

Discussion of Isabelle Sin & Steven Stillman, "The Geographical Mobility of Maori in New Zealand"

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Labour Econometrics Workshop, UNSW
12 August 2005

Why Mobility Matters

- Taylor and Bell outline various arguments as to why we should study mobility of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.
 - To understanding how regions are developing
 - To better understand Indigenous culture
 - Because dispossession has characterised past relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples
 - To help develop better policy
- In this paper, the main focus is on unemployment. Hence the choice of labour market areas as the region to focus upon.
- Important new innovations: take account of unobservables by including LMA fixed effects, look at both land-based ties and social ties.

2

Impact of iwi

- One of the main organising principles of the paper is to look at how iwi affiliation affects mobility, ie: iwi affiliation → mobility
- But more likely: iwi affiliation ↔ mobility
- Conditioning on iwi affiliation is akin to conditioning on past migration. For example, we would probably not want to look at non-Indigenous mobility, conditioning on whether the person lived in the same LMA as their parents.
- Unless you can instrument for iwi affiliation, it would be better not to condition on it (virtually all tables in the paper are constructed this way).
- But there is another exercise which might be interesting: for Maori only, regress mobility on demographics and iwi indicators.
 - How much of migration is accounted for by iwi differences?
 - Then show us the distribution of the iwi FE terms – is there a wide spread? Do some iwi's seem to be breaking up (or at least to encourage moving)?

3

Unemployment

- The authors motivate the paper by a discussion of unemployment. However, they say that they cannot test the impact of unemployment rates, since their technique uses LMA fixed effects.
- But it's still possible to include interactions between unemployment rates and mobility for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The main effect (LMA unemployment rate) is merely absorbed by the LMA fixed effect.
- This is an important policy question: if Maori are moving a lot, but their moving decisions are orthogonal to unemployment rates, then higher mobility rates will not help reduce joblessness.

4

Age Matters

- The authors show that the age patterns of the two groups have an impact on mobility comparisons (this is even more true of Australia).
- To take account of this, they control for a quartic in age.
- It might even be better to include non-parametric age controls, or at least assure the reader that the results are robust to this specification.

5

Human Capital and Social Capital

- The authors look at both iwi affiliation and education, and find that both matter. It would be interesting to pursue this further, and see whether human capital substitutes for social capital.
- A related question is the extent to which Indigenous people near metropolitan areas are more or less likely to move.
 - Snipp (1989) finds that non-urban Native American peoples are less likely to move.
 - Frideres (1983) has similar findings for Canadian Inuit
 - Taylor and Bell (1996) for Australian Indigenous people.
 - (Caveat: This might be partly due to underreporting of moves in non-urban areas)

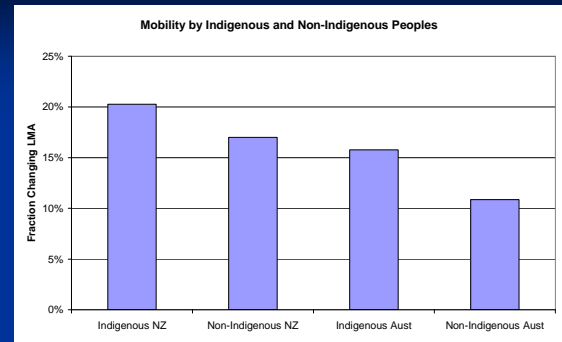
6

Comparison

- The authors focus only on New Zealand, but it would be useful to put this in a wider context, and look at how Maori mobility rates compare to those of other Indigenous groups.
- To see this, I compared Sin & Stillman's results with those of Taylor & Bell (1999). It's not possible to make precisely the same comparisons, but one can get a sense of the patterns in the two countries.

7

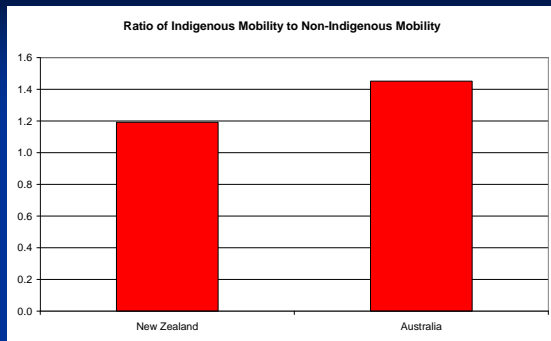
Comparing NZ and Australia



Sources: Sin & Stillman (2005), Taylor & Bell (1999). NZ mobility is 1991-96, Australian is 1995-96. Australian LMA assumed equivalent to SLA.

8

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9

Mobility and Panel Data

- In an ideal world, we would really like to know more about "mobility careers" – to what extent do the same people continue to move throughout their lives? And what are the longer term impacts for movers?
- To do this, you need a panel. But since the authors have 100% samples from two NZ censuses, a panel could be constructed (as has been done for some US censuses in the 1800s).
- Another implication of Sin & Stillman is the point made by Hunter & Smith (2002): since Indigenous people tend to be more mobile than non-Indigenous, panel surveys like HILDA should oversample Indigenous people, and be prepared to devote more resources to follow-ups.

10

References

- John Taylor & Martin Bell, 1996, "Population Mobility and Indigenous Peoples: the View from Australia", *International Journal of Population Geography* 2: 153-169
- B Hunter & D Smith, 2002, "Surveying Mobile Populations: Lessons from Recent Longitudinal Surveys of Indigenous Australians", *Australian Economic Review* 35(3): 261-275
- J Taylor & M Bell, 1999, "Changing Places: Indigenous Population Movement in the 1990s", CAEPR Working Paper 189/1999.

11