A Longitudinal Study of Past Influences on Migration

Theresa Marie Fedor and Sang Lim Lee

Utah State University

INTRODUCTION

Migration literature usually describes the age pattern of adult migration frequency as highest in young adulthood, with a subsequent gradual decline in the frequency of migration events with age. This tapering off in a person's life describes an assumed universal, life cycle of migration. There is also an embedded assumption that each migration event in an individual's life is independent of all other migration events and that each migration is simply a result of the costs and benefits of a move at that point in time. The idea that each move is independent of other moves, coupled with a universally applied life cycle of migration for an individual has partially stemmed from data limitations bred from cross-sectional studies. This research utilizes longitudinal data that enables a more thorough analysis of the two assumptions listed above.

We hypothesize that each migration event is correlated to other migration events in an individual's life. A migration event is defined as a change in county of residence, defined by federal information processing standards codes (FIPS codes). This study shows that the age of an individual's first adult migration differentially influences subsequent migration events. The frequency of primary migration events declines with age, meaning that there are fewer total numbers of primary migrations at later ages. But those who experience a primary migration at age 28 as opposed to age 18, for example, will begin their migration life cycle at that point, leading to a higher chance of subsequent migrations. By grouping cases by age at first migration, or primary migration, new patterns emerge that give a more detailed description of how migration occurs. Disaggregation by age group of first migration event reveals that the universally applied life cycle of migration as a gradual taper with age, no longer remains true. In fact, the

same pattern as described in the life cycle of migration still occurs on the individual level, but this pattern begins at different time points based on the age of primary migration.

DATA, METHODS AND RESULTS

This study employs the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 79 (NLSY79), which enables us to chase past information pertaining to individual characteristics as well as migration patterns over time.

Analysis will be done using logistic regression. The dependent variable in this research is categorized migration frequency between the ages of 30 and 39. The main independent variable of interest is the age of an individual's first adult migration experience. More specifically, this includes dummy variables indicating whether a respondent moved first between the ages of 18 and 24, whether a respondent moved first between the ages of 25 and 29, or whether a respondent did not migrate at all during their early adulthood. Other independent variables that are controlled (according to status at age 30) include education, employment, income, marital status, number of dependent children, urban or rural residency, duration of residency, race, and sex. Initial comparison of the dependent variable to select independent variables is attached (table 1).

Migrants who experienced primary migration at older ages are more likely to migrate in subsequent adult years than people of the same age who experienced primary migration earlier in adulthood. Meanwhile, some segments of the population maintain very low mobility throughout their lives. This data provides important explanations of longitudinal migration patterns in ways that differ from the dominant conceptualization of causal factors and generalized patterns of adult mobility.

Table 1.		Frequency and Percentage of Migrations between Ages 30 and 39					
		0 Migrations	Any Migrations (1 or more times)	1 Migration	2 Migrations	3 or more Migrations	Total
By Previous Migration Pattern:	**Late Primary Migrants (25 to 29)**	**39.8%**	**60.2%**	35.2%	16.4%	8.5%	**100.0%**
		306	463	271	126	66	769
	Early Primary Migrants (18 to 24)	**53.6%**	**46.4%**	24.3%	13.8%	8.3%	**100.0%**
		2657	2297	1202	683	412	4954
	Non-Migrants (18 to 29)	**77.7%**	**22.3%**	12.8%	7.0%	2.5%	**100.0%**
		2670	765	439	239	87	3435
By Sex:	**Female**	**63.2%**	**36.8%**	20.8%	10.8%	5.2%	**100.0%**
		2981	1734	979	510	245	4715
	Male	**59.8%**	**40.2%**	21.0%	12.0%	7.2%	**100.0%**
		2725	1834	960	546	328	4559
By Race:	**White**	**56.3%**	**43.6%**	23.5%	12.8%	7.3%	**100.0%**
		2386	1849	996	543	310	4235
	Black	**65.1%**	**34.9%**	17.8%	10.8%	6.3%	**100.0%**
		1648	883	450	273	160	2531
	Hispanic	**62.8%**	**37.1%**	20.8%	11.2%	5.1%	**100.0%**
		1016	602	337	182	83	1618
	Other	**73.7%**	**26.2%**	17.5%	6.5%	2.2%	**99.9%**
		656	234	156	58	20	890
By Employment Status:	**Employed**	**62.2%**	**37.8%**	21.1%	11.0%	5.7%	**100.0%**
		4464	2716	1517	788	411	7180
	Unemployed	**63.1%**	**36.9%**	17.5%	12.8%	6.6%	**100.0%**
		361	211	100	73	38	572
	Out of the Work Force	**57.9%**	**42.1%**	21.2%	12.8%	8.1%	**100.0%**
		881	641	322	195	124	1522
By Marital Status:	**Married**	**62.4%**	**37.6%**	21.7%	10.7%	5.2%	**100.0%**
		3433	2066	1191	589	286	5499
	Not Married	**60.2%**	**39.8%**	19.8%	12.4%	7.6%	**100.0%**
		2273	1501	747	467	287	3774
By Education (Highest Degree):	**High School**	**63.0%**	**36.9%**	20.3%	10.5%	6.1%	**99.9%**
		3238	1898	1044	541	313	5136
	Associates Degree	**62.8%**	**37.2%**	21.3%	9.8%	6.1%	**100.0%**
		391	232	133	61	38	623
	Bachelors Degree	**56.2%**	**43.9%**	24.8%	13.0%	6.1%	**100.1%**
		753	588	332	174	82	1341
	Graduate/Professional Degree	**42.8%**	**57.2%**	29.3%	18.0%	9.9%	**100.0%**
		143	191	98	60	33	334