

Example PhD topic: Professor Fiona Steele (October 2012)

Residential mobility, union formation and union dissolution

Individuals move house for many different reasons, including the desire for increased space (e.g. in anticipation of having children or after a birth) or for employment reasons. Among the most important drivers of mobility are the formation and break down of co-residential unions. Most previous studies of residential mobility have either (i) not distinguished moves due to union transitions from other types of moves, or (ii) treated the duration to moves following union formation or dissolution as censored. The problem with approach (i) is that effects of covariates on mobility will be conflated with their effects on union formation (for singletons) and dissolution (for couples). In contrast, approach (ii) treats moves due to union formation or dissolution as 'forced' moves which are different from other types of moves because they may not reflect underlying mobility preferences; the rationale for treating them as censored is that these moves would not have occurred had the individual not changed their union status. However, treating moves due to union transitions as censored assumes that an individual's mobility preferences are unrelated to their underlying propensities to enter and exit unions. This assumption may be unreasonable; for example, we might expect that individuals who frequently move house may also have a tendency towards union instability.

This project would develop longitudinal simultaneous equations models for the processes of residential mobility, union formation and union dissolution, using data from the British Household Panel Survey or any other national panel survey. This approach allows for the possibility that there may be unmeasured individual characteristics influencing more one than one outcome by estimating residual correlations between each pair of outcomes. The same methods could be used to distinguish moves for employment moves from other types of move.

The project would build upon research carried out as part of an ESRC project on the interrelationships between housing transitions and fertility [add link to <http://www.bris.ac.uk/cmm/research/housing/>].

Reading

Kulu (2008) describe a model for residential mobility, allowing for individuals who make multiple moves over the study period. Boyle et al. (2008) extend this model in a joint analysis of mobility and union dissolution. Steele et al. (2005) describe a similar approach with an application to union transitions and childbearing.

Boyle, P.J., H. Kulu, T. Cooke, V. Gayle, and C.H. Mulder. 2008. Moving and union dissolution. *Demography* 45(1):209-22.

Kulu H. (2008) Fertility and spatial mobility in the life course: evidence from Austria. *Environment and Planning A*, **40**, 632-652.

Steele, F., Kallis, C., Goldstein, H. and Joshi, H. (2005) The relationship between childbearing and transitions from marriage and cohabitation in Britain. *Demography*, 42: 647-673.