10-1-2015

Employment Research, Vol. 22, No. 4, October 2015

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Citation

W.E. Upjohn Institute. 2015. Employment Research. 22(4). [https://doi.org/10.17848/1075-8445.22\(4\)](https://doi.org/10.17848/1075-8445.22(4))

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OCTOBER 2015

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Employment Research is published quarterly by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. Issues appear in January, April, July, and October.

The Institute is a nonprofit, independent research organization devoted to finding and promoting solutions to employment-related problems at the international, national, state, and local levels. The Institute is an activity of the W.E. Upjohn Unemployment Trustee Corporation, which was established in 1932 to administer a fund set aside by Dr. W.E. Upjohn, founder of the Upjohn Company, to conduct research on the causes and effects of unemployment and seek measures for the alleviation of the hardships suffered by the unemployed.

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Research Highlights from the 2015 Inner City Economic Summit

Detroit, Michigan, was the site of the 2015 Inner City Economic Summit. Entitled “Revisiting the Promise and Problems of Inner City Economic Development,” the summit brought together researchers and practitioners from around the country who shared their knowledge and experience on how inner cities can grow and develop into vibrant areas where people want to live, work, and play. The summit grew from a special issue of *Economic Development Quarterly* (EDQ), a peer-reviewed journal based at the Upjohn Institute, and was cosponsored by the Institute, the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC), and Sage Publications. The conference included a day of touring inner city development initiatives and neighborhoods in Detroit and a day of research presentations. This article describes three of the research papers presented at the conference, which will be published in the special issue of EDQ in May 2016.

Connecting Regional and Inner City Cluster Performance

First, in their paper titled “Clusters and Regional Performance: Implications for the Inner City,” Mercedes Delgado and Kim Zeuli evaluate Michael Porter’s premise that inner city job creation could be facilitated by strengthening the connection between the inner city and

its regional clusters (Porter 1997). Inner city policy prescriptions for job creation typically focus on incentives to attract businesses to certain neighborhoods, but Porter argues that integrating inner cities into the cluster composition of their regions is a more effective job creation strategy. Prior research finds that a strong regional cluster increases employment and innovation growth as well as start-up activity within the cluster (Delgado, Porter, and Stern 2010, 2014).

Delgado and Zeuli’s research measures cluster specialization at different levels of geography within an urban region: the inner city, the surrounding central city (outside the inner city), and the rest of the region (i.e., the metropolitan statistical area [MSA] outside the central city). The authors hypothesize that inner city industries, and hence job creation, will grow faster if surrounded by a strong cluster of related industries in the inner city. This effect will be more pronounced if the same cluster is also strong in the central city and MSA.

The research adopts the inner city definition established by ICIC and cluster definitions developed by the U.S. Cluster Mapping Project (see www.clustermapping.us). Based on the federal government’s empowerment zone criteria for designated areas of high poverty and unemployment set forth in 1993, ICIC defines an inner city as a set of contiguous census tracts in a

central city that have higher poverty and unemployment rates than the surrounding region and, in aggregate, represent at least 5 percent of a central city's population. ICIC identifies 328 inner cities belonging to 328 central cities and 188 MSAs.

Delgado and Zeuli's findings suggest that inner cities offer some locational advantages for industries within certain clusters, although the strength of the clusters varies. For example, the Performing Arts cluster is overrepresented in the inner city relative to the other clusters. Figure 1 illustrates whether particular inner city clusters are specialized in the same cluster as their respective central cities and MSAs.

The findings offer several important policy implications for inner city development. First, to be effective, inner city job creation strategies should focus on clusters that are strong not just in the inner city, but also in the central city

To be effective, inner city job creation strategies should focus on clusters that are strong not just in the inner city, but also in the central city and the MSA.

and the MSA. By doing so, they will leverage competitive advantages present within a region, which is necessary to create sustained growth but too frequently overlooked. Without a deeper understanding of regional, city, and inner city economic relationships, and without linking job creation strategies to strong clusters, the authors suggest that policies such as empowerment zones will be less effective, especially in areas where cluster linkages between the inner city and the rest of the region are broken.

The Resurgence of America's Inner Cities

The next paper discussed at the summit, "Are America's Inner Cities Competitive Again?," by T. William Lester, Daniel Hartley, and Nikhil Kaza, uses new data from the Census Local Origin-Destination Employment Statistics to analyze employment and growth trends in the inner city in 2002–2011.

