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Repeated Mobility and Social Capital

A Longitudinal Model from Childhood to Adult Life

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LIFELONGMOVE

*Understanding spatial mobility from
early life into adulthood*

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European Research Council
Consolidator Grant (CoG)

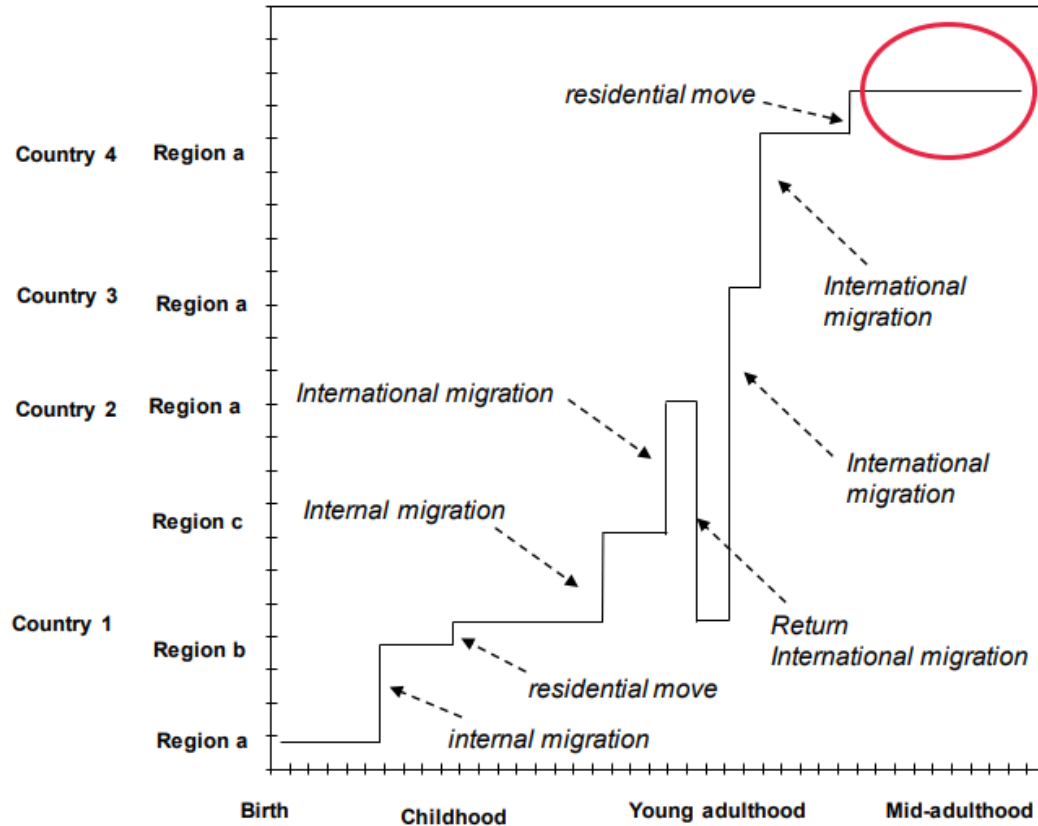
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Period: Jan 2023 – Dec 2027



European Research Council
Established by the European Commission

Example of a fictitious individual trajectory
Bernard et al. (2017)



There is growing recognition that mobility is more complex and diverse than *binary approaches* suggest, e.g., lifetime sedentarism, chronic residential mobility, circular international migration, return migration, etc. Hence, underlying axioms of a one-way permanent migration or views that denote that individuals migrate through clearly demarcated life cycle stages *are increasingly obsolete*.

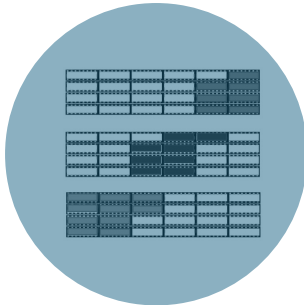
- Mobility as a *process* vs. mobility as an *outcome*
- *Immobility* & downgrading of housing conditions

Component 1:

Mapping lifelong mobility

How is spatial mobility “lived”?

Assessing
heterogeneity in
lifelong mobility
pathways



Deciphering
continuities and
disruptions



Unmasking
population
heterogeneity



Component 2:

Explaining lifelong mobility

How earlier life influences movement?

