

Movin' in and Movin' out – Migration and Marital Events

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For presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America,
Boston, MA, April 1-3, 2003.

This paper reports the results of research and analysis undertaken by the U.S. Census Bureau staff. It has undergone a Census Bureau review more limited in scope than that given to official Census Bureau publications. This report is released to inform interested parties of ongoing research and to encourage discussion of work in progress.

Introduction

Marriage and divorce represent tumultuous times in people's lives. Families experience upheaval in many ways. One of the least examined aspects of this upheaval is geographic disruption or migration. Very often these events are accompanied by at least a local move and the combination into a single household, or the disruption in two multiple households. This analysis examines the intra-state and inter-state migration associated with these marital events.

Background

The divorce rate in the United States suggests that about 1 million households may face a divorce related migration each year. The annual marriage rate points to the formation of more than 2 million new married couple families each year. In the 5 years prior to Census 2000, about half of the population experienced a residential migration (Berkner and Faber 2003). The timing of marital events to residential moves, has not been well described, especially in recent years.

The literature contains few references to research on these demographic events in a linked manner (Rossi 1955; Mincer 1978; Speare and Goldscheider 1987; Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1987; Myers 2000; Feijten and Mulder 2002). Speare and Goldscheider (1987) present the probability of an immediate move following marriage, divorce, or widowhood using data from a panel study of Rhode Island adults. They find that there is an increased risk of relocation following marital events, except for widowhood, and that most wait more than one year following the event before relocating. The relationship between household composition changes and migration events is not new to Sociologists (Rossi 1955;), however recent research is much more limited, especially since the tremendous upswing in the proportion of the population experiencing divorce. This omitted component to both discussions of the impact of marriage and divorce and migration factors is the focus for this analysis.

Marriage and divorce literature often describes stresses associated with events in terms of conflict and economic changes. These discussions center around the direct effect of the marital event on the family and on children's well-being. McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) and Cherlin (1992) present considerable evidence of the disruptive effects of divorce on children's lives. However, how much additional compounding in the effects of divorce is created by subsequent residential upheaval. Migration literature, however, usually focuses on the labor market as a driving force behind moves, and seldom examines micro-level factors as engines for movement. Most effects of migration on child well-being are in the context of an intact family experiencing a relocation, and the disruption to peer networks, schooling, and other social connections.

Data and Methods

Data from the 2001 panel of the Survey of Income and Program Participation are used in this analysis. The topical modules attached to the second wave of data collection are the primary source for both the recent marital events and the residential migration

information. The 2001 SIPP panel is a nationally representative longitudinal household survey that follows respondents identified in Wave 1 for 3 years. The data from Wave 2 were collected during the summer of 2001 – (June – September). Data were collected from approximately 32,000 households.

The marital history topical module asks adults about their first, second, and last marital events. Respondents are asked for dates of marriage, separation and divorce. The timeframe for this analysis is the last 10 years. The analysis is limited to events in this period to limit recall problems and to reflect the experience of fairly recent marriage and divorce cohorts. The timing of these events is placed into the context of residential moves by overlaying the migration history dates on these marital events.

The outcomes of interest, international migration, interstate migration, intercounty migration, are examined in a descriptive analysis in conjunction with the timing of marital events – marriage and divorce. Since the reference period for these events extends out before the survey data were collected, contemporaneous covariates are limited. However, data from the fertility history topical module can provide simple statistics for women about whether they had any children prior to the events. Data from the education history topical module can place these moves into perspective with some school or continuing education transitions. Basic ascribed demographic controls are used to further provide detail to the association between migration and marital events.

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