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Lifetime stayers in urban, rural, and highly rural communities in Montana

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Abstract

Modernity can be characterised by a shift from a communal to an individual orientation where social mobility is one of individuals' primary goals. However, for individuals to achieve social mobility, they often must also be geographically mobile. Consequently, geographic immobility or staying in place needs to be theorised and examined directly. In this context, the life course perspective provides a useful framework to understand staying. The role transitions associated with different life stages represent different decision points where choices to stay must be deliberate. We use state-representative data from Montana (USA) in 2010 to perform an exploratory analysis of stayers. Using a variety of community and individual predictors, we find that high community attachment, low satisfaction with one's community, and/or local services make being a stayer more likely. In separate models of being a stayer by rurality, age group, educational attainment, and having a dependent in the home, the pattern of results suggests that interpretations of high attachment and low satisfaction among stayers as being indicators of being "stuck" may be incorrect. Instead, even in the absence of being satisfied with one's community, community attachment may be indicative of deliberate decisions to stay. We discuss the limitations of addressing staying using cross-sectional data and suggest future avenues for better understanding those who stay in place throughout their lives.

KEYWORDS

community, immobility, mobility, rural, stayers

1 | INTRODUCTION

Interest in geographic immobility is relatively recent. This may be because the beginning of the social sciences is, at least in part, a result of attempts to understand the social changes associated with modernity (Giddens, 1991). Therefore, a critical component of modernity's project is the shift from prioritising the "community" to the "individual." This shift has made mobility less a community issue, as likely was the case in "premodern" societies (Hochstadt, 1999), and more one of understanding individual mobility decisions. Consequently, stayers—those who remain geographically immobile—have not received much attention and sometimes are referred to simply as the nonmobile residual (Hanson, 2005). However, an emerging body of literature indicates that this traditional view of stayers is problematic, and that our current understanding of why individuals choose to remain in a community is inadequate (Hjälm, 2014; Ni Laoire, 2001).

The purpose of this study is twofold: (a) to apply a life course perspective to the analysis of stayers and (b) to explore the differences between stayers and nonstayers in urban, rural, and highly rural communities. We use the U.S. state of Montana as a case study of lifetime stayers. The unique geographies of its population distribution across urban, rural, and highly rural communities, its large geographic size, positive population growth, and high level of geographic mobility makes Montana an excellent location in which to examine stayers. We situated our study of stayers within the complex social and geographic context underpinned by issues of modernity, community, and the life course. We use a state-representative sample of Montana in 2010 derived from a two-stage, stratified sampling design, randomly selecting zip codes within urban, rural, and highly rural areas and then randomly selecting households from all known addresses in Montana.

In the following section, we position our study on stayers within the complex social and geographic context underpinned by issues of modernity, community, and the life course. Next, we describe the method of our exploratory investigation. Thereafter, we present the results of the analysis and conclude with a discussion of the results

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with reference to the literature and recommendations for future research.

2 | MODERNITY AND MOBILITY

To the extent that social mobility is the driving force of geographic mobility (Recchi, 2009), modernity is a useful theoretical frame for understanding geographic mobility and migration. Indeed, conceptually, most studies consider long-distance (and even sometimes short-distance) moves as individual responses to the inability to achieve some desired level of social mobility where they live (Clark, 2013; Coulter, van Ham, & Findlay, 2016; Geist & McManus, 2008; Harris & Todaro, 1970; Rossi, 1955). These studies have shown that some form of cost–benefit analysis of the changing needs for housing or economic goals tends to motivate geographic mobility. Thus, geographic mobility is the antidote for disequilibrium between one's reality and the goals of personal and economic progress defined by modernity. In this context, immobility in migration research tends to be ignored and is treated as the normal or equilibrium state (Hanson, 2005; Hjälm, 2014) that needs no explanation.

However, as modernity has run its course, the social context of mobility and immobility has changed. The rapid pace of social change in Western countries increasingly creates situations of disequilibrium for individuals—where there may be a poor fit between the local structure of opportunity and individuals' goals. The pursuit of higher education (Geist & McManus, 2008; Haartsen & Thissen, 2014), for example, creates a disequilibrium for those who do not live near a suitable college or university. Changes in patterns of family formation and dissolution also often create disequilibrium that precipitates mobility (Clark, 2013; Thomas, Stillwell, & Gould, 2016). During much of recent history, job tenure has declined (Bidwell, 2013). Although job changes indicate an individual's perception of disequilibrium only when they are voluntary, involuntary job loss attributable to changes in the labour market nonetheless imposes disequilibrium. In the end, in modernity, either as a direct part of its project (e.g., desire for upward social mobility) or as a byproduct (e.g., job tenure and family dissolution), geographic mobility has come to be characterised as the new normal. In short, modern life is mobile life.

As the new norm of modernity is one of geographic mobility in search of upward social mobility or other attempts at equilibrium (Clark, 2013), it is the lack of geographic mobility, or stayers, that requires explanation. Efforts to conceptualise staying as an independent concept rather than as the absence of mobility have grappled with a number of questions while trying to arrive at conceptualisations and definitions. Is a stayer someone who has lived their entire life in the same residence or can stayers move but not to a home outside the community in which they were born (Boyle, Halfacree, & Robinson, 1998)? If it is reasonable to consider someone a stayer if they move within their community, how do we define community? Should moving outside one's zip code, county, census block or tract, or town or city boundaries disqualify someone from being defined as a stayer (Bartram, 2013)? Can people who move into a community become stayers after some period of time? Is someone a stayer if they leave their community for some time but return later (Hjälm, 2014; Thomas

et al., 2016)? Can someone who lives in a community seasonally be considered a stayer (Smith & House, 2006)?

