

The Impact of Residential Mobility on Altruistic Behavior

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Abstract: This paper summarizes the relationship between residential mobility and altruistic behavior. This paper expounds the present situation of the floating population in China and the world. The feasible path of providing psychological support to the floating population is proposed, including the psychological support scheme closely following the characteristics of the floating population, the cultivation of targeted talents and the popularization of online psychological support methods, so as to promote the research on the floating population.

Keywords: Residential mobility; Altruistic behavior; Social support

1. Introduction

1.1 Residential mobility

With the economic and social development and internationalization of human societies in the last few decades, population mobility has greatly increased, especially in developing countries in Asia and Africa (International Organization for Migration, 2015). Socio-ecological psychology captures this phenomenon well (Oishi, 2014). Residential mobility has become a common experience for people in most parts of the world.

Residential mobility (RM) refers to the frequency with which people change residence and is typically characterized by changes in residential space and the construction of new social networks (Oishi, 2010). The study of residential mobility has a long tradition: geographers, sociologists, economists, and psychologists have contributed extensively to the literature on the process of residential mobility and its relationship to changes in urban structure. The most frequently cited work is Rossi's (1955) classic, *The Causes of Household Migration: A Socio-Psychological Study of Urban Residential Mobility*.

Brown and Moore's (1970) article is another frequently cited work that focuses on the decision of families to move. They divide the mobility process into two stages. In the first stage, there is dissatisfaction with the current housing situation as the family environment or its composition changes. The current housing situation creates pressures that eventually lead households to the second stage: searching for vacancies in the housing stock and deciding whether to move or stay in their current residence.

1.2 Altruistic behavior

Pro-social behavior is often defined as unofficially directed behavior intended to benefit another person, such as sharing, helping, or even trying to help another person. Pro-social behaviors may be motivated by many different reasons, including concern for others, an expectation of recognition or reward, a desire to comply with norms or perceived responsibilities, or out of a belief in fairness or justice. Altruistic behavior, a subtype of pro-social behavior, is generally defined as voluntary behavior that is intrinsically motivated to benefit others, including behavior that arises out of concern for others or internalized values, goals, and self-rewards, rather than the expectation of specific or social rewards-avoidance of punishment and disapproval (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989).

Many theories have been proposed about the origins, emergence, and changes in altruistic behavior. Inclusive adaptation theory and the reciprocal altruism explanation (Hamilton, 1964) have led a generation of researchers to embrace as the standard answer that what appears to be altruism-personal sacrifice on behalf of others-is really just long-term egoism. However, recent experimental research has revealed forms of human behavior, including interactions between unrelated individuals, that cannot be explained by egoism. One such feature, which we call strong reciprocity (Henrich, 2001), is the tendency to cooperate with others and punish violators of cooperative norms at personal cost, even though it is impossible to expect that these costs will be repaid by others or at some later point in time.

2. The relationship between residential mobility and altruistic behavior

The role of neighborhood environment in behavioral health has recently become a prominent focus of research and policy. Research in the field of child development has found that pro-sociality (O'Brien et al. ,2011; Wilson et al. ,2019), aggressive behavior (Ingoldsby & Shaw 2012; Molnar et al. ,2014), juvenile delinquency (Sampson et al. 1999), mental health (Xue et al. ,2015), and behavioral problems (Edwards & Bromfield ,2019) have all been associated with characteristics of the neighborhood environment. Studies have found that these effects are independent of a wide range of individual variables, from demographics to family parenting practices, suggesting that neighborhoods help influence early life experiences of development. However, such studies are often cross-disciplinary, and the phenomena they demonstrate may be dominated by the experiences of people who have lived in their neighborhoods for most of their lives. At the same time, they are unable to determine whether children who have already had significant social experiences in another setting are affected by the characteristics described above.

To explore this issue, a study tracked the behavioral development of an urban adolescent population, some of whose families had moved within the city. Thus by paying special attention to changes in pro-sociality, defined as behaviors and attitudes that benefit others or the group as a whole. Prosociality is the key to obtaining social resources for oneself and is central to the well-being of the community, providing for the construction and maintenance of social networks and the basis for collective endeavors (Putnam, 2010).

