BLACK AMERICANS AND GHANAIANS: COMPARATIVE PATTERNS OF INTERNAL MIGRATION

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Internal migration has long been an overwhelmingly pervasive phenomenon and a major component of socioeconomic change in many countries around the globe. A redistribution of population is a strongly recognized aspect of the migratory process. Typically, attention centers on the rural-urban flow.

Scholarly expositions on the subject of population mobility typically assert that migration is a response to economic opportunity. The curious scholar might wonder whether responses to improved opportunities are characteristically similar for cohorts in a selected migration stream and whether explanations of such behavior can be generalized to migrants of different streams and of different cultural and geographical environments. In respect to migration behavior, an interesting topic concerns the comparative motives of the black American relative to his African counterpart, particularly the Ghanaian. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to analyze the rationale and determinants of black American and Ghanaian migration and to investigate the extent to which there is, perhaps, a common relationship between migration and economic circumstances for these geographically as well as culturally different environments. I will develop a model of migration to estimate the parameters of internal migration in relation to the push and pull hypothesis.

MIGRATION: CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Generally, three hypotheses have been advanced to explain migration: push and pull, human capital investment, and select group. The push and pull hypothesis was conceived by the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century English economists, Ravenstein and Redford. According to
Ravenstein, people are pushed from rural areas by factors such as outmoded land-tenure systems, unfavorable terms of trade, unequal distribution of property and income, and pressure of rural poverty in general. On the other hand, people are pulled to some migration destination by some especially attractive opportunities. Assertedly, urban migration results from some combination of both push and pull factors.  

The human capital investment hypothesis puts internal migration in a framework of costs and returns to investments in human capital. Expectations of future returns consist of the differentials in the income streams accruing to the migrant from the expected or improved opportunities. Costs are comprised of several components: money costs in the form of increased expenditures on food, lodging, and transportation; nonmoney costs, which include income foregone during the period spent on traveling to, searching for, learning, and adjusting to a new job; and psychic costs, such as homesickness, acclimatization strains, etc.

The select group hypothesis submits that migrants are not simply randomly chosen. Rather, they are the dynamic risk-taking beings who have tremendous capacity to separate themselves from traditional surroundings and acclimate to unfamiliar environments. They tend to move to centers that offer improved economic opportunities.

COMPARATIVE MOBILITY: PUSHES AND PULLS

The migration of Blacks from the South has been one of the most significant population movements in the United States history. About 15 percent of the non-white population of the South, a net total of 1.5 million persons, almost all Blacks, left the South in the 1940–50 decade; as many left again in 1950–60. This out-migration occurred primarily in the eight states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

A similar phenomena is taking place in Ghana. Massive numbers of people are migrating from northern Ghana to southern Ghana because of greater economic opportunities in the South. During the period 1931–48, over 17 percent of the population of northern Ghana migrated to southern Ghana, particularly to the South and Ashanti administrative regions.

From the accumulating research and writings, there emerge some identifiable determinants—push and pull factors of southern United States black migration. One grouping of factors concerns the nature of the agrarian economic structure and the subordinate position of Blacks within this structure. These include low farm income, boll weevil invasions, the