

Belonging to the Neighbourhood, Residential Mobility, and the Transition to Parenthood

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Abstract

Previous research shows that individuals often move in anticipation of parenthood, potentially rupturing local social connections in the process. However, local connections, familiarity, and emotional investment in the local area give individuals a sense of belonging. The sense of belonging to the neighbourhood, as a form of subjective geographic place, is indicative of local social capital, well-being, a sense of security, and emotional investment. We hypothesise that a stronger sense of belonging is positively associated with the transition to parenthood, especially for recent movers, long-distance movers, and those living in urban centres. We employ the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Survey (2009-2022) and utilise multilevel logit regression. We observe, that a stronger sense of belonging to the neighbourhood is associated with a higher likelihood of becoming a parent. We find that the sense of belonging moderates the relationship between recent residential moves and parenthood with belonging being more important for recent movers regardless of the distance moved. Individuals living in large urban areas are more likely to become parents if they have a stronger sense of belonging. These findings suggest that beyond objective measures of geographic place, the subjective feeling of belonging to the neighbourhood plays a role in the transition to parenthood.

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