The conceptual and operational choices early researchers made that represent the various answers to these questions in the emerging literature on stayers have, perhaps not surprisingly, resulted in a picture of stayers that paints them as a complex group—even as complex as the mobility literature paints those who are mobile. Broadly, however, stayers tend to be categorised as those who choose to stay or those who might choose to leave but are otherwise stuck (Barcus & Brunn, 2009; Fernández-Carro & Evandrou, 2014). Yet there also may be psychological stayers, who may leave their communities for various reasons but remain tied to it and then return as soon as they can (Haartsen & Thissen, 2014). However, it is likely that these broad categorisations obscure some of the realities that stayers face and the processes they undergo to reach a decision to stay.

The life course perspective (Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003) provides some ability to parse the decision-making processes that stayers face. An emphasis on the life course draws attention to individual role transitions that occur as meaningful life events. Life course trajectories consist of a series of these transitions that depend on broader notions of historical time and place. Transitions include finishing compulsory and higher education, family formation (e.g., marriage and cohabitation), child-rearing, employment, family dissolution, retirement, and a spouse's death. These transitions become important for stayers, because each represents a decision point with respect to geographic mobility that is a response to the historical context experienced at a particular life stage. Although much research has only considered a decision to move as one that requires some form of individual action, it has become clear that a decision to stay is an active one as well and is made by stayers repeatedly throughout their lives (Hjälm, 2014). Consequently, we examine various predictors of staying that represent many of these life transitions. We also examine separate models for rurality, age groups, education, and whether there is a dependent in the home.

Central to our exploration are notions of community attachment and satisfaction. Sociologically, the conceptual importance of community attachment derives from its identification with the experience of community outlined by Tönnies [1887] (2002), Wirth (1938), and other classical and 20th-century theorists. Such scholars described community attachment as a commitment to a place of residence (Liu, Ryan, Aurbach, & Besser, 1998), emotional or psychological ties to place (Guest & Lee, 1983), and the degree to which an individual is attached sentimentally to a community (Brown, 1993; Connerly & Marans, 1985; Ryan, Agnitsch, Zhao, & Mullick, 2005). However, the experience of community is, theoretically, more complex than simple attachment. Community satisfaction, a related, albeit separate concept, denotes "… people's subjective evaluations of their own well-being as measured by how well their local community meets their personal needs" (Brown, 2003, p. 303). For example, does the community meet one's needs for housing, day care, employment, connections with family members, and so forth? Community satisfaction, therefore, relates to a community's physical and social characteristics. Thus, although attachment denotes a perception of how rooted an individual is within a community, satisfaction refers to more global cognitive and evaluative factors used to determine how well one's community satisfies

subjective expectations (Brown, Xu, Barfield, & King, 2000). The emotional sense of attachment and the more practical notion of satisfaction become important considerations in understanding individuals' experiences of their community.

We address the issue of stayers in this complex context. In the absence of a universally accepted conceptualisation, we defined stayers as individuals who have lived in a single community their entire lives or whose parents moved into their current community before they began elementary school. Prior to elementary school, children's experiences are confined primarily to family. Although little research addresses children's sense of place (Spencer, 2005), we argue that elementary school represents the point at which individuals begin to interact formally with the broader community and its institutions and, therefore, represents the beginning of individuals' development of attachment to their community. Importantly, focusing on community attachment leads us to ignore residential mobility within one's community. Further, we do not specify geographical boundaries of geographic mobility, leaving the identification of community boundaries to be a subjective task for respondents. We contrast stayers to those who moved into their community at some point in their lives after beginning school.

3 | STUDY SETTING

Data were derived from a state-representative sample of non-institutionalised adults living in Montana in 2010. Montana is a large, western U.S. state. Although it is the fourth largest state in size, roughly the size of Germany, it also is one of the least populated states in the United States. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Montana's population was 989,415, 44.1% of which lives in rural areas. Geographically, the largest population concentrations are found in seven counties located along major interstates and State Highway 2, which runs across the northern part of the state (Figure 1). Further, most of Montana's communities are relatively small, with only three having a population greater than 50,000. Further, Montana's population largely is homogeneous, with 87.8% non-Hispanic whites. The next largest racial-ethnic group in Montana is Native Americans, who comprised 6.3% of the population in 2010. The largest economic sectors in Montana are agriculture and mining.

For several reasons, Montana is uniquely suited for the study of lifetime stayers. First, its population is distributed among urban, rural, and highly rural areas.[1] Thus, using Montana as a case study allows us to examine the way in which stayers' sociodemographic characteristics vary between urban, rural, and highly rural communities. Further, its large geographic size means that many communities are isolated geographically and residents often have limited local services available and must travel significant distances to reach them. Consequently, this offers some ability to identify the role of community characteristics for stayers. Next, Montana has the highest ratio of vehicle ownership in the United States, approximately 1.6 vehicles per person in 2010 (Office of Highway Policy Information, 2014). This, together with an extensive infrastructure, helps ensure that residents who choose to stay in a community do so by choice and not because they cannot be geographically mobile. In addition, Montana has reported positive

population growth in recent decades. In fact, a majority of its counties reported an increase in population over the last 20 years (US Census Bureau, 2012). This positive demographic growth means that stayers in Montana are not individuals trapped in dying communities, as previous research has suggested (Elshof, van Wissen, & Mulder, 2014). The combination of these geographic and demographic patterns makes Montana an excellent location to problematise and examine lifetime stayers.

4 | METHODS

4.1 | Data

The data for this study came from the Montana Health Matters 2010 survey (MHM). The MHM is a state-representative sample of urban, rural, and highly rural residents in Montana in the United States. Based on the U.S. Veteran's Affairs categorisations at the time of the survey (West et al., 2010), urban was defined as Census Urbanised Areas (50,000 or more people), highly rural as counties with an average population density of six or fewer residents per square mile, with all other areas defined as rural. The MHM used a two-stage, stratified sampling design, selecting zip codes within urban, rural, and highly rural areas randomly and then selecting households randomly (2,000 rural, 2,000 highly rural, and 1,000 urban). The households were drawn using the U.S. Postal Service's computerised Delivery Sequence File, which contains all known addresses in Montana.

