td>
<td>8.498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (within)</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95.861</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100.765</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>93.734</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* *p* = .03
** *p* = .023
DISCUSSION

The results of this study fail to support the popular belief that frequent moves have a negative effect on children or adolescents. Although much of the literature reviewed came from uncontrolled studies that presented a view of mobility as having a negative influence, little hard data has been found in this study, or elsewhere, that confirms this view.

Of the three measures used in this study, on only one was a difference found between scores by mobility groups that was favorable to the low mobility groups. On Personal adjustment scores the mean for the low mobility groups was 46.44, while the mean for high mobility groups was 46.14, a difference that approaches significance ($p = .052$). On measures of Self-confidence and Self-control, the high mobility groups scored higher than the low mobility groups (Table 1) but the difference in means fell far short of significance. Therefore, high mobility, by itself, does not appear to have negative effects on the adolescent personality traits measured in this study.

Mean ACL scores on both Personal adjustment and Self-confidence were significantly higher for the positive maternal attitude groups than for the negative maternal attitude groups. Therefore, it appears that insofar as
these traits are concerned, the mother's attitude toward moving is more significant than the frequency of moves in determining the effects of moving on adolescents. On the Self-control scale, no significant differences were seen between groups due to either mobility or attitude. It is interesting to note that the scores on Self-control were lower than the other measures. Perhaps the attitude of the mother does not influence a youngster's self-control and, therefore, a positive attitude would not tend to raise scores on this measure.

This study suggests that the maternal attitude toward moving is an important factor among adolescents who move in determining certain personality variables. A negative attitude on the part of the mother has a negative impact. However, it may be that the attitude toward moving is simply indicative of a generally negativistic personality. It is possible that in this study the overall personality of the mother is as much a critical factor as is her attitude toward just one aspect of her life, moving.

The subjects of this study were obtained through a mail survey. In such a study the person conducting the research must be concerned with sample bias. When the response rate is low, a risk exists that a particular segment of the population has responded that may not be representative of the larger population. Babbie (1973) states that a high response rate indicates an unbiased sample, while a low
response rate is likely to be biased. He considers a 50% response rate adequate to assure lack of bias.

The response rate obtained in this study was 47%. Although this is slightly less than the 50% Babbie regards as adequate, it may be considered a high response rate when the unusual requirements of this study are considered. For each response received, the efforts of three individuals were needed. The first was the employee who took the materials home. The second was the mother who completed the questionnaire. (In a few cases the employee may also have been the mother.) The third person to participate was the teenager who filled out the ACL. Considering these circumstances, the response rate may be seen as very high.

The large number of responses received was due, apparently, to a high degree of interest in this study by Forest Service employees and their families. This high interest was evidenced by the comments given on the bottom of the questionnaires. Whereas one might expect that a minority of persons would take the time and effort to write in comments, the majority did so. Of the 211 questionnaires received, only 60 contained no comments. An analysis of these comments was made, noting the similar themes that occurred. A synopsis is given in Appendix G.

Limitations of Study

The independent variables in this study were Maternal Attitude and Mobility Rate. However, as can be seen in
Figure 1, a high proportion of subjects in the High Mobility groups were also in the Positive Maternal attitude groups, suggesting a correlation may exist between maternal attitude and mobility rate. A Chi square analysis was made of subject groups, with a resulting value of $x^2 = 5.71 (p < .02)$. Therefore, a correlation is seen to exist between the independent variables, and results must be interpreted cautiously; the impact of Maternal Attitude on adolescents is not free of Mobility Rate itself. However, the two-way analysis of variance used in this study is known to be relatively insensitive to correlations between independent variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maternal Attitude</th>
<th>Low Mobility</th>
<th>High Mobility</th>
<th>Total by Attitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total by Mobility</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Number of Subjects per Group.

The correlation between positive attitude and frequency of moves is very interesting. Two equally likely explanations...
are offered here. It may be that persons who have had to move a lot adjust to, and learn to like, a life style that includes a frequent change of scenery. On the other hand, it may also be that women who like to move encourage their husbands to seek transfers, with the result that the family moves more than would families wherein the wife discourages mobility. However, although high mobility and positive attitude are correlated, no causal relationship may be assumed. It may be that Forest Service people are largely mobile (which seems to be the case) and that most people in the Forest Service like to move.

This research was prompted by an interest in Forest Service families and their problems. While mobility is an issue with large areas of the population other than Forest Service families, caution must be exercised in generalizing these findings to other segments of society. The reason for this is that Forest Service families often have a "support system" not often found in other employment situations. This support system derives from the novel life-style characteristic of many of these families: A life style that may include residence on a government compound in an isolated mountain area and close contact with other Forest Service families on the compound.

Litwak (1960) found that modified extended families aided in problems associated with geographical mobility. Forest Service families often benefit from a type of
quasi-entended family. That is, a network of past and present co-workers who help each other in adapting to a new job location and in getting acquainted in a new area.

