

SPECIFIC AIMS - PAPER THREE

“Mental Health and Movin’ On” The Effect of Depression on Migratory Moves

Introduction:

The recent health selectivity model proposed by Jasso, Massey, Rosenzweig & Smith (2004) presents a model of selectivity that is built on rational choice theory and human capital theory. As I argued earlier, this is a helpful, but limited way to understand how health affects a person’s choice to migrate. One of the biggest weaknesses of the model is that it completely excludes social capital, yet it has been shown that social capital is highly correlated with better mental health (Pescosolido, Gardner & Lubell 1998; Pescosolido, Wright, Alegría & Vera 1998) and with a person’s decision to move (Massey et al. 1993). Additionally, research has shown that mental health is positively correlated with both internal migration (Lix et al. 2006; Larson, Bell & Young 2004) and international migration (Norman, Boyle & Rees 2005). It seems logical enough that social capital, mental health, and migration ought to be included together in a model of health selectivity, but such a model has not been tested before. I will test this model in paper three.

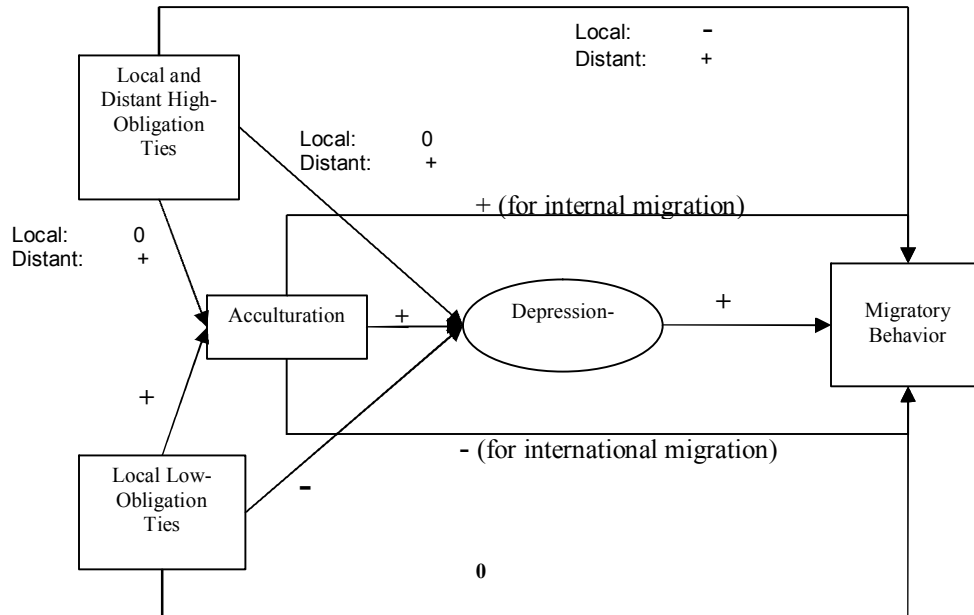
In paper two I demonstrate how migration and acculturation act as acute and chronic strains, respectively. If a person was suffering from depression as a result of these strains, I argue that he/she would seek to remove these strains. One way to accomplish this would be to move away from the strains, a finding that is supported by previous work showing an increase in internal migration among the mentally ill (Lix et al 2006, Larson, Bell & Young 2004), but I hypothesize it will work in a similar fashion for international migration. Independent of mental illness, I argue that an immigrant’s social ties will affect his/her decision to migrate because the connections one has, and where one has them, act as “anchors” or “pull” factors. For instance, I expect that distant high-obligation ties will increase the likelihood of international migration

(i.e., a pull), but that local high-obligation ties will decrease the likelihood of international migration (i.e., an anchor). I do not expect that local low-obligation ties will have a significant effect on migration because by definition they are easy to dissolve and form therefore they should not act as significant “anchors” or “pulls” in the choice to migrate. In regards to internal migration, I do not expect that distant high-obligation ties will have an effect because these ties would still remain distant. Similarly, I do not expect local low-obligation ties to have an effect because these ties are easier to dissolve and form, therefore they should not act as anchors. However, I do expect local high-obligation ties to have a negative effect on the decision to internally migrate because these ties would act as anchors to the community the migrant is currently living in. Net of the effects of social ties and mental illness, I also expect to find that acculturation has a significant negative effect on international migration because once a person has gone through the process of acculturation (or at least progressed significantly along it), I believe it would act as a disincentive to migration. That is, once adjustment and settlement has occurred, what is the advantage to uprooting and repeating the process anew? In contrast, I believe high levels of acculturation may have a significant positive effect on internal migration, net of other effects, by facilitating an immigrant’s ability to move beyond his/her initial destination through increased access to the native born culture and community.