Given the address-based sample design, a multimethod, five-wave mail/telephone survey protocol with a US$2 honorarium was used to maximise survey responses (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). All householders were asked to respond. The multimethod design resulted in 3,512 respondents, 3,019 in rural and 493 in urban communities, for a response rate of 52%. This rate includes an adjustment for 1,200 original Delivery Sequence File addresses that could not be linked to a householder name, and non-residential addresses that were identified using GoogleEarth® and certified mailings (Call, Erickson, & Yorgason, 2013). The weighting scheme developed took into account ineligible addresses, the multistage cluster sampling design, and survey nonresponses, such that the final sample was representative of the Montana population. We excluded respondents whose status as a stayer could not be determined based on available data, which resulted in a final sample size of 3,395.

4.2 | Measures

4.2.1 | Stayers

Respondents were asked, "In total, how many years have you lived in this community?" Respondents could report the number of years or "all my life." Those who reported living in their community all their lives were coded as stayers. We also considered respondents stayers if they reported living in their community by the time they were 6 years old, the typical age children begin formal schooling in the United States. Stayers were coded 1 and nonstayers 0. We tested for differences between stayers who reported living in the community all their lives and those who lived in their community before 6 years of age using logistic regression (not shown). Eighty-three respondents
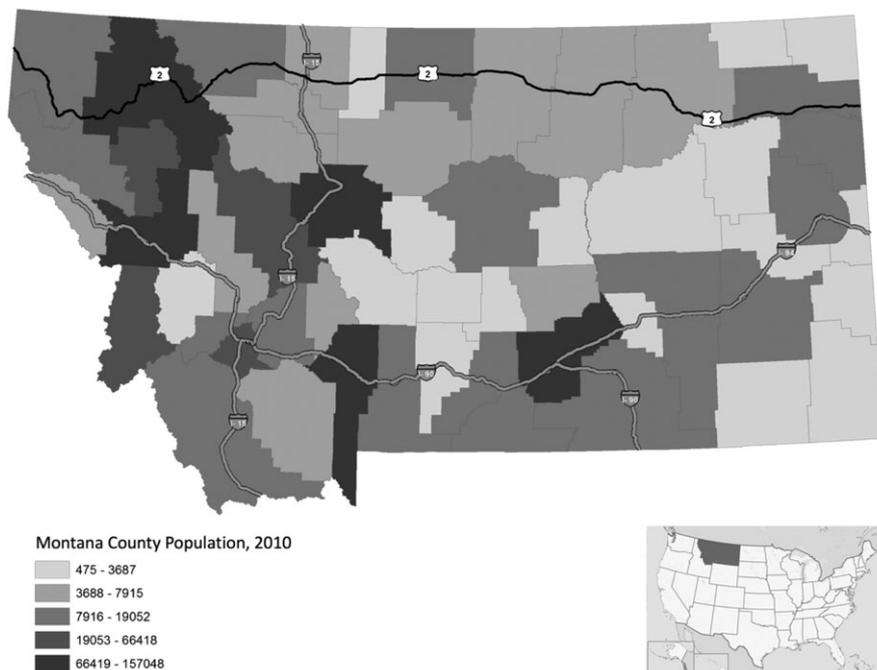
Montana County Population, 2010

	475 - 3687
	3688 - 7915
	7916 - 19052
	19053 - 66418
	66419 - 157048

FIGURE 1 State map of Montana with major roadways and country population

had moved into their community before they began school. Only gender—with females less likely than males—and marital status—with widowed and never married less likely than married respondents—were related to reports of living their entire lives in the community. We also estimated a model similar to the one reported in Table 2 (see below) that used a stayer variable that restricted stayers only to those born in their communities (comparison model not shown). There were no substantive differences between these results and those in Table 2.

4.2.2 | Predictors of staying

Community-level predictors of being a stayer included rurality, community attachment and satisfaction, satisfaction with services, distance to the nearest hospital and big box store, and having the Internet at home. Although the latter may be characterised better as an individual-level variable, we included it with the community-level predictors because of its conceptual connection to community satisfaction. Having the Internet at home can be an alternative avenue through which to satisfy consumption and service needs that are important to one's sense of community satisfaction (Dutta-Bergman, 2005).

Rurality included categories for urban, rural, and highly rural communities. Community attachment was the factor score from a factor analysis of three indicators designed to capture a multidimensional view of community experience (Brown et al., 2000). Respondents were asked about their current views of their community. "How much do you have in common with most of the people in your community?", "How well do you feel that you fit into your community?" with responses ranging from 1 indicating a low sense of commonality and fit to 7 indicating a high sense of commonality and fit. A third question asked which of five options described best how well respondents like living in their community. Responses ranged from 1, "I would really like to leave this community if I had the opportunity," to 5, "I would do everything possible to stay here." Community satisfaction

was measured with a single item, "How satisfied are you with living in your community?" Responses ranged from 1, "*Dissatisfied*," to 7, "*Satisfied.*" The miles to the nearest hospital and shopping variables were created using road network analysis in Arc GIS 10.3. To create both variables, we first geo-referenced or mapped the exact location of each respondent based on information collected in the MHM survey; next, using data from the ESRI business analysis and the Centres for Medicare and Medicaid Provider of Service files, the location of all known hospitals, health clinics, and Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals with at least 25 beds in Montana were geo-referenced (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, 2010; ESRI, 2013). We then generated the actual distance in miles between each respondent's residence and the nearest hospital. The distance to shopping variable used the same method and measured the actual distance in miles between the respondent and the nearest Wal-Mart, Target, and so forth. Having the Internet at home was coded 1 if respondents reported they did and 0 otherwise.

