ILR Review

Impact Factor: **2.9**
5-Year Impact Factor:

A TEST OF THE THEORY OF GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY

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In the April 1961 issue of this journal, Ashby, Prosper, and I presented data on the extent and characteristics of labor mobility within and through three southern states. In this article, the same body of data is used to provide a brief bit of evidence bearing on the theory of labor mobility. Both this and the April articles are by-products of a larger study of mobility in the so-called "Urban Crescent" of North and South Carolina.[1] The parent study utilized a 1 percent sample of all workers covered by Old-Age and Survivors Insurance who were employed at some time during 1953 in North Carolina, South Carolina, or Georgia.[2]

The Urban Crescent comprises sixteen contiguous counties in central North Carolina and northern South Carolina. These counties have been grouped into six subareas, four of which contain standard metropolitan areas.[3] The data make possible a comparison of the 1953 flows of workers

The ability of wage differentials to perform the function of allocating labor supplies, as posited by conventional economic theory, is the central issue of recent research on labor mobility. Most mobility studies, however, have taken the local labor market as the framework for study and analysis of interfirm, interindustry, or interoccupational movements of workers. This article is concerned with rural-urban and interregional worker movements with respect to appropriate differences in money wages. The results tend to support the hypothesis that the flows of workers in movement are typically from areas of low net advantage to areas of high net advantage, as measured by income differentials.

The author wishes to acknowledge his debt to the Urban Studies Committee of the Institute for Research in Social Science, University of North Carolina, for financial assistance in making the study on which this article is based. Peter A. Prosper, Jr., provided research assistance and Benjamin J. Mandel of the Bureau of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance helped to solve problems in handling the data. Various versions of the manuscript benefited from the advice and suggestions of T. Hardie Park, George S. Tolley, Albert Rees, and H. Gregg Lewis. Robert L. Bunting is chairman, Department of Economics and Business Administration, Cornell College, Iowa.—Editor

[1] Robert L. Bunting and Peter A. Prosper, Jr., "Labor Mobility Patterns in the Piedmont Industrial Crescent" (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Institute for Research in Social Science, University of North Carolina, May 1960), mimeo.

[2] The major shortcomings of these data are incomplete coverage (approximately 79 percent of total civilian employment was covered in the year of this study, 1953) and the lack of occupational information. (See Robert L. Bunting, "Labor Mobility: Sex, Race, and Age," *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (May 1960), p. 229; for more detailed discussion of data problems, see Bunting and Prosper, pp. 10–16.) Those self-employed workers to whom coverage was extended by the 1950 amendments to the Social Security Act were deleted from the data analyzed in this article.

[3] The subareas were defined as follows: No. 1: Wake, Durham, and Orange counties, North Carolina; this area includes the Raleigh, N.C. and Durham, N.C. standard metropolitan areas. No. 2: Alamance, Guilford, Forsyth, Davidson, and Randolph counties, North Carolina; this area contains the Greensboro-High Point, N.C. and Winston-Salem, N.C. standard metropolitan areas. No. 3: Rowan and Cabarrus counties, North Carolina. No. 4: Gaston and Mecklenburg counties, North Carolina; this area contains the Charlotte, N.C. standard metropolitan area. No. 5: Cherokee and York counties, South Carolina. No. 6: Greenville and Spartanburg counties, South Carolina; this area contains the Greenville, S.C. standard metropolitan area.

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