O'Brien (2011) provided an evolutionary developmental model of individual altruistic behavior, suggesting that early life experiences can be used to guide development towards locally adaptive social strategies (Belsky, 1991). Evolutionary theorists have long argued that the success of pro-social strategies depends on the presence of social partners who are similarly pro-social, give back to others, and participate equally in cooperative ventures (Wilson & Wilson, 2017). Thus, the pro-social development of young people depends on the quality of the local social environment. Using the same sample that served as the basis for the current study, the authors tested this model in Binghamton by measuring altruistic behavior and social support from a variety of sources (family, school, extracurricular activities, religion, and community). This series of studies adds to the body of research that suggests an association between quality relationships with adults and adolescent altruism (Romano et al., 2015; Wilson & Csikszentmihalyi, 2017; Wilson et al., 2009). Furthermore, changes in altruistic behavior over time parallel changes in all forms of social support.

Unrelated to neighborhood effects, residential moves have the potential to adversely affect the development of altruistic behaviors because they often disrupt the social relationships of all members of the household (Pribesh & Downey, 1999). Research with adolescents suggests that those who move frequently report having fewer friends and being less popular (Petit, 2004; South & Haynie, 2014). In addition, they may lack adult social support as their parents are less likely to have met their friends' parents (South & Haynie, 2014), an important component of intergenerational cohesion (Coleman, 1990). This means that altruistic behavior declines for all movers, independent of the neighborhood in which they live. However, this effect may be weakened if the move is closer (Magdol & Bessel, 2013).

2.1 Current situation of residential mobility of university students

2.1.1 Current status of residential mobility in the United States and in the world

In the pursuit of happiness, millions of Americans move to a new city each year to get a better education or find a better job (Florida, 2002). In addition, millions of Americans are choosing to retire in pursuit of a better quality of life. This trend is likely to increase as 27% of Baby Boomer respondents indicated that they are fairly certain they will move to a new city when they retire (AARP, 2004). This finding is not surprising considering that residential mobility is a defining characteristic of American culture (Oishi & Kislign, 2009). What is surprising is that residential mobility is no longer confined to the United States - a land of opportunity known for its relentless pursuit of happiness. People across the globe are increasingly moving to new cities, countries, and even continents in pursuit of a better quality of life. According to the World Migration Report (International Organization for Migration, 2015), 175 million international migrants live in countries different from where they were born in 2000, up from 76 million in 1960. Recognizing that residential mobility is a key factor in globalization and increasing economic and social integration around the world, the United Nations Secretariat now holds regular high-level meetings on the subject (for example, international migration and development was discussed on August 11, 2008 at the United Nations General Assembly).

As migration becomes a common experience for most people, and even a way of life for some people around the world, it is crucial to understand precisely how residential mobility affects mindsets and behaviors. Especially in the new context of global public security, where population mobility may cause deterioration in social security and where altruistic behavior is an important factor influencing the social climate, it is important to fully explore the relationship between residential mobility and altruistic behavior and ways to improve it.

2.1.2 Current situation of residential mobility in China

China is currently a socialist primary stage society undergoing a profound transition to a market economy and experiencing dramatic urban change (Huang & Deng, 2006). In socialist Chinese cities, residential mobility within mainland China was low prior to the reform and opening up in 1978 due to a welfare-oriented housing system and a public sector that was almost equivalent to lifetime employment. After the reform and opening up, especially the urban housing reform initiated in 1988, new forces were unleashed for profound changes in all aspects of society, including an unprecedented increase in residential mobility in China and a growing number of individuals with experience of residential mobility. Currently, the rate of residential mobility in China continues to grow rapidly, and even with the impact of the global epidemic crisis since 2020 (Zhang, 2021), the overall mobility trend remains unchanged. The trend of population mobility in China tends to be from rural to urban areas, and the number of migrants from rural to urban areas has been increasing year by year, but China has been practicing a dual urban-rural household registration system, which may lead to unequal or stereotype-laden treatment of rural migrants in urban areas (Chen et al., 2020), which may in turn result in psychological problems for individuals with a lot of experience of mobility (Nelson et al., 2020). According to intervention studies on the subject, individuals who are frequently mobile lead to a decrease in altruistic behavior (Zhang & Wu 2018). A Chinese social survey also showed that the altruism of the mobile population is generally lower than that of the low-mobility population (CGSS, 2017). Therefore, paying attention to the psychological problems of the mobile population and enhancing the altruistic behavior of the mobile population is a measure of great significance for the long-term development of society.