Individual-level predictors of being a stayer included age, gender, race, educational attainment, annual household income, marital status, and whether the respondent had a child/parent living with them. Age was measured in years. Gender was coded 1 for females and 0 for males and therefore is labelled female in all tables. White was coded 1 and all other racial/ethnic groups 0. Approximately, 92% of the respondents overall reported being white. The second most frequent group was Native Americans, who represented just over 3% of the sample. Educational attainment included categories of having no high school diploma, a high school diploma, some college, and a college degree. Household income was measured using a 15-category variable. The first was less than $10,000. Subsequent categories increased by increments of $5,000 until $39,999. Until $99,999, categories increased by increments of $10,000. There was a category to capture $100,000 to $149,999 and a final category for $150,000, and over. Each category was coded to its middle value, scaled in $10,000, with the final category coded to 17.5. The variable was then treated as

continuous. Marital status included the categories married, divorced, widowed, and never married. Respondents reported separately whether a child or parent was living with them currently. Having a child in the home was coded 1 and 0 otherwise. Having a parent in the home was coded in the same way.

Descriptive statistics for all study variables for stayers and nonstayers are presented in Table 1.

5 | ANALYSIS

Prior to analyses, missing data were treated with multiple imputation using chained equations. Multiple imputation requires the Missing at Random assumption for missing data, which is less strict and more realistic for most survey data than are traditional methods of addressing missing data, such as complete case analysis/listwise deletion, and mean substitution. The chained equations approach to multiple imputation allow for the prediction equation for the missing data in each

variable to be consistent with its distribution (e.g., OLS regression for continuous variables and logistic regression for dichotomous variables). Current recommendations suggest that the number of imputations should be at least the same as the percentage of missing data in the variable with the most missingness (White, Royston, & Wood, 2011). In our sample, 29% of respondents had missing data with respect to whether a parent lived with them (see Table 1), and thus, we used 30 imputed datasets using *mi impute* in Stata 14 (StataCorp, 2015). Further, consistent with current recommendations (von Hippel, 2007), we included all respondents in the imputation process but excluded respondents from analyses if their status as stayers was indeterminate. Datasets were separated by 200 iterations based on graphical diagnostics that indicated the imputation model converged well before that (Enders, 2010).

Logistic regression was used to estimate the relationship between the predictors of staying. Table 2 reports a full-sample model that includes all covariates. Subsequently, we report a series of separate models that divide the sample according to rurality, age, educational

TABLE 1 Means (or proportions), standard error, minimum, maximum, and percent imputed of study variables

	Stayers		Nonstayers				
	Mean[a]	SE	Mean[a]	SE	Min	Max	Percent imputed
Community							
Rurality							
Urban	0.28	0.02	0.30	0.02	0.00	1.00	0
Rural	0.27	0.05	0.42	0.04	0.00	1.00	0
Highly rural	0.46	0.04	0.29	0.03	0.00	1.00	0
Community attachment	0.21	0.03	−0.07	0.02	−2.90	1.44	3
Community satisfaction	5.84	0.06	5.58	0.04	1.00	7.00	0
Satisfaction with services	4.37	0.07	4.49	0.05	1.00	7.00	1
Miles to hospital (in 10 s)	12.10	1.57	9.47	1.16	0.00	100.00	0
Miles to shopping (in 10 s)	89.47	9.43	64.91	4.45	0.00	285.60	0
Internet in home	0.75	0.02	0.82	0.01	0.00	1.00	3
Individual							
Age (in years)	56.45	0.75	57.43	0.46	18.00	101.00	3
Female	0.49	0.02	0.59	0.01	0.00	1.00	2
White	0.90	0.03	0.95	0.01	0.00	1.00	3
Educational attainment							
No high school degree	0.08	0.01	0.04	0.00	0.00	1.00	3
High school degree	0.39	0.02	0.26	0.01	0.00	1.00	3
Some college	0.30	0.02	0.29	0.01	0.00	1.00	3
College degree	0.23	0.02	0.41	0.02	0.00	1.00	3
Income (in $10,000)	5.48	0.16	5.96	0.16	0.50	17.50	14
Marital status							
Married	0.69	0.02	0.71	0.01	0.00	1.00	3
Divorced	0.11	0.01	0.13	0.01	0.00	1.00	3
Widowed	0.08	0.01	0.08	0.01	0.00	1.00	3
Never married	0.11	0.01	0.08	0.01	0.00	1.00	3
Child in home	0.30	0.02	0.32	0.01	0.00	1.00	10
Parent in home	0.04	0.01	0.04	0.00	0.00	1.00	28

[a]Proportions are presented for categorical variables. Results weighted to be representative of Montana. Source: Montana Health Matters. Unweighted N = 3,395.

TABLE 2 Predictors of being a stayer in Montana: Odds ratios from logistic regression

Community	
Rurality	
Urban	1.000
Rural	0.392***
Highly rural	0.553*
Community attachment	1.708***
Community satisfaction	1.025
Satisfaction with services	0.891*
Miles to hospital (in 10 s)	1.003
Miles to shopping (in 10 s)	1.007***
Internet in home	0.761**
Individual	
Age (in years)	0.987**
Female	0.657***
White	0.585**
Educational attainment	
No high school degree	1.000
High school degree	0.870
Some college	0.586*
College degree	0.314***
Income (in $10,000)	1.006
Marital status	
Married	1.000
Divorced	0.938
Widowed	0.992
Never married	1.342
Child in home	0.905
Parent in home	0.756
Unweighted N	3,395

Note. Results weighted to be representative of Montana. Source: Montana Health Matters.

