

Migration toward Family and Labor Market Outcomes in Sweden

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Introduction

Internal migration—a permanent or semi-permanent relocation within national borders—is an important mechanism for facilitating human capital development and labor market flexibility. Traditional models assume that long-distance moves are motivated by employment and educational considerations (e.g., higher wages, better labor market prospects, educational opportunities) while shorter-distance moves are associated with life course transitions, such as family formation/dissolution and housing adjustments (Kulu and Milewski 2007). Recent research points to a more nuanced picture, though—namely that social and family moves are also important factors in individuals’ decision to move across long distances (Mulder 2018; Thomas, Gillespie, and Lomax 2019).

Survey studies suggest that migrants are as much concerned about adjusting consumption and/or realigning social relationships as they are about making specific economic gains (Morrison & Clark 2011; Niedomysl 2011). In many cases, while “employment may enter the decision-making matrix ... it is not necessarily the primary motivation” (Korpi and Clark 2017). Thus, returns to migration might be negative in cases where employment considerations are not the primary motivation.

Hypothesis 1: When compared with moves for employment-related reasons, family moves will be associated with worse labor market outcomes.

People move for reasons other than increasing their earning capacity and family ties to a location can strengthen the advantages of moving to that location. This location-specific capital—the resources that are bound to a specific area—might form a benefit for migrating to that area, especially for individuals with coresidential children.

On one hand, potentially-mobile parents can tap their family network as a social resource. Moving toward family might lead to more or better childcare so that individuals can express more workplace flexibility (e.g., working more hours). On the other hand, moving close to family might compete with individuals’ job market performance or individuals might sacrifice good jobs for family care/contact. Therefore, we propose competing hypotheses for the role of coresidential children in moderating the association between family-related moves and labor market outcomes:

Hypothesis 2a: Family-motivated moves will be associated with improved labor market outcomes for migrants with coresidential children.

Hypothesis 2b: Family-motivated moves will be associated with worse labor market outcomes for migrants with coresidential children.

Some have identified social and familial networks as an important source of information for finding and securing employment (Bähr and Abraham 2016). Unemployed individuals in particular might strengthen ties to their close family in order to access job-related resources that are not available through professional channels (Spilimbergo and Ubeda 2004). Thus, in contrast with Hypothesis 1, among the unemployed, we might expect movement toward family to mitigate barriers to employment.

Hypothesis 3: Unemployed individuals will have a higher likelihood of post-migration employment if they report moving for family reasons.

Data and Method

Data for this project are based on the Swedish Motives for Moving survey (see Nedomysl 2011). Data were collected in 2007, in collaboration with Statistics Sweden, through a postal questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to a stratified sample of 10,000 Swedish adults who had moved at least 20km in the previous year. The sample was drawn from a total population of 244,704 Swedish individuals who made such moves. The sample groups were stratified by sex, age, and migration distance. After two reminders, 49% of the migrants returned a completed questionnaire. Register information from Statistics Sweden was linked to the data and a data weight was assigned for each respondent, thus giving them an appropriate weight based on their share of the total migrant population in 2006.

There were several restrictions on the full data set ($N = 4,909$). For the first models, we restricted the sample to working age individuals (18-65) who reported having been employed prior to and after the move (i.e., students, currently unemployed, and retired individuals were excluded). This yielded an analytic sample of 1,852. Subsequent analyses are based on the subset of individuals who reported being unemployed prior to moving ($N = 232$).

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable measured changes in labor market outcomes associated with the move. A survey item asked, “How has the move affected your work conditions regarding...?” Three items were provided: (1) Salary (2) Work Opportunities, and (3) Interesting Work Tasks. The Likert-type response options were: (1) *Much Worse*, (2) *Somewhat Worse*, (3) *Unchanged*, (4) *Somewhat Better*, and (5) *Much Better*. The responses were collapsed into three categories, representing deteriorations (1), no change (2), or improvements (3). The collapsed responses were summed to create a scale, ranging from 3-9, with higher scores indicating better labor market outcomes.