Figure 1 Inner Cities Vary in their Connectivity to Regional Clusters: Performing Arts (40% of ICs are connected to strong regional clusters)

SOURCE: Delgado and Zeuli (2015)

The authors employ a broad and unique definition of the inner city: the census tracts outside of the central business district in the largest principle city in an MSA.

In the conference presentation, Lester placed the authors' research in the context of the 1990s, when academics and policymakers were increasingly concerned with the dramatic decline of many inner cities. Significant job losses during the 1970s through the 1990s were considered to be one of the primary causes of inner city decay. For example, from 1975 to 1991, the city of Chicago lost 45 percent of its manufacturing jobs. In contrast, today many cities have thriving downtown areas, attracting a new wave of residents. As Lester noted in his presentation, these neighborhoods have evolved from "spaces of production to spaces of consumption."

The authors find significant employment growth in inner cities between 2002 and 2011. In addition, a significant number of metros have

"competitive" inner cities, which are defined as having an increasing share of metro jobs in growing MSAs. Their research suggests a few key drivers of growth that include the presence of hospitals/health care facilities and universities, as well as indicators of gentrification. High-poverty areas still constrain employment growth across census tracts. As Lester told the audience, "These findings suggest the ongoing need for targeting economic development to areas of highest need."

Barriers to Creating Inner City Economic Opportunity

In the final paper we discuss, Timothy Bates and Alicia Robb focus on the impact of race and the neighborhood context on small business owners' access to bank loans. The literature has revealed difficulties in accessing capital by businesses in inner cities and minority neighborhoods. This problem is perhaps one of the reasons why the

business-centered inner city economic development strategy proposed by Michael Porter has not always worked well. Existing studies, however, have not effectively answered the question of whether redlining or racial discrimination leads to the small business financing problem in inner cities and minority neighborhoods.

Using Kauffman Firm Survey data and logistic regression analysis, Bates and Robb examine various factors associated with the probability of being discouraged borrowers (defined as business owners who are in need of bank loans but do not apply in fear of being rejected). The results of some of these factors are shown in Table 1. All else equal, being located in minority neighborhoods (or inner cities) does not significantly increase the chance of being discouraged borrowers. However, black and Latino business owners are significantly more likely to be discouraged borrowers, regardless of the neighborhood context. Therefore, the results support the racial discrimination thesis rather than redlining. This finding is consistent with a rigorous audit study (Bone, Christensen, and Williams 2014). As shown in Table 2, minority borrowers face more scrutiny and receive less assistance when applying for bank loans than their white counterparts.

From a policy perspective, Bates and Robb suggest that it is important to enforce the Equal Opportunity Credit Act, which prohibits racial discrimination in banking. They also discuss the much-needed efforts to encourage minority business owners to complete loan applications despite being discouraged. The research presented by Bates provided context for programs such as those run by Cleveland-based JumpStart, whose CEO,

Table 1 Delineating Discouraged Borrowers from Others: Logistic Regression Results

Variable	Coefficient
Minority neighborhood	0.204
Black business owner	1.271*
Latino business owner	0.824*
Owner wealth: high	−0.929*
Credit rating: high	−0.826*
Household poverty rate	−0.035*

NOTES: Log likelihood significance level (0.000); * statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

SOURCE: Bates and Robb (2015).

Ray Leach, also participated in this panel. JumpStart is a nonprofit that engages in “venture development”: venture investment combined with mission-based economic development in northeast Ohio.

In 2015, JumpStart launched Growth Opportunity Partners, a coaching and lending program aimed at small businesses that have been unable to secure capital from traditional sources. In his presentation, Leach emphasized that the program is not a lender of last resort and that the recipient businesses must meet stringent standards. Given Bates and Robb’s findings, more programs such as these may be needed to ensure that all credit-worthy small businesses are able to access the capital to create jobs in inner cities.

Final Thoughts

These research papers offer compelling new evidence regarding the state of inner cities in America and point to tangible policy prescriptions that would help foster greater and more equitable economic growth in

the country’s distressed urban areas. The forthcoming special issue of *EDQ* will include a synthesis of the robust discussion generated by all of the presentations at the Inner City Economic Summit. Clearly, there is still much to learn about how to ignite inner city economic development, but the summit provided a solid foundation on which to develop future research.