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

***$p < .001$

attainment, and having a child/parent in the home to capture different social contexts of staying. Each model was estimated separately on the imputed datasets and combined using Rubin's rules by Stata's *mi estimate* prefix. Stata's *svy* prefix also was used to incorporate the weights and sampling design so that estimates were representative of Montana, and standard errors were adjusted to account for the clustered (by zip code) sampling design.

6 | RESULTS

Overall, 23% of the sample was stayers. Table 2 presents the odds ratios from a logistic regression that used community and individual predictors of being a stayer for the full sample. The odds ratios represent the odds associated with being a stayer relative to not being a stayer, that is, having moved into one's community some time after beginning elementary school. We did not test specific hypotheses

because we considered the analyses exploratory. However, generally, we used statistical significance to focus our attention.

Among the community predictors that are subjective to the respondent, rural (0.553) and highly rural (0.392) residents were substantially less likely to be stayers than were urban residents. A one-point increase on the community attachment scale increased the odds of being a stayer by 1.708 times. The broad measure of community satisfaction did not predict being a stayer, but being more satisfied with the services in one's community reduced the odds of being a stayer (0.891).

Among community predictors that are objective, the distance to a hospital was unrelated to being a stayer, but the odds of being a stayer increased by 1.007 times for a 10-mile increase in the distance to shopping. Again, we conceptualised having the Internet at home as a potential compensation for poor quality local services that allow residents to remain in their communities and satisfy their consumption needs adequately. However, having the Internet and being a stayer were related negatively (0.761).

Among the individual predictors, older residents were less likely to be stayers (0.987). Women were less than 0.7 times as likely to be stayers as were men. White respondents were less likely to be stayers than were non-whites. Because Native Americans comprise the majority of non-white residents, this means that Native Americans, many of whom reside on reservations, tend to be stayers quite often. Neither income, marital status, nor having a child/parent in the home were related to being a stayer in the full model.

Tables 3-6 present separate models for rurality, age groups, levels of educational attainment, and whether there is a dependent (child/parent) in the home. The benefit of these models relative to the full model presented in Table 2 is that they locate respondents in the different geographical, life course, and socio-economic contexts that past research has shown are important predictors of mobility/ immobility (Boyle et al., 1998; Erickson, Call, & Brown, 2012). Consequently, we limit our discussion of the findings to patterns that differ from the overall model presented in Table 2.

6.1 | Rurality

Table 3 reports separate models for urban, rural, and highly rural communities. Among urban residents, community attachment (1.757) and satisfaction with services (0.662) predicted being a stayer, similar to the full model. However, those were the only significant predictors of being a stayer among urban residents. Age, gender, race, and educational attainment were not related to being a stayer. Satisfaction with services was unrelated to being a stayer in rural or highly rural communities, whereas there was a relationship between distance to shopping and being a stayer in highly rural but not rural communities. One final note regarding the results in Table 3 is that, although being widowed was not significantly related to being a stayer in any geographic locale, the odds ratios were substantial in size. In urban communities, the odds of being a stayer were substantially negative (0.257) for widowed relative to married respondents, but the odds in rural (1.726) and highly rural (1.415) communities were substantially positive. Although we do not have the data to unpack these differences, it may be that the death of a spouse is more disruptive to social networks in urban than more rural communities (Glasgow, 2000).

TABLE 3 Predictors of being a stayer by rurality: Odds ratios from logistic regression

	Urban	Rural	Highly rural
Community			
Community attachment	1.757**	1.557**	1.912***
Community satisfaction	1.133	0.921	1.058
Satisfaction with services	0.662*	1.003	0.943
Miles to hospital (in 10 s)	0.333	1.077	1.027
Miles to shopping (in 10 s)	1.412	1.004	1.078***
Internet in home	0.469	0.708	1.039
Individual			
Age (in years)	1.003	0.967*	0.987
Female	0.909	0.627*	0.524***
White	0.682	0.864	0.412*
Educational attainment			
No high school degree	1.000	1.000	1.000
High school degree	1.283	0.937	0.840
Some college	0.811	0.576	0.642
College degree	0.544	0.291**	0.302**
Income (in $10,000)	1.045	0.971	1.008
Marital status			
Married	1.000	1.000	1.000
Divorced	0.689	1.103	0.868
Widowed	0.257	1.726	1.415
Never married	1.251	0.838	1.802*
Child in home	0.906	0.779	0.949
Parent in home	0.958	0.838	0.549
Unweighted N	474	1,340	1,581

Note. Results weighted to be representative of Montana. Source: Montana Health Matters.

*p < .05

**p < .01

***p < .001

6.2 | Age

Table 4 presents results by age group. We divided the age distribution into four categories, each representing roughly different life stages—the 18–34 group was considered young adulthood; mid-life included those aged 35–64 years; past mid-life those aged 65–79 years, and elderly those aged 80–101 years. As in previous research on age differences among stayers, age remained a covariate in these models to account for age differences within age groups (Thomas et al., 2016). The age group that deviated most overall from the model in Table 2 was the 18–34 age group. Among young adults, living in rural or highly rural communities was unrelated to being a stayer, as were satisfaction with services, distance to shopping, and being female. Thus, relatively little predicted being a stayer in the youngest age group. In contrast, there was a significant odds ratio for age (0.918), indicating that among young adults, those who are relatively older are less likely to be stayers. Further, young adults who reported higher household incomes were more likely to be stayers (1.083)—the only age group for which income was a significant predictor. Because income was a significant predictor, and few others were relevant to being a stayer in the older

TABLE 4 Predictors of being a stayer by age: Odds ratios from logistic regression

