Don’t tell him too much - A simple mobility game for migration decisions of couples and some quasi-experimental evidence

Martin Abraham  
University of Nuremberg-Erlangen

Natascha Nisic  
FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg / IAB

(November 2009)  
LASER Discussion Papers - Paper No. 34  
(edited by A. Abele-Brehm, R.T. Riphahn, K. Moser and C. Schnabel)

Correspondence to:  
Prof. Dr. Martin Abraham, Findelgasse 7/9, 90402 Nürnberg, D, Email: martin.abraham@wiso.uni-erlangen.de.
Abstract

This paper develops a new theoretical model for couples' migration decisions called the mobility game. The model describes migration decisions as reliant on the strategic interdependence of two partners. The important implications of this model are as follows: first, under complete information, a household move is the "natural" solution for stable couples; second, incomplete information allows the tied mover to "blackmail" the partner and thus to avoid the household move; and third, the decision to commute will depend mostly on the preferences of the potential commuter. The hypotheses derived from this theoretical framework are empirically testable, although the necessary information is difficult to measure. The hypotheses are tested employing a quasiexperimental design known as factorial survey, which allows one to vary systematically the incentives for moving. The empirical results confirm the importance of both the strategic reasoning and the mechanisms for solving problems of cooperation within the partnership.

Keywords: regional mobility, household migration, game theory, factorial survey