3. Suggested Measures to Address Low Altruistic Behavior of Highly Resident Mobile Populations

3.1 Exploring Psychological Support Programs for China's Resident Mobility Population

How to prevent psychological problems and low altruistic behaviors among the high residential mobility population, and how to improve and intervene in this regard is the focus of our social psychology research today. We need to develop psychological support programs that are suitable for China. The first step is to develop appropriate psychological support programs that take into account the mobility and life characteristics of high-occupancy migrants. Currently, the characteristics of China's migrant population are often due to work or study reasons for mobility, migrant people often psychological pressure and a sense of belonging is not strong reaction is more obvious (Deng et al., 2014). Therefore, the relevant units accepting migrant individuals can carry out regular psychological support activities for migrant individuals. Through individual or group specialized support activities, individuals can accurately identify negative emotions and develop a sense of belonging to the mobile destination. Promote the application of psychological support in the daily situation of mobile individuals, and ultimately enhance the psychological state and altruistic behavior of mobile individuals. Second, a tracking pilot study will be conducted on the characteristics of the high-residence migrant population; through long-term tracking, the main factors affecting the altruistic behavior of the migrant population will be identified, and targeted and tracked intervention methods will be developed.

3.2 Nurturing counterpart psychological professionals

Due to the continuous development of social economy, China's mobile population is increasing, and the shortage of psychological talents is growing. In order to promote the psychological support for the migrant population, it is indispensable to cultivate talents with professional qualities. Professional psychology practitioners who provide psychological services for mobile populations should not only have a firm grasp of the basics of psychology, but also have a sufficient understanding of the concept of social ecological psychology of residential mobility, and have a wealth of practical experience to understand the psychological impact of large numbers of mobility on individuals, and to be able to prescribe the right medicine to enable mobile populations to obtain accurate psychological support, which is a key factor in the

development of psychological services for mobile populations. This is the basic requirement for professional psychology practitioners who provide psychological services to migrant populations(Quartiroli et al., 2022). First of all, we should make full use of social resources, selecting professionals to attend professional teacher training at universities and colleges or formal institutions, building professional teams, and cultivating backbones capable of performing front-line psychological support work and guiding psychological counseling. In addition, units with the conditions can also organize mobile people to experience psychological support through hospitals, welfare institutions and other authoritative institutions, to pave the way for the occurrence of their altruistic behavior. On the basis of psychological knowledge, we can consciously screen and cultivate professionals to promote the care and support for the highly residential migrant population in China.

3.3 Popularize online psychological support functions

A good psychological state is an important foundation for promoting altruistic behavior. First, the popularization of online psychological counseling support can effectively alleviate the current shortage of psychological services for the highly mobile population in Chinese society. Although Chinese society has made great progress in psychological services for the migrant population in recent years, the construction of grassroots psychological services is still unable to meet the demand for psychological services for the migrant population at this stage. The lack of specialized personnel and the large number of service groups have raised higher requirements for psychological services for the Chinese migrant population. Providing a variety of healthy and positive self-adjustment methods for the general psychological problems of China's migrant population can not only help China's migrant population ease their psychological problems and prevent the emergence of migrant population's psychological crises, but also effectively alleviate the current situation of China's insufficient service strength of social psychological support. At the same time, online self-help psychological counseling support can avoid some of the worries and concerns of the migrant population about psychological counseling, protect the privacy of the migrant population, enhance the motivation of the migrant population to participate in psychological support counseling, and at the same time, provide practical methods to ensure the psychological support of the migrant population. The second is to actively integrate online psychological support into social education. Through the network, the knowledge of psychological support and altruistic behavior is transmitted and psychological guidance recordings are provided at the same time, based on the popularization of psychological support and the cultivation of altruistic behavior, to guide the high mobility people to positively face and accept the psychological feelings and experiences of life in different social environments, to cultivate the sound personality of the mobility people, and to improve the psychological quality of the mobility people(Di Carlo et al., 2021).

4. Conclusion

As an emerging research direction in social psychology, the relationship between residential mobility and altruistic behavior is a topic worth exploring. An in-depth study of this relationship can give us deeper insights into how to promote individual altruistic behavior. The mobile population is a unique feature of our time, we should pay more attention to the mobile population, explore the causes and influences of their behavior, find out the problems, and explore solutions to improve the psychology and behavior of the mobile population.

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