	18–34	35–64	65–79	80–101
Community				
Rurality				
Urban	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Rural	0.817	0.445**	0.210***	0.240**
Highly rural	0.850	0.593	0.479	0.240
Community attachment	1.664**	1.715***	1.788***	1.806
Community satisfaction	0.876	1.060	1.015	1.173
Satisfaction with services	0.987	0.909	0.852	0.713*
Miles to hospital (in 10 s)	1.042	1.052	0.952	1.013
Miles to shopping (in 10 s)	1.029	1.066***	1.056*	1.136**
Internet in home	0.849	0.934	0.674	0.371*
Individual				
Age (in years)	0.918*	0.978	1.034	0.952
Female	1.003	0.616***	0.602**	0.383**
White	0.248***	0.886	0.316**	0.434
Educational attainment				
No high school degree	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
High school degree	0.749	1.168	0.623	0.993
Some college	0.694	0.812	0.422*	0.621
College degree	0.385	0.437*	0.138***	0.644
Income (in $10,000)	1.083**	0.993	1.015	0.878
Marital status				
Married	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Divorced	1.498	0.942	0.615	3.253
Widowed[a]		0.651	0.773	1.225
Never married	1.439	1.250	3.772**	2.818
Child in home	1.618	0.728*	0.933	0.225
Parent in home[b]	0.704	0.565	1.493	
Unweighted N	310	1,951	850	284

[a]There were no respondents in the 18–34 group who were widowed.

[b]There were no respondents in the 80–101 age group with a parent in the home. Results weighted to be representative of Montana. Source: Montana Health Matters.

*p < .05

**p < .01

***p < .001

age groups, it may be likely that higher income facilitates some sense of equilibrium that allows young adults to remain stayers even as they begin to experience the many role changes that accompany the transition to adulthood. Higher household income among young adults also provides a sense of security as they establish professions and families that helps overcome any potential dissatisfaction with local services or amenities. The large, positive, although not statistically significant,

TABLE 5 Predictors of being a stayer by educational attainment: Odds ratios from logistic regression

	No HS	HS diploma	Some college	College
Community				
Rurality				
Urban	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Rural	0.481	0.500**	0.416**	0.241***
Highly rural	0.435	0.608	0.655	0.374
Community attachment	3.097***	1.320**	1.881***	2.044***
Community satisfaction	0.601**	1.155	1.081	0.901
Satisfaction with services	0.898	1.012	0.880	0.775**
Miles to hospital (in 10 s)	1.110	1.069	1.028	0.970
Miles to shopping (in 10 s)	1.068	1.061**	1.068*	1.084*
Internet in home	1.307	0.672**	0.818	0.651*
Individual				
Age (in years)	1.016	0.988	0.980*	0.980**
Female	0.688	0.587***	0.883	0.480***
White	0.441	0.332*	0.826	1.025
Income (in $10,000)	1.019	1.011	0.983	1.031
Marital status				
Married	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Divorced	0.812	0.844	0.961	1.123
Widowed	0.266*	1.152	0.676	2.305
Never married	1.084	1.217	1.059	1.810*
Child in home	1.525	1.027	0.707	0.796
Parent in home	1.803	0.632	0.519	1.314
Unweighted N	176	1,027	1,034	1,158

Note. Results weighted to be representative of Montana. Source: Montana Health Matters. HS = high school.

*p < .05

**p < .01

***p < .001

TABLE 6 Predictors of being a stayer by dependent in the home: Odds ratios from logistic regression

	No dependents	Child in home	Parent in home
Community			
Rurality			
Urban	1.000	1.000	1.000
Rural	0.322***	0.516*	0.411
Highly rural	0.456**	0.782	0.500
Community attachment	1.678***	1.860***	2.979
Community satisfaction	1.037	1.013	0.728
Satisfaction with services	0.861**	0.935	0.905
Miles to hospital (in 10 s)	1.021	1.043	1.131
Miles to shopping (in 10 s)	1.076***	1.055	1.029
Internet in home	0.751*	0.711	1.150
Individual			
Age (in years)	0.994	0.975***	0.977
Female	0.574***	0.889	0.379
White	0.483*	0.688	0.737
Educational attainment			
No high school degree	1.000	1.000	1.000
High school degree	0.983	0.615	0.273
Some college	0.746	0.335*	0.109
College degree	0.360***	0.195***	0.093
Income (in $10,000)	1.008	1.014	1.085
Marital status			
Married	1.000	1.000	1.000
Divorced	0.795	1.503	1.967
Widowed[a]	0.975	0.683	
Never married	1.319	1.328	2.984
Unweighted N[b]	2,259	1,063	135

[a]There were no respondents who were widowed that had a parent in the home.

[b]Having a child or parent in the home is not mutually exclusive. Results weighted to be representative of Montana. Source: Montana Health Matters.

*p < .05

**p < .01

***p < .001

odds ratio for having a child in the home provided additional support for this interpretation.

There were a few unique results evident in the other age groups. Satisfaction with services was related significantly to being a stayer only in the 80–101 age group (0.713). This finding likely is associated with the reality that many older adults become increasingly dependent on local services for their well-being, often at the same time as their physical ability to access those services declines (Sanders, Erickson, Call, Rugh, & McKnight, 2016). Thus, some may choose to move closer to essential services. Among the 65–79 age group, there was a large, significant odds ratio for never being married (3.772). Coupled with the positive, although nonsignificant, odds ratio for having a parent in the home, this could represent an increased likelihood that single adult children are caring for aging parents more than are their married siblings, who may have dependent children (Grundy & Henretta, 2006).

6.3 | Educational attainment

Table 5 presents the results by educational attainment, which represents status attainment. There were few differences between the full model in Table 2 and the models for respondents who received a high school diploma, completed some college, and completed a college degree. This suggests that stayers are not simply those who are stuck because they lack human capital, as they are often portrayed in the out-migration or "brain-drain" literature (Carr & Kefalas, 2009). Further, satisfaction with services was related to being a stayer only among those who completed college. Being widowed (2.305, although nonsignificant) and never married (1.810) increased the odds of being a stayer on the part of those who completed college.

