

Greenwood M J. Research on internal migration in the United States: a survey.
J. Econ. Lit. 13:397-433, 1975.
[Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ]

This paper is a survey article that discusses what was known about the economics of internal US migration as of about 1975. The paper considers such topics as the determinants and consequences of interregional migration and attempts to ascertain the state of knowledge concerning migration research, as well as fruitful directions for future research. [The *SSCI*[®] indicates that this paper has been cited in over 220 publications, making it the most-cited paper from this journal.]

Michael J. Greenwood
Center for Economic Analysis
University of Colorado
Boulder, CO 80309-0257

April 26, 1988

For many years migration was an important topic of research in disciplines like sociology and geography. After the publication in 1961 of T.W. Schultz's¹ classic paper in the *American Economic Review*, soon followed in 1962 by G.S. Becker's² paper on investment in human capital and, in the same special issue of the *Journal of Political Economy*, by L.A. Sjaastad's³ paper on migration as an investment in human capital, migration research by economists really began to blossom.

The human capital perspective provided a paradigm that caught the attention of economists and provided a convenient theoretical framework for their work. After a little more than 10 years of fairly heavy production by economists, the time seemed right during the early 1970s to draw together what had been published, which I did in the survey article that became a *Citation Classic*. The idea was to ascertain via a survey what we knew about migration phenomena with some certainty and what important issues remained fertile for investigation.

In the early days of its development, the migration literature produced by economists emphasized the link between income differentials and interregional migration. This emphasis was certainly understandable given both the emphasis on the human capital perspective and

notions from international and interregional trade theory that both goods and factors flow geographically in response to differential prices and rates of return, respectively. The idea in those days was that migration occurred in a disequilibrium system in which differences in wage rates reflected real utility differentials that gave rise to migration.

As a reflection of how far this literature has developed, today great emphasis is placed on the idea that migration occurs within an equilibrium system in which wage differentials are compensated and therefore do not reflect opportunities for real utility gains. The notion is that areas with attractive bundles of location-specific amenities, such as climate in Southern California, will have wages and rents that reflect these amenity values. If these notions are correct, migration occurs in response to changed incomes that cause individuals to demand more access to location-specific amenities.

Before 1975 surprisingly little emphasis was placed on employment opportunities as a determinant of migration. A few studies had been conducted that placed migration in a simultaneous framework with employment change, but these were exceptions. Since 1975 the importance of employment opportunities in migration decisions has received much more attention, and simultaneous equations models of migration and employment change have become standard in the literature.

The area of research that has developed most markedly since 1975, however, is that relating to the analysis of micro data. Migration studies in the context of micro data were almost unheard of in 1975, but have been quite common since then. The availability of micro data and the development of techniques to analyze such data provided an important impetus to the rejuvenation of labor economics during the last 10 to 15 years, and migration research has followed this trend. Several important findings have depended upon the use of micro and panel data.

Perhaps one reason for the popularity of my article is that migration research is now common in several disciplines, and as the thrust and tone of published migration research has changed, many scholars wish to reference the "basics." My paper did, I think, lay out these basics as they existed in 1975. I have since updated the article by surveying the literature that appeared roughly between 1975 and 1985.⁴

1. Schultz T W. Investment in human capital. *Amer. Econ. Rev.* 51:1-17, 1961. (Cited 185 times since 1966.)
2. Becker G S. Investment in human capital: a theoretical analysis. *J. Polit. Econ.* 70(Supp., Pt. 2):9-49, 1962.
3. Sjaastad L A. The costs and returns of human migration. *J. Polit. Econ.* 70(Supp., Pt. 2):80-93, 1962.
4. Greenwood M J. Human migration: theory, models, and empirical studies. *J. Reg. Sci.* 25:521-44, 1985.