Primary Independent Variables

Respondents' reason for moving was based on three items that asked about primary, secondary, and directional reasons for moving. The first item asked, “What was the most important reason for your move?” A second item followed up on the first and asked about “other important reasons for moving.” Later in the survey, a third item assessed directional reasons for the move by asking individual about their particular reasons for moving “to this specific place/region.” All three questions were open-ended, allowing respondents to report any number of reasons in their own words. The reasons were then coded and classified into four groups: work only (the

reference category), family only, neither work nor family, and both work and family. Subsequent models on the subsample of unemployed individuals prior to moving consider whether or not family was mentioned as *any* reason for moving, else = 0.

Control Variables

At the individual level, we included measures for age and gender (female = 1, male = 0). Education is an ordered variable classifying individuals as having an elementary school education, high school, some college, or a college degree. A dichotomous measure for marital status indicated whether the respondent was married after the migration took place (1), else 0. Housing tenure marked individuals' post-migration housing situation as owning (the reference category), renting, or some other type of housing situation. Income is based on information on respondents' logged household income in 2005.

Based on aggregate data from Statistics Sweden, regional variables identify post-migration attractions at the municipal level. The continuous variables include the logged average municipal housing cost, unemployment rate, and the average gross income (logged). An urbanicity measure is based on Statistics Sweden's SKL, which classifies areas based on their population and commuting patterns—the categories are: large city, suburban municipality, medium-sized town, medium sized commuter municipality, medium sized commuter town with low commuter population, small town, commuting municipality near a small town, rural municipality, rural municipality with visitor industry. A dichotomous measure indicated whether or not there was a higher education institution in the post-migration municipality.

Analytic Strategy

We first employed a Heckman model for selection into post-move employment using the unemployment rate at the post-migration municipality as the selection instrument. The Rho for the model was non-significant ($\rho = .04$, $p = 0.68$), indicating that the selection model did not improve upon standard regression models. Therefore, the following analyses are based on multinomial logistic regression assessing whether individuals' reasons for moving are associated with improvement or deterioration in labor market outcomes compared to the reference category, which is that there was no change. An additional model includes an interaction between motives for moving and having coresidential children. Subsequent analyses use logistic regression to examine whether family-motivated migration among the unemployed is associated with post-migration employment (odds ratios reported).

Preliminary Results

Table 1 presents the primary results for the impact of controlling for the measures mentioned above. Individuals who moved for family reasons only were significantly more likely than those who moved for work only to experience labor market deteriorations than remain the same ($p < .05$). Those who moved for family only ($p < .001$) or neither work nor family ($p < .001$) were significantly less likely than those who moved for work only to experience a labor market improvement than stay the same. These findings are in line with hypothesis 1—that family moves would be associated with worse labor market outcomes for those who move for family-related reasons than those who move for employment.

Table 1: Migration Motives and Labor Market Outcomes (N = 1,852)		
Reference: Stayed the Same	Deteriorated	Improved
Migration Motives		
Reason		
Family Ties Only	2.11*	0.44***
Work Only (Reference)		
Family Ties & Work	1.62	1.21
Other	0.73	0.23***
Table Notes: Control variables not included in table. Unweighted and unimputed data. Clustered at the municipal level.		

Table 2 presents the results of a separate model with the interaction between motives for moving and the presence of coresidential children including all control variables (not shown). These results support Hypothesis 2b. Migrants with coresidential children who reported family as a reason for moving are significantly more likely to report labor market deterioration than those without children ($p < .05$). Employment-motivated migrants with coresidential children are significantly less likely to report labor market improvement than those without children ($p < .01$).

Table 2: Interaction Model (N = 1,852)		
Reference: Stayed the Same	Deteriorated	Improved
Main Effects		
Children	0.95	0.22
Migration Motives		
Reason		
Family Ties Only	1.24	0.52*
Work Only (Reference)		
Family Ties & Work	1.58	2.15*
Other	0.65	0.23***
Interaction		
Reason x Children		
Family Ties Only x Children	4.22*	0.61
Work Only x Children		
Family Ties & Work x Children	1.68	0.23**
Other x Children	1.69	1.07
Table Notes: Controls not included in the table. Unweighted and unimputed data. Clustered at the municipal level.		

The results of the final logistic regression (not shown) also support our third hypothesis—unemployed individuals moving for family reasons have a higher likelihood of post-move employment than those who moved for other reasons. In the logistic model, individuals who reported family as any of the reasons for moving were significantly more likely to report being employed after the move ($p < .05$).

References

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