There were several differences between the full model (Table 2) and the model that included only those who did not achieve a high school diploma. Although community attachment predicted being a stayer consistently in all of the models we estimated, the odds ratio was particularly high in this group (3.097). Further, community satisfaction was related negatively to being a stayer (0.601)—the only group for which community satisfaction had a significant odds ratio among all of the models we estimated. Consequently, although low levels of satisfaction suggest a disequilibria that could create geographic mobility, these less-educated respondents seemed to choose to remain in place because of strong attachment to their communities. In other words, strong community attachment seems to trump dissatisfaction with community services among this group. This conclusion seems reasonable given the positive, although nonsignificant, odds ratio for having Internet in the home. It may be that, among those with the lowest education, the Internet serves as a mechanism for residents who are extremely connected to their community to reduce the potential disequilibria that might occur because of the lack of, or poor, community services.

6.4 | Dependents in the home

In households without dependents, the pattern of results was essentially identical to that in the full model presented in Table 2. The two noteworthy differences between these and the full model are that when there was a dependent in the home, regardless of whether it was a child or parent, neither satisfaction with services nor distance to shopping was related to being a stayer. It appears that the responsibility of care giving creates ties to one's community that may overcome any disequilibria that result from both inadequate community services and the distance to other services.

7 | DISCUSSION

Our study examined stayers in Montana (USA) in 2010 using a general population sample of householders. We defined stayers as individuals who had lived in their communities since before they began elementary school. Overall, 23% of respondents were stayers. Although this could be considered a high rate, it is somewhat difficult to contextualise without a consistently applied measure of stayers. Nevertheless, this high rate suggests that efforts to examine staying are warranted. We explored separate models by rurality, broad age groups that represent life stages, educational attainment, and whether there was a child or parent in the respondent's household. The results we reported, although evaluated by statistical significance, were not based on specific hypotheses. Rather, we placed the exploration of stayers in the context of modernity and principles of the life course perspective. Our hope is that these findings serve as a guide for future efforts to develop theory regarding stayers.

Throughout the modern era, the shift from a communal to more individual social orientation has created a large body of research that emphasises understanding why individuals leave their communities—severing connections to place, social networks, and so forth. In this research, staying is taken for granted. However, as the predominant narrative of the modern world has become one of social mobility, geographic mobility has become the norm and understanding immobility or stayers becomes problematic. Recent research on stayers confirms that they often are considered backward or otherwise inadequate (Hjälm, 2014; Ni Laoire, 2001).

This paradigm of seeing stayers as problematic provides important new opportunities to identify the association between individuals and place in contemporary society. For example, some literature has suggested that a combination of high community attachment and low community satisfaction and/or satisfaction with services likely indicates that individuals remain in their communities because they have no other options (Erickson et al., 2012). From a conceptual standpoint in which mobility is what needs to be explained, this may make sense—strong attachment to communities with low quality or few services could represent the result of efforts to reduce the cognitive dissonance that may occur from the inability to move out of a community that does not satisfy one's needs. However, if we acknowledge staying as a deliberate choice that individuals make in light of the variety of desires and goals that they have for their lives, the assumption that high attachment and low satisfaction marks being stuck may be incorrect. Rather than being stuck, attachment to a community would mark a genuine evaluation of the way in which people feel about the place in which they live. Further, focusing solely on the relation between community attachment and satisfaction and mobility to define what it means to be stuck ignores the broader scope of the calculus individuals make.

A number of specific patterns in our results reinforced this reconceptualisation of stayers. First, education often is seen as an important indicator of why some residents choose to leave their communities—either to obtain education or because it provides the means to leave. We did find a generally negative relation between educational attainment and being a stayer. This is consistent with the rural "brain-drain" literature, which suggests that human capital among the educated facilitates their escape from rural communities, whereas a lack of human capital traps rural residents (Carr & Kefalas, 2009). Further, we did find a high level of community attachment and low satisfaction among respondents with no high school diploma, consistent with conceptualisations of stayers as stuck. However, we found little difference between the factors that predict staying among respondents who reported having a high school diploma, some college, and a college degree. In fact, community attachment was a substantially stronger predictor of being a stayer among those who had a college degree than among those who had only a high school degree. Further, strong community attachment was accompanied by high satisfaction with services. It hardly seems reasonable to suggest that the college educated are stuck in communities with poor services, at least not because they lack the resources needed to leave.

Second, the Internet has been conceptualised as a way for those who are attached to communities with poor services to satisfy their consumption needs (e.g., Bokser-Liwerant, 2002). This suggests we should have observed a positive relation between the Internet and being a stayer, but we found the opposite. Consider the findings for the oldest age group we examined (80–101 years old). Although approximately 80% of respondents had Internet in their homes, the relation between this and being a stayer was negative. This finding

suggests that Internet access alone is unable to compensate for poor services. Older residents also must know how to access, and trust e-commerce, before they realise the conceptual benefits of the Internet. Further, older stayers had to travel farther to a big-box retailer than did nonstayers. This combination of results suggests that there should be a substantial disequilibrium. Further, there was a positive relation to community attachment in this group. The fact that this pattern occurs in the oldest group makes the conclusion that they must be stuck somewhat sensible. However, considering their high levels of community attachment, it is likely that these life-long stayers do not feel in disequilibrium. This is consistent with recent evidence that, at least in rural areas, the elderly learn to adapt to the local services available to them (Brown, Glasgow, Sanders, Kulcsar, & Theide, 2017), as well as the conceptualisation of community attachment primarily as a measure of one's sense of rootedness to a community and community satisfaction as the way in which people experience the larger society and its institutions through their communities.