Place
attachment



Attitudes and
capabilities



Early-life
(dis)advantages



Component 3:

Outcomes of lifelong mobility

What are the consequences of lifelong mobility?

Socio-economic
outcomes



Family
outcomes



Health
outcomes



LIFELONGMOVE addresses how spatial mobility unfolds through life, from early childhood into adulthood.

Sources of data:

1. integrated register and census data
(e.g., Sweden)
2. cohort studies
(e.g., Millennium Cohort Study)
3. household panel studies
(e.g., Swiss Household Panel)

Swiss Household Panel

- First edition in 1999, with three refreshment samples
- Representative sample of the Swiss population
- SHP_III (2013) includes the *retrospective residential trajectories* of 6k individuals aged 16+ (life calendar)
- Respondents were asked to provide information about the *occurrence and duration of each residential event* before the panel study, as well as information about the *geographical location* of their residential stays at the cantonal and regional levels

Analytical sample (N=3,841)

- SHP is structured around a *core* and *rotating core*
- Linkage of the life calendar (2013) with individual files of three waves (2014, 2015, and 2016)

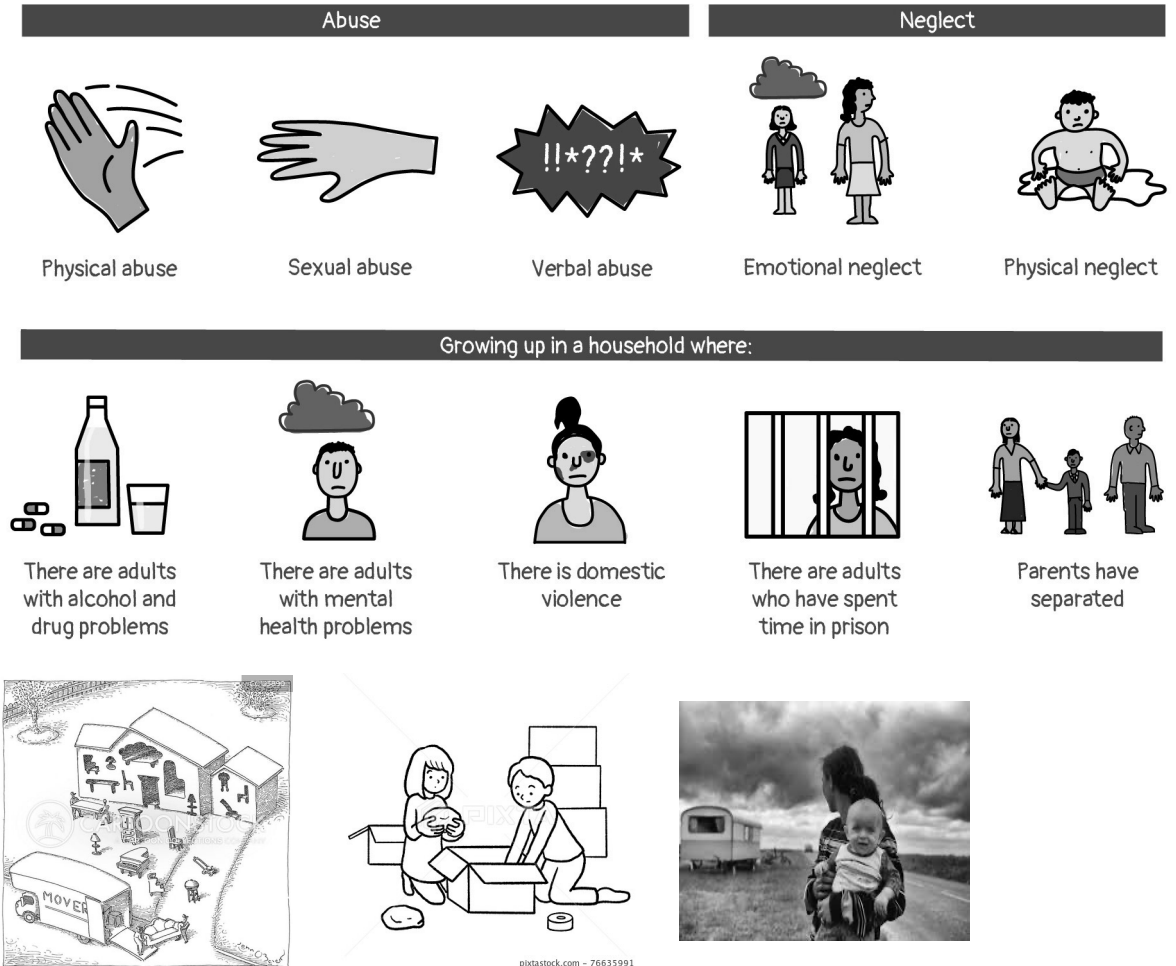


Schweizer Haushalt-Panel
Panel suisse de ménages
Swiss Household Panel

Mobility & social outcomes later in life

We know from previous literature that:

- *frequent moving* may be a marker for various family problems
- frequently changing residence during childhood is reported to increase the risks of developing *health problems in adulthood*
- although moves may be driven by positive (e.g., birth of a child or a job promotion) or negative forces (e.g., divorce or substantial loss in income), they nonetheless bring *transitions and adjustments*
- *cumulative, timing-specific, and interactive* effects



Repeated mobility as an ACE?

DeCandia, C., Volk, K. and Unick, G. (2022)

Repeated mobility as an ACE? It depends ...

Introverts who had moved frequently as children had a much higher risk of mortality during the 10-year follow-up period than did introverts who had not moved much. In contrast, *extraverts* who had moved a lot as children had roughly the same risk of mortality during this period as did extraverts who had not moved as children.

Residential mobility provokes *a shift in individuals' self-definition from collective to personal attributes*.

Oishi, Lun and Sherman, (2007)
Oishi and Talhelm (2012)

Psychological
approach

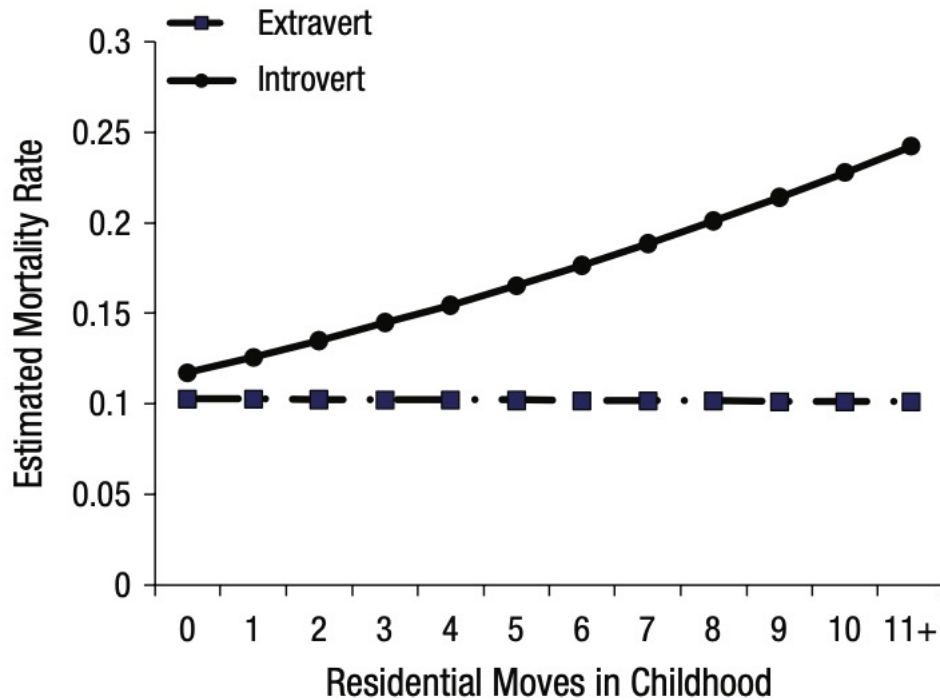
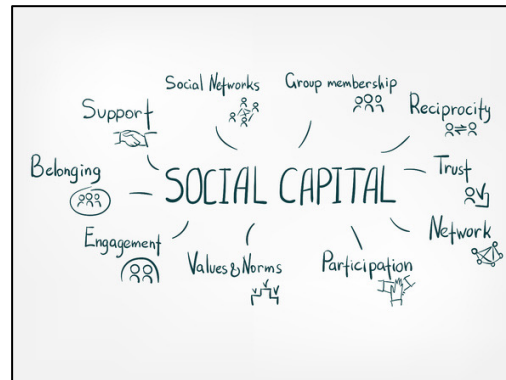
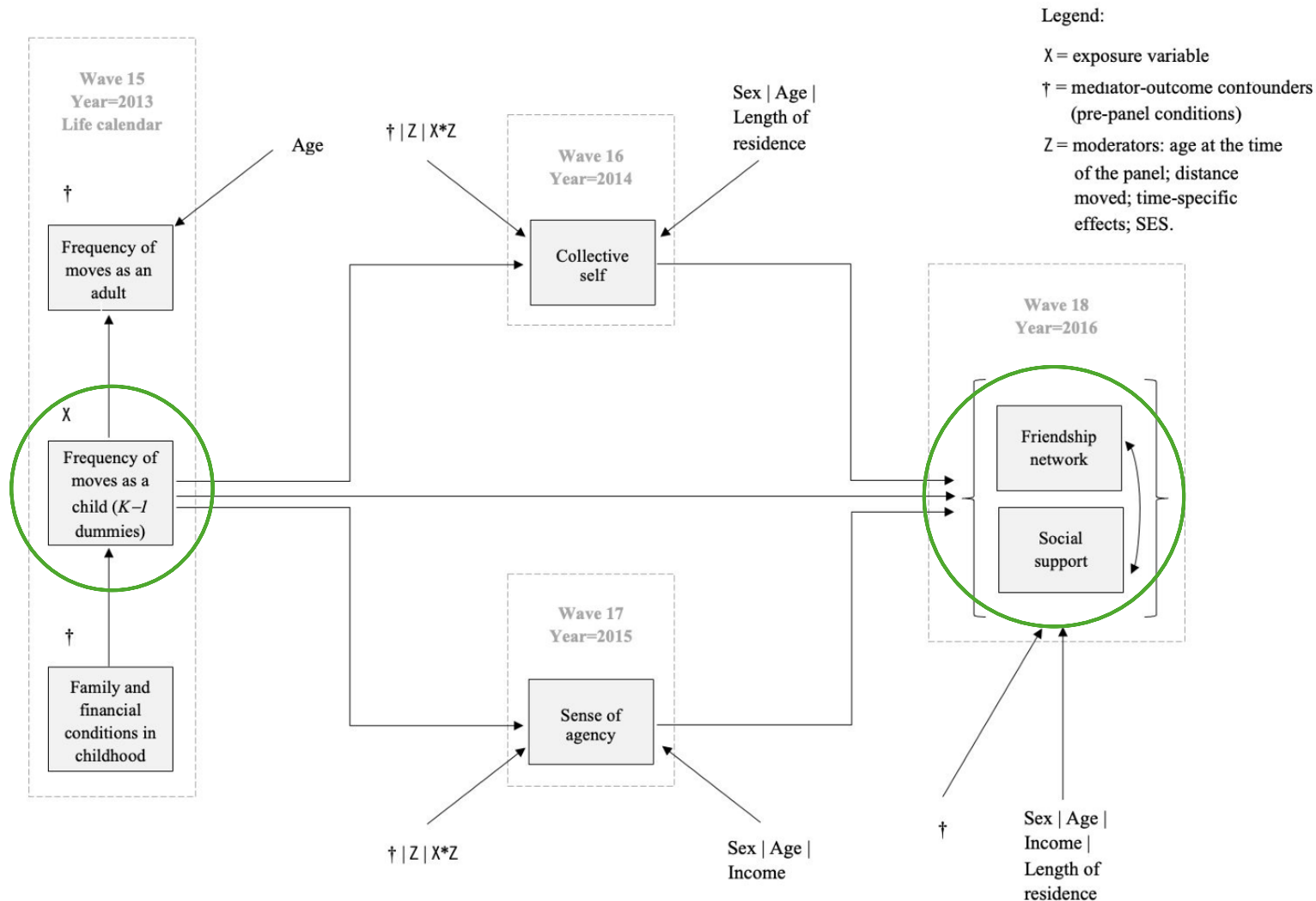


Fig. 3. The moderating role of extraversion in the link between residential moves in childhood and mortality risk in adulthood. Adapted from “Residential Mobility, Well-Being, and Mortality,” by S. Oishi and U. Schimmack, 2010, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98, p. 986. Copyright 2010 by the American Psychological Association. Adapted with permission.