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Table 2 Audit Study: Racial Differences in Loan Applicant Treatment by Bankers (%)

	White business owners	Minority business owners
Applicant information requested		
Income tax returns	50.0	82.8
Financial statements	52.4	86.2
Assistance offered		
Offered a business card	81.8	42.9
Help completing loan application	59.1	18.8

SOURCE: Bone, Christensen, and Williams (2014).

Morris M. Kleiner

Border Battles

The Influence of Occupational Licensing on Interstate Migration

“Mobility . . . is basic to any guarantee of freedom of opportunity. The result would be a substantial dilution of the rights of national citizenship, a serious impairment of the principles of equality. Since the state statute here . . . involved such consequences, it runs afoul of the privileges and immunities clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.” —*Edwards v. California* (1941)

This quote from the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Edwards v. California* focuses on the issue of whether states can establish monetary barriers to restrict citizens moving across state boundaries to pursue making a living. The Court also has noted in several decisions that “the right to move freely in search of economic betterment is a mark of national citizenship and fundamental in our system of constitutional guarantees” (Roback 1943). This article examines one such potential barrier—occupational licensing—to learn whether it restricts migration across state borders. To the extent that it does, I propose policy recommendations to minimize these barriers in order for individuals to be able to work in government-regulated occupations.

Occupational licensure, the legal process establishing qualifications to practice a trade or profession, has become one of the most significant labor market regulations in the United States. The percent of the workforce licensed at the state level grew from around 5 percent in the 1950s to almost 23 percent in 2008, with a 28 percent increase since 1980 (Kleiner and Krueger 2013). At the same time, migration rates within the United States have fallen dramatically, with a decline of 50 percent in the gross flow of people across states over the last 20 years (Kaplan and Shulhofer-Wohl 2015). Figure 1 shows the growth in occupational licensing coverage of the

workforce and the decline in interstate migration rates. During this early period, gross interstate migration was about 3.5 percent, but by 2014 it had declined to 1.5 percent, with the most rapid decline following 1985 (Molloy, Smith, and Wozniak 2011). To what extent has the growth in occupational licensing coverage of the workforce contributed to the decline?

Analysis of Occupational Licensing and Interstate Migration

The study of licensing and interstate migration has a well-developed history in policy analysis. Holen (1965) examines the relationship between state licensing arrangements and professional practices (specifically medicine, dentistry, and law) and how it affects interstate mobility and the allocation of professional labor resources. She finds that the empirical evidence is consistent with the hypothesis that professional licensing arrangements

and practices in dentistry and law restrict interstate mobility among dentists and lawyers and distort the allocation of professional personnel in these fields. In a follow-up analysis, similar to Pashigian (1979), Kleiner, Gay, and Greene (1982) find that restrictive licensing may operate as a barrier to mobility, causing a misallocation of labor resources across U.S. states, with increased earnings for the practitioners in those states with the most restrictive barriers. These barriers

Occupational licensure has become one of the most significant labor market regulations in the United States.

may reduce the ability of the labor market to most efficiently allocate its human capital resources.

More recently, Federman, Harrington, and Krynski (2006) estimate the effects of licensing regulations on the entry of manicurist immigrants into the occupation in the United States. This is the first analytical study that examines the links between licensing and the migration patterns in a low-skilled occupation. Their findings show that the level of migration is influenced by the existence and restrictiveness (in terms of minimum entry standards) of

Figure 1 Occupational Licensing and Interstate Migration, 1950–2008

SOURCE: Johnson and Kleiner (2015).

state licensing regulations. In particular, they estimate that the requirement to have an additional 100 hours of training reduces by 4.5 percent the likelihood of having a Vietnamese manicurist, while states requiring some level of English proficiency were 5.7 percentage points less likely to have a Vietnamese manicurist.

DePasquale and Stange (2014) examine the influence of the nurses' compact on mobility. The Nurse Licensure Compact, introduced in 1999, was created with the intent to provide greater mobility for nurses. It allows registered nurses and licensed practical nurses with licenses in one compact member state to practice in other states without obtaining a separate license. The authors find that nurses that live in a border metropolitan statistical area that crosses multiple state lines see a 1.2 percentage point increase in the probability of living in one state and working in another following their home state joining the compact. The authors also find that the reduction of licensing barriers on cross-state mobility appears to widen the geographic reach of the nurse labor market.