However, moving with the Forest Service may not be unlike moving with the military or with large corporations who also may offer a "support system" for their members. Urban Forest Service employees resemble other managerial members of bureaucratic organizations. Litwak and Fellin (1960) found that families of these types of employees were more likely to integrate quickly into a neighborhood, were trained to deal with change and, therefore, found changing geographic location less of a problem. It is likely that studies of adolescents from families with a managerial head-of-house would obtain results similar to those found in this study.

**Implication for Future Research**

Studies with other types of populations are needed to determine the extent to which results of this study may be generalized to a wider population.

Further, the attitude toward moving was the only maternal quality that was measured. Future research could look for critical personality characteristics in mothers of adolescents who must move frequently.

The mean ACL scores on Personal adjustment indicate a trend toward lower scores being associated with higher
mobility. Although the difference in mean scores was not significant, further research in this area could indicate if in fact such a trend in Personal adjustment scores exists, or if the difference in mean scores was by chance.

**Implication for Mobility Policy**

As stated previously, many organizations find it necessary to transfer employees in order to optimally utilize employee skills and experience. This study suggests that frequent moves need not be detrimental to the personal adjustment of children. It also suggests that the mother's attitude toward moving can be an important component in the child's experience. While the mother's attitude might be thought to be beyond the control or concern of an organization responsible for transfers, I believe the employing organization can, and should, be concerned with family attitudes toward moving. Women in the study by Jones (1973) point out that:

> There is little training in early life or college which helps in the adjustment to moving or preparing them to cope with the many demands and problems faced by a family which is caught up in the moving process. (p. 214.)

Organizations which have a policy of moving employees frequently could conduct workshops or training sessions where the problems of moving are discussed and advice from knowledgeable persons is given so as to minimize the difficulties encountered by the families.
If organizations manifested concern for their employees and demonstrated a willingness to help with the problems arising from policies promoting mobility, perhaps families would find moving easier and more mothers would have a positive attitude toward moving. The result could be better personal adjustment for more children who move frequently.
APPENDIX A

LETTER TO FOREST SERVICE EMPLOYEES

United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

Re: Forest Service Mobility Study

Dear [name]

The Forest Service has authorized me to conduct research into the effects of mobility of Forest Service families. The findings of this study will be included in my master's thesis, "The Effects of Family Moving on Adolescent Personality Adjustment."

I am asking employees with one or more children 14 years of age or older for their participation. You can assist in this research by taking the enclosed documents to your family for completion: The Adjective Check List by a teenage family member, and the opinion survey by the mother.

Your help in obtaining the cooperation of your family in this effort is earnestly requested. As a Forest Service wife and mother myself, the subject of moving is of personal interest to me. My research findings will be available to the Forest Service as an aid in making enlightened policy decisions regarding family moves. By participating in this study, you have an opportunity to contribute to policy regarding mobility.

Thank you very much for your vital help in my study.

Sincerely,

Jean M. Irwin
APPENDIX B

INSTRUCTION FORM TO FOREST SERVICE EMPLOYEE

PLEASE NOTE:

1. YOU NEED NOT HAVE MOVED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.
2. ALL INFORMATION VOLUNTEERED WILL BE KEPT IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE.
3. YOUR HELP IS URGENTLY NEEDED. MEANINGFUL RESEARCH FINDINGS CAN ONLY BE OBTAINED IF A LARGE NUMBER OF FAMILIES RESPOND.

To aid in this research will you please do the following:

1. Sign below, giving permission for your teenager to participate in the study.
2. Have enclosed questionnaire completed by the mother.
3. Have your teenager fill in The Adjective Check List, giving age and sex. No name is needed. (If you have more than one teenager willing to participate, please ask the one whose age is nearest to 16 years to respond.
4. Return documents in enclosed envelopes. (To assure anonymity, return permission slip in separate envelope.)

-----------------------------------------------------------------

I hereby give my permission for participation by my teenager in research conducted under the official auspices of the Department of Psychology, California State College San Bernardino and done in cooperation with the U. S. Forest Service.

I hereby consent to the use of the information obtained in The Adjective Check List and in the completed questionnaire. I understand that the information gathered will be used for research purposes only, that it will be handled in the strictest professional confidence, and that no names or personal information will be furnished to the Forest Service. Only summarized data will be used, rather than individual identities or personalities.