Sociological
approach

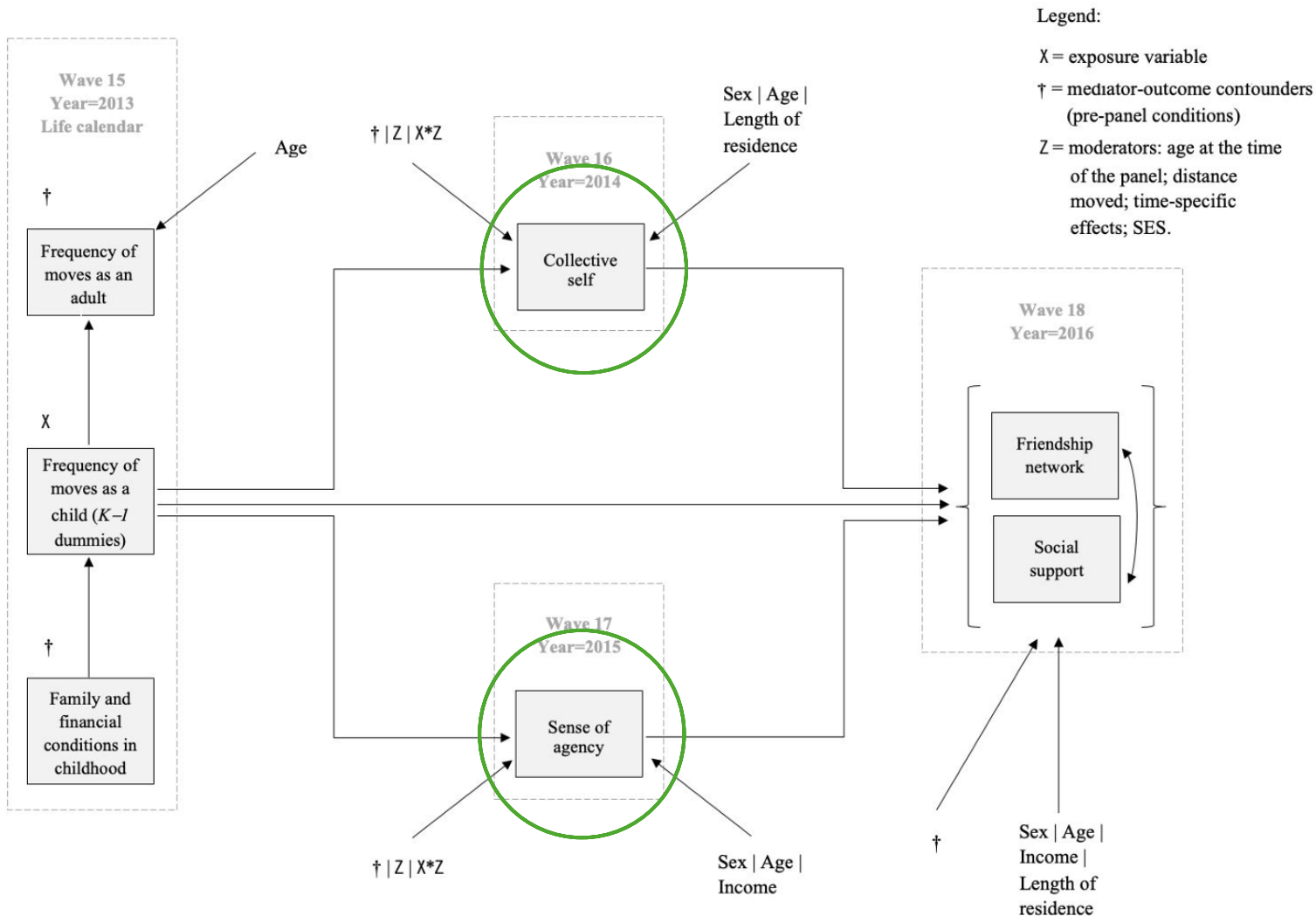
How does *frequent mobility* in childhood impact *social capital* in adulthood?