Johnson and Kleiner's (2015) more comprehensive analysis of five universally licensed occupations shows that, after controlling for demographic

Restrictive licensing may operate as a barrier to mobility, causing a misallocation of labor resources across U.S. states.

characteristics, individuals in these regulated occupations have lower interstate migration rates than their peers in other occupations, while the rate at which they move within states is similar. To establish whether or not licensing is behind these differences, the authors perform a difference-in-difference analysis using changes in state licensing laws. State policies on accepting those who fulfill licensing requirements in other states as qualified to practice in their state (called endorsement) and on forming agreements with other states on establishing licensing requirements

(called reciprocity) are amended often. For example, for lawyers, Johnson and Kleiner find that states that adopt these more flexible policies have higher migration rates compared to states with no such policies. They find that for these five universally licensed occupations, the additional costs placed on migration have restricted the movement of individuals in licensed occupations, accounting for part of the decrease in overall migration within the United States.

Taken together, these studies on interstate migration support the view that regulation may limit the number of practitioners in a country and that a policy of reducing barriers to interstate migration would provide benefits to workers and consumers. The ability to move across state lines with fewer impediments and have permission to work would allow individuals to more easily go to where there are jobs. This is particularly important because the growth in wage variation may make it more advantageous to move across state lines (Moretti 2012).

From Research to Policy

In a 2011 executive report, the Obama administration highlights the obstacles that occupational licensure regimes place on military spouses' careers when they move from state to state. In particular, the report lists as a priority developing "career and educational opportunities for military spouses . . . by reducing barriers to employment and services due to different state policies and standards" (U.S. Department of the Treasury and U.S. Department of Defense 2012). This issue continues to be a topic of discussion for the Joint Forces task force, an initiative led by Michelle Obama and Jill Biden to improve wellness, education, and employment opportunities for veterans and their families.

Some of the greatest variations in occupational licensing requirements influence teachers. For example, all 50 states and the District of Columbia have some sort of reciprocity or endorsement scheme for out-of-state teaching applicants. Within each category, though, the degree of reciprocity and

endorsement can vary immensely. For example, Maine endorses an out-of-state applicant for licensure who has taught for five of the last seven years as long as she has gone through a state-approved education program in another state. In North Carolina, an out-of-state teacher with the same amount of experience must be "highly qualified" in his current state and meet North Carolina exam requirements or have National Board Certification to be eligible for

When licensing is deemed to be in the public interest, weighed against the economic costs, states and localities should accept licenses granted by other states.

endorsement (Public Schools of North Carolina 2002).

The following commentary from a public school teacher illustrates the influence of interstate regulations on potential migrants' ability to move across state lines: "I had reciprocity in New Mexico from Louisiana, no problem. Now, I am moving to Illinois and having to test all over again. I've tried applying online to public schools, and they won't even let you submit without a license and have strongly worded warnings about contacting schools directly" (Arbury et al. 2015, p. 26).

Another illustration of the "border battle" comes from a high school principal: "It would be great if Minnesota and Wisconsin would have some sort of reciprocity agreement. I work in a border town, and we get a lot of qualified applicants from across the river. We can't keep them though, they have to go back to their state after their student teaching is over. I also think this pool of teachers could also fill content gaps" (Arbury et al. 2015, p. 27).

Policy Changes

Based on the legal and economic issues presented, state licensing standards should allow individuals to move across state lines with minimal costs for retraining or residency requirements.

When licensing is deemed to be in the public interest, weighed against the economic costs, states and localities should accept, as much as possible, licenses granted by other states. The Nurse Licensure Compact mentioned earlier is one example: all states party to the compact have agreed to accept nursing licensure applicants from the other party states without additional requirements. In the case of endorsement, a state will accept out-of-state applicants as long as the origin state has substantially equivalent licensure standards as the destination state (DePasquale and Stange 2014).

Recognition of occupational licenses across states may not benefit all licensed workers equally. For example, the decision to move often depends on both age and education, with younger and more-educated workers usually having the most to gain from migration. Calls to reduce occupational licensing

“The right to move freely in search of economic betterment is a mark of national citizenship and fundamental in our system of constitutional guarantees.”

barriers to interstate mobility have come from the executive branch of the federal government, including the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the U.S. Department of Defense (2012). The executive branch has made these policy recommendations because, owing to variations in state licensing laws, the families of some military personnel have had a difficult time pursuing their careers as they move between states. Recently proposed policy would more fully implement what the U.S. Supreme Court deemed crucial in *Edwards v. California* (1941): “mobility . . . is basic to any guarantee of freedom of opportunity.”

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Morris M. Kleiner

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