DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

My dissertation studies how migration influences the educational characteristics of individuals in the next generation by introducing changes to marriage, assortative mating, and fertility. The dissertation is comprised of four chapters. Thus far, I have completed three out of the four substantive chapters. The first chapter describes how migration shapes marriage and marital sorting patterns in Mexico and the United States. Migrants are more likely than non-migrants to marry and, when they do, they are also more likely to marry individuals whose education differs from their own. Individuals in Mexican communities with high levels of migration are less likely than those in communities with low levels of migration to marry a spouse whose education resembles their own. However, the patterns of marital sorting in the U.S. do not differ depending on the levels of migration from Mexico, suggesting that migrants from Mexico are too small a population to alter most marriage markets. Taken together, these findings suggest that migration disrupts preferences and opportunities for marriage, which results in a more even distribution of better educated parents across families. This chapter received a revise and resubmit from Demography.

The second chapter examines whether migration alters educational variation in the timing and completed levels of fertility. Preliminary results show that migration diminishes educational differentials in fertility in sending communities by delaying and diminishing the completed fertility of lesser educated migrants to a greater extent than the fertility of better educated migrants. One way migration may reduce inequality in sending communities is by altering educational differences in fertility norms and behaviors since individuals with many siblings attain lower levels of education than do those with fewer siblings.

The last two chapters investigate how migration shapes the educational composition of future generations in Mexico and the United States. In these chapters, I develop a formal demographic model that shows how the distribution of schooling in the next generation depends on four processes: (1) intergenerational transmission of education, (2) marriage and assortative mating; (3) fertility; and (4) migration. I then use this model to simulate how improvements in women’s education in Mexico alter the distribution of schooling in the next generation. Methodologically, this approach improves upon previous work because of two reasons. It recognizes that increases in women’s education do not solely change their educational characteristics, but also affect their marriage, fertility, and migration behavior. Simultaneously, it also considers how the resulting changes in these demographic behaviors influence the distribution of schooling in the next generation. Chapters 3 and 4 report the results for the United States and Mexico, respectively. Increases in women’s education in Mexico have beneficial effects for the educational attainment of individuals in the next generation in both countries. These effects are enhanced by the more favorable marriage partners among better educated women, but are offset by the lower probabilities of marriage and lower fertility rates of better educated women. The higher rates of migration from Mexico to the United States among the better educated dampen the effects of increases in women’s education in Mexico while they have the opposite effect in the United States.