Third, a life course perspective provides additional context to these examples of the need to consider the complex, repeated decision-making process that likely occurs throughout stayers' lives. For example, there were substantial differences in the predictors of staying for young adults (age 18–34 years) compared to older age groups. It may be that the transition to adulthood and its accompanying role transitions is a particularly important period of life for staying behaviour that filters nonstayers out of communities. Moreover, having a dependent in the home eliminated the relation between the perceived quality of community services and being a stayer. This suggests that linked lives are an important consideration for staying—more so in this case than the economic disequilibrium that often is included in the narrative of mobility. Future studies should consider the various decisions stayers face at different points during their lives—do they stay rather than leave their communities to pursue higher education? Do they move back once they finish? Do parents uproot their children and separate them from increasingly important peer networks in pursuit of career advancement? Do empty nesters face a reality of frequent travelling to visit adult children and grandchildren or do they move closer to their children? Do the elderly maintain an independent residence but remodel their homes with assisted living technology, do they move in with an adult child or into an institution, or just manage the best they can?

Although our analysis provides important insights for the current understanding of what it means to be a stayer, our data and approach have limitations. First, our operational definition of stayers is quite restrictive. This precludes answers to important questions about stayers posed in the previous paragraph. Second, although Montana permits an analysis across the rural–urban spectrum, the population's geographic distribution is sparse and may not generalise directly to more urban and geographically concentrated populations. Further, the age distribution of the data is slightly high. However, this is consistent with many states and regions with aging populations.

The cross-sectional nature of our data also presents some limitations. The most fundamental issue for the understanding of stayers is that the point of comparison is necessarily for those who have moved in. Although this is an important comparison, cross-sectional data prevent comparing stayers to those who left. From the perspective that stayers are making deliberate decisions to stay in the context of the life course, it may be more illustrative to compare stayers and leavers. For example, what differentiates young parents who stay from those who leave? Cross-sectional data cannot answer this and related questions.

More specific issues related to cross-sectional data in this study include the confounded relation between staying and age. Every year of life is an additional year of risk in leaving a community, and every year, more individuals will fall prey to that risk. Consequently, the proportion of stayers in a community at any individual age will necessarily decline, which may be an artefact of having only cross-sectional data. Thus, each additional year also is associated with a risk of remaining a stayer and that risk is impossible to capture in cross-sectional data. Further, although return migration is an important aspect of understanding stayers (Haartsen & Thissen, 2014), our data did not allow us to capture the return migration that is relatively common in some rural communities. If returners should be considered stayers, then our measure classified them incorrectly as leavers. Although perhaps not a large empirical phenomenon, mortality among stayers also reduces their presence in a community.

Finally, a lingering empirical question in understanding staying behaviour is interwoven with efforts to understand community. What is community? Where is community? In this study, we allowed the study respondents to answer these questions and left community otherwise unspecified. Many existing studies of stayers have been conducted by linking behaviour to specific geographic boundaries (e.g., Barcus & Brunn, 2009)—that is, staying in a geographically bounded area. However, it remains unclear what aspects of the community experience continue to be linked intrinsically to place. For example, recent community studies have shown that there is no important place-based community effect on an individual's community attachment (Flaherty & Brown, 2010) and that orientation to community primarily is a function of individual characteristics (Cope, Currit, Flaherty, & Brown, 2016). Research in this vein calls for community to be studied more broadly and notes that, arguably, theories that define community as localised bounded solidarities overlook many of the consequences of modernity inadvertently. Thus, defining community exclusively in geographic terms disregards social processes that have divorced the context of local solidarities and networks of primary ties from the social interactions essential to the reproduction of daily life (e.g., Nisbet, 1953; Wirth, 1938). Consequently, such approaches inadvertently minimise the fact that extra-local forces moderate the experience of the local community in late-modern life (Bauman, 2007; Brown, 1993). Although focusing research efforts on local solidarities is germane, perhaps a more holistic understanding of where individuals stay will account for community as a distinct way of organising society, in which the essential interactions of daily life remain embedded within local solidarities and primary ties (Goodsell, Flaherty, & Brown, 2014).

8 | CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we echo Hjälm (2014), who asserted, "... in order to more fully understand the dominant staying behavior, we need to scrutinize staying, not only as the opposite of moving, but also acknowledge that staying is as diverse and ongoing a phenomenon as moving"

(pp. 578–579). Our analyses suggested that staying is indeed a much more complex and potentially proactive decision than much of the literature on residential mobility has assumed by taking staying for granted. However, in the context of a rapidly changing economy and unstable labour markets, although its causes and consequences may be diverse, mobility is the norm, and immobility needs to be explained. There is much work to do to understand the decisions individuals make repeatedly to stay in a place throughout their lives.

From a policy perspective, seeing lifetime stayers as individuals who choose to stay means they can be an asset to communities. Positive in-migration often is an economic lifeline, especially for rural and highly rural communities. For many rural communities, new migrants bring in higher levels of human capital and economic resources or connections that facilitate growth (Brown, Bolender, Kulcsar, Glasgow, & Sanders, 2011). Using the social networks and capital of long-term residents is an effective way for rural and highly rural communities to recruit new or return migration (von Reichert, Cromartie, & Arthun, 2014). Therefore, policymakers can use the established connections and attachment of lifetime stayers to their communities as an anchor both in recruiting and attracting external resources actively. As a result, local policymakers can view stayers as a bridge to outside people and capital and not merely as a geographically stuck or immobile population.

ENDNOTES

[1] We defined urban, rural, and highly rural residents using the US Census Bureau's (2012) definition, where urban residents lived in urbanised areas with 50,000 or more people or an urban cluster with a population between 2,500 and 50,000 people. Highly rural residences were identified as those in a county with a population density of six people or fewer per square mile. Rural residents were defined as all non-urban and non-highly rural residents.

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