Exposure / Outcome:

- *Frequency of moves* (categorical): zero (ref.=54.6%), 1, 2, 3+ (8.7%)
- *Social capital*: (1) *structural*: number of friends, and frequency of contacts; (2) *instrumental*: expected emotional or concrete support from close friends

Mediators



- **Collective self:** 'to what extent is belonging to the [municipality of residence; the canton; the linguistic region; and Switzerland in general] important for your identity'
- **Sense of agency:** achievement orientation scale proposed by Strodtbeck (1958). 4-item indicators: e.g., 'I feel like I have little influence on the events of my life'

Highlights

- frequent movement in childhood (3+) is associated with a higher perceived social support in adulthood (instrumental social capital), *but not* to a greater size of the friendship network (structural social capital)
- the association is mediated by an increased sense of agency among frequent movers
- on the other hand, frequent movement prevents the construction of a sense of local self, but this does neither directly nor indirectly impact social capital levels
- *rather than disrupting social capital resources, residential moves play a role in their rearrangement*

Valente and Vacchiano (under review – *European Sociological Review*)

OK, but ...

Is it because of the elapsed time?

The *mean age* when filling in the first individual questionnaires in 2014 was 49.9 (i.e., 34 or more years after the last move in childhood).

When age is 1.5 SD below the mean (i.e., the respondent was 20 years old in 2014), the indirect effect is stronger ($\beta_{ind}=.105$; $p \leq .01$) than when at the mean ($\beta_{ind}=.042$; $p \leq .01$). As the respondent gets older, the indirect effect progressively decreases, but it is still statistically meaningful at age 60 ($\beta_{ind}=.021$; $p \leq .05$).

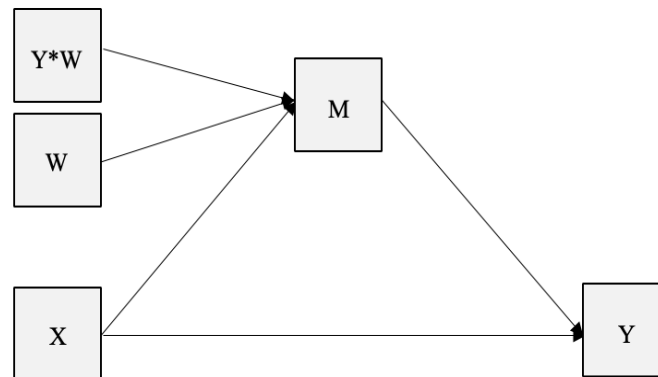
Y = Social capital
X = Frequency of moves as a child

Mediators (M):

M₁ = Collective self
M₂ = Sense of agency
M₃ = Friendship network

Moderators (W):

W₁ = Age at the time of the panel
W_{2a} = Relocation before the age of 6
W_{2b} = Relocation between 7-11
W_{2c} = Relocation between 7-16
W₃ = Moved outside the canton



Spatial mobility or *social mobility*?

1 SD away from the mean of *income* corresponds to an increase in the effect of moving 3+ times as a child on instrumental social capital ($\beta=.329$; $p \leq .01$).

Any *age-specific* effects? Or due to the *distance* moved?

Some indications from these tests that residential mobilities after the age of 12, and over longer distances, might downsize the positive effects of childhood residential mobility on social capital. However, the hypothesis of a statistically significant moderated mediation is not supported by our tests.

Cultural specificities? ...

How do these mechanisms take place?

Residential mobility functions as an identity moratorium for kids. They must strategically deploy personal skills to integrate into a social environment (*agentic learning*).

Frequent residential moves urge the activation of a network of support that is “more oriented toward actual needs” (Nisic and Petermann, 2013: 200). Over the short term, this activation reduces the consequences of residential relocation, whereas over the long term, it can improve *movers’ familiarity with social capital functional mobilization*. This hypothesis needs further testing but seems to align with Bernard’s (2022) idea of *internal migration capital* and provides initial indications that this form of capital accumulation starts at an early age.

According to *social convoy theory*, our most meaningful relationships (e.g., kinship and intimate ties) can accompany us through transitions and turning points, such as changes of residence (Antonucci et al., 2010).

Limitations

- Poor geographical granularity
- Temporal mismatch of the mediators
- No access to direct measures of social capital in childhood at the individual and family levels

Conclusions

Previous literature often assumes frequent residential mobility as a child to be an adverse childhood experience per se. However, it seems to play a more multifaceted influence on self and social outcomes. Indeed, it can represent a risk for social capital in adulthood, but only if it undermines movers' sense of collective belonging without compensating them in terms of their sense of agency.

Overall, however, our results suggest that *children's experience with frequent relocation may also better prepare them to cope with life's uncertainties*, mainly if they can rely on responsive social safety nets.

Thanks!

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