(Signed) ____________________________
(Date) ____________________________

41:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>No. times moved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Please list your children by age, sex, and number of times each have moved over 50 miles during his/her lifetime.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone number</th>
<th>Husband's job title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Appendix G**

**Opinion Survey**

*Table of statements:*

- **Children who move frequently have difficulty making friends.**
  - Strongly Agree
  - Mildly Agree
  - Mildly Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree

- **I usually find it easy to adjust to a new area.**
  - Strongly Agree
  - Mildly Agree
  - Mildly Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree

- **Moving makes school adjustment difficult for children.**
  - Strongly Agree
  - Mildly Agree
  - Mildly Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree

- **People are usually friendly to new neighbors.**
  - Strongly Agree
  - Mildly Agree
  - Mildly Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree

- **My children usually are unhappy when they learn we will move.**
  - Strongly Agree
  - Mildly Agree
  - Mildly Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree

- **Children usually are unhappy when they learn we will move.**
  - Strongly Agree
  - Mildly Agree
  - Mildly Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
People who move often have more interesting lives than those who stay in one place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Mildly Agree</th>
<th>Mildly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Children should not be moved during a school year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Mildly Agree</th>
<th>Mildly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

People who move a lot usually have many friends in different places.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Mildly Agree</th>
<th>Mildly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Below are paired statements regarding moving. Please put a check mark in the blank opposite one statement in each pair that comes closest to your feelings.

a. I find moving exciting.

b. I hate moving.

a. Moving is bad for children.

b. Moving can be a positive experience for children.

When I learn my husband is being transferred I usually:

a. feel mostly favorable toward moving.

b. feel mostly unfavorable toward moving.

Comments: __________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________
The preliminary questionnaire, consisting of ten statements, were distributed at a Newcomers Club meeting. After the questionnaires had been scored, the women who had participated were contacted by telephone. A comparison was made between attitude scores and responses to statements given over the telephone. These statements constitute the second part of the questionnaire.

An analysis of the original ten statements revealed two which tended to elicit responses inconsistent with other responses. These statements were eliminated from the final questionnaire.

A total of 19 women were available for telephone confirmation of their attitude scores. Seventeen responded to the additional three statements in the same direction as the written questionnaire.

Two women gave responses that disagreed with the attitude score obtained from the written questionnaire. It is difficult to account for this. In both cases, the women chose statement "b" in the first pair of statements in the second part, which states, "I hate moving." Similarly, the scores on the questionnaire were negative. However, they both
responded that when they learn their husband is being transferred, they feel "mostly favorable toward moving."
It may be that while their general attitude toward moving is negative, and they dislike the work involved in a move, they feel mostly favorable toward a transfer because a promotion or other benefit is involved.
APPENDIX E

CORRELATION COEFFICIENT--THE ADJECTIVE CHECK LIST OF TEST-RETEST RELIABILITY STUDY

Test-retest Reliability--Scales of The Adjective Check List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACL Scale</th>
<th>College Males (N = 56)</th>
<th>College Females (N = 23)</th>
<th>6 Months Adult Males (N = 100)</th>
<th>5 1/2 Years Medical Students (N = 34)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal adjustment</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

SUBJECT RESPONSES NOT INCLUDED IN STUDY

The mailings to Forest Service employees generated 232 responses. Of these, two responded by declining to participate in the study. Twelve others returned the mailing, saying they had no children of the right age, the parents were divorced, or the mother was deceased.

The mailing to employees was done on April 15, 1977 and by June 15 no further responses had been received for the past two weeks. By June 30, the data had been scored and tabulated. After June 30, nine more responses were received, but were not included in the data.

Of the responses received prior to June 15, 1977, 19 sent Opinion Surveys with no ACL, eight sent ACL's with no Opinion Survey, and nine returned Opinion Surveys that were incomplete, could not be scored for attitude, or did not give information sufficient to determine the mobility rate of the child.

Replies received 232

- Declined to participate 2
- Received too late 9
- No children right age, etc. 12
- No ACL returned 19
- No Opinion Survey 8
- Opinion Survey incomplete 9

Used in study -59 173

47
This study elicited a great deal of interest from mothers, as shown by the 211 questionnaires received. Of these, 151 women wrote comments about their feelings concerning moving, many crowding a paragraph or two into the brief space provided on the questionnaire, and a few even enclosing additional sheets of paper to write more.

Of those who wrote, 30 voiced strong feelings in favor of moving and 39 wrote about the negative aspects of moving. Others described both good and bad points involved in mobility. A few women said that though they had formerly enjoyed moving, now they found it more difficult. Some of the reasons given for changing attitudes were: the financial loss involved in relocation (5); they had become involved in a career which made relocation difficult (8); and a very familiar theme was that as children grow older it becomes more difficult for them to change schools (35).

Two women felt strongly that children should not be moved during the school year, while three said they believed it was easier for children to adjust if the move was made during the school year when it was easier for the children to become acquainted. Three women wrote that they felt children
should not be forced to move once they enter junior or high school.
REFERENCE NOTES


2. Hickman, J. L. Personal communication, February 8, 1976.


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Downie, N. M. A comparison between children who have moved from school to school with those who have been in continuous residence on various factors of adjustment. Journal of Educational Psychology, 1953, 44, 50-53.


