

Description of Topic

Education is viewed as an investment that enables individuals to more successfully find and compete for opportunities offered in a society. Basic models portray migration as a strategy by which individuals use their investment in education, and other human capital, to respond to the spatial distribution of opportunities. For instance, research indicates that highly educated individuals operate in a national job market, and are thereby more likely than less educated individuals, to make long distance moves.

Yet, there is a preponderance of evidence that the returns to investments in education vary by race and ethnicity: members of disadvantaged minority groups receive less for their investments in education. This differentially effects the migration strategies used by Blacks, Hispanics and Whites. This study analyzes the role of education in determining whether differences exist in the repeat migration of those groups with respect to return and onward migration, once other socio-demographic variables are controlled.

DaVanzo and Morrison (1981) illustrated that, through a process of self-selection, migrants who return to places where they have previously lived differ from those who move onward, or do not return, in their motives, characteristics, and circumstances, both before and after the initial move, and in any subsequent moves. One of the important differentiating characteristics is education. Research on Whites¹ shows the less educated are more likely to return to areas in which they have previously resided, and the more educated are more likely to move on to new areas.

Comparisons of the rates at which differing race/ethnicities make repeat migrations, and whether one group is more likely to make return or onward migrations, is important. The redistribution of these groups within the larger society is greatly influenced by repeat migration. Further, knowing these rates may be useful for increasing understanding of whether migration is utilized differentially during the years when careers and families are being built.

There is little research on repeat migration because it requires data about places of residence at many points in an individual's life. Census data provide only three data points for migrants: place of birth, residence five years earlier, and current residence.

¹ DaVanzo (1976) notes that analyses are restricted to Whites because the number of Non-White families in the IDP data was too small to support separate analysis. However, more recently the PSID has been over sampling Hispanics (<http://psidonline.isr.umich.edu/>)

This lack of information is particularly problematic for studying repeat migration, because much of this migration is sequenced throughout the lifetime, with a high proportion of the movements occurring during the young adult years (Long, 1973.) According to Toney, Berry and Cromartie (2004) a complete distinction between primary and repeat migration, and the subcategories of repeat migration (onward and return,) requires the identification and timing of all prior residences.

The absence of ethnic and racial comparisons of return and onward migration is another important gap in this line of research. The deficiency is particularly significant for Hispanics. A major reason for this gap is that the earliest panel studies did not include enough Blacks or Hispanics for meaningful comparisons, although there is separate informative literature on Black return migration, primarily to the South (Newbold, 1997; Lieberman, 1978; Campbell, Johnson and Strangler, 1974; Adelman, et. al, 2000.) This study will analyze the role of education in directing the repeat migration patterns of Blacks, Hispanics and Whites utilizing the 1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, NLSY79.

Theoretical Focus

According to human capital models, education is an investment individuals make in their futures. In relation to migration, education variables consistently show statistical significance. Studies examining the link between migration and education have provided an array of information. Schwartz (1976) asserts that for any educational level, the rate of migration declines with age, and the rate of migration for any age increases with education. More educated individuals move, on the average, longer distances, and are less risk averse than are less-educated persons. Weisbrod (1962) sees the process of migration as one of spatial shifting based on external effects of education.

DaVanzo (1983; DaVanzo and Morrison, 1981) examine propositions about return moves by using longitudinal data from the 1968-75 Panel Study of Income Dynamics, PSID. These analyses find that whether repeat migrations are return or onward depend on educational level and employment status. Onward migrants tend to be

younger², better educated, more highly skilled and better informed about opportunities and amenities at an array of possible destinations than are return migrants. Moreover, the most educated are most prone, when making a short-interval repeat move, to favor a new destination; the less educated tend to return to areas where they lived before. In addition DaVanzo (1983) maintains the less educated are the likeliest to return quickly.

Although there is a large body of literature examining the relationship between migration and education, examination of these variables may yield different results when race/ethnicity is incorporated. The dominant ideology of education in America assumes that society is a place where an individual's status depends on talent and motivation, not inherited position, connections, or privileges linked to ascriptive characteristics like race or ethnicity (Mickelson and Smith, 1998.) However, despite the fact that racial and ethnic differences in educational achievement and attainment have narrowed over the past three decades, there are still substantial gaps between Blacks, Hispanics and Whites. Although Black and Hispanic students are more likely to attend college than ever before, they are more likely than Whites to attend a community college than a four-year institution (Kao and Thompson, 2003.) Due to the significant impact of certain socio-demographic characteristics on migration outcomes, controls will be included for age, sex, employment status and length of residence.

Data and Research Methods

This research will build on the conceptualization and measurements developed by DaVanzo and Morrison. In particular, the study will break repeat migration into two types, namely return and onward. The National Longitudinal Study of Youth is a survey funded by the Bureau of Labor Statistics that has been ongoing since 1979 (NLSY79.) Data in the NLSY79 allows for comparisons of repeat migration, and examination as to whether differences exist in risk with respect to return versus onward migration. It provides data on counties of residence at each interview date, as well as for county of birth, and county of residence at age 14, for each respondent.

² These results show that by comparison those in the age group 25-34 have the largest onward to return ratio; other age categories are (a) under 25 years; (b) 35-54 years; (c) 55+ years.

Whether a respondent had ever migrated at the time of the initial interview is used to identify any repeat migration. While some ambiguity exists in distinguishing between onward and return migration because of movements from birth to age 14, and between age 14 and the first interview, place of birth and residence at 14 have been shown to be critical points in the pre-adult years. Furthermore, this is a much more extensive residence history than was available for DaVanzo and Morrison's definitive study.

Expected Findings

The expected findings of this study are based on the following premises: (1) one's level of education effects the direction of his or her migration, and (2) considerable gaps exist in the educational achievement and attainment between Blacks, Hispanics and Whites. This study hypothesizes that migration rates for race and ethnic groups at different educational levels will be different after controlling for age, sex, employment status and length of residence. Specifically, Blacks and Hispanics are expected to have higher rates of return migration, and Whites will have higher rates of onward migration, once these socio-demographic characteristics are controlled.

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