Specifically, I will test the following four hypotheses:

1. Depression will increase the likelihood of internationally and internally migrating.
2. Local low-obligation ties should have no effect on the likelihood of internal and international migration.
3. Local high-obligation ties will have a negative effect on the likelihood of both internal and international migration, while distant high-obligation ties will have a positive effect only on international migration.
4. Acculturation will have a positive effect on the likelihood of internal migration and a negative effect on the likelihood of international migration.

Figure 3: Conceptual Diagram of Network and Depression Effects on Migration



(Controls for demographics, human capital, and migratory history are not shown)

Brief Description:

Paper three extends paper two by considering how major depression affects migration rather than the reverse. Migratory behavior before time two, but after time 1, will be regressed on depression at time one, net of the effects of social ties, acculturation, and the control variables. I will test two models; the first model will predict a dichotomous dependent variable of migration versus no migration without distinguishing the type of migration. The second model will be a multinomial dependent variable which distinguishes among no migration, international migration and internal migration. I will start by regressing the migratory moves outcome on my controls, and then I will add acculturation and social ties, finally I will add in depression. If there is any mediation through depression, this method will allow me to observe it. I will also repeat the multiple group tests conducted in Paper two to test for any differences across groups.

Model Equations:

In paper one and two the following abbreviations were used to denote variables in the model and I repeat them here for the sake of clarity:

- C = controls for demographics, human capital, and migratory history
- LH = local high-obligation ties
- DH = distant high-obligation ties
- LL = local low-obligation ties
- η_1 = first latent construct of acculturation – language proxies
- η_2 = second latent construct of acculturation – behavioral and knowledge
- η_3 = first latent construct of depression – depressed affect symptoms
- η_4 = second latent construct of depression – somatic symptoms

Migratory moves – The migratory moves variable will be defined in two stages, with the first stage being whether or not migration was engaged in and the second stage being the type of migration (i.e., internal or international). This migratory variable is an observed variable and therefore is represented by Y_4 in the structural model below (note: the subscript 4 is used to denote the fourth observed dependent variable in the model; local high-obligation ties, local low-obligation ties, and distant high-obligation ties being the first three):

$$Y_4 = \beta_{31}\eta_1 + \beta_{32}\eta_2 + \beta_{33}\eta_3 + \beta_{34}\eta_4 + \beta_{31}LH + \beta_{32}DH + \beta_{33}LL + \gamma_{31}C + \zeta_{y_3} \quad (12)$$

I make the assumption that the error term, ζ_{y_3} , is uncorrelated with the other variables in the model, that its expectation is zero, that the errors are homoscedastic, and that it is distributed normally.

Methods:

Software and Estimation – I will use the structural equation software MPLUS Version 4.2 (Muthén and Muthén 2006) and its full information maximum likelihood estimator (MLR) for the estimation of my models. I will estimate model one for the dichotomous variable of migration/no migration on my controls and will step-in my independent variables beginning with the acculturation, then social ties, then depression taking care to examine the likely changes in coefficient values with each additional set of predictors. I will repeat the same procedure for my multinomial dependent variable of no migration, international migration and internal migration.

Expected Findings:

Overall, I do expect that depression will have a significant, positive effect on migration, especially international migration, which is in keeping with the “salmon effect” theory. I also expect that depression will have a significant, positive effect on internal migration net of the other controls in the model. These expectations come from the previous research on the effects of health and mental health on the likelihood of migration, but I should caution that this research has not specifically looked at depression or at Hispanic immigrants.

I would argue that even if I do not find a significant, positive effect of depression on future migratory behavior it would be a substantively interesting and important finding. Given the relative dearth of research on this topic, any finding would contribute to this literature and spur future research on the health and mental health determinants of migration. If I do find a significant, positive effect, however, it would seem to lend support to the salmon hypothesis of selection bias and would hold implications for future cross-sectional work on immigrant populations.