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## **Internal Migration In Latin America: An Analysis of Recent Literature**

Before attempting to review research on internal migrations in Latin America, defining the term "internal migration" seems appropriate. "Internal" implies within countries, but a problem arises in defining "migration." There are almost as many definitions as there are investigations. The process has been variously described, as follows:

- 1) A permanent or semipermanent change of residence. No restriction is placed on distance of the move or the voluntary or involuntary nature of the act (Lee, 1966);
- 2) Movement that involves a change in the usual place of residence from one community to another (Hamilton, 1961);
- 3) The change of residence of an individual from one parish or commune to another (Hagerstrand, 1969);
- 4) Moving to a state different from the one in which the individual lived at the time of the last census Whetten and Burnight, 1956);
- 5) In most census enumerations, movements across administrative demarcations are viewed as migrations, but whether they are boundaries between local, civil, intermediate county, or larger provincial units is subject to the working definition of the specific census bureau (Ng, 1969);
- 6) Intercommunity movement cannot be employed with precise community boundaries, since these boundaries do not reflect the data available for the study of migration. Instead, some existing set of well-established and universally familiar boundaries must be used as an approximation. Counties, communes, *municipios*, and similar areas more closely match the definition and are practical. In the United States, for example, it is customary to define migration as intercounty mobility (Bogue, 1969);
- 7) A relatively permanent moving from one geographic place to another, preceded

by decision-making on the part of the migrant that results in a change in the interactional system of the migrant (Mangalam, 1968).

Clearly, the definitions vary from study to study, and the definition employed will depend on such considerations as the objectives of the research as well as the availability of the data.

## **Directional Bias**

In recent years population growth in Latin America has been increasingly centered in urban areas. While Latin America's total population increased approximately 32 percent between 1950 and 1960, rural areas grew by only 16.8 percent while urban centers (2,000 and over) increased by 56 percent. During the same decade some fourteen million people moved from rural to urban areas as urban population rose from thirty-nine percent in 1950 to forty-six percent in 1960 (Miller and Gakenheimer, 1969). In 1960 twenty-seven million people lived in cities with a population of over one million people, and, if this unprecedented growth continues, there should be sixteen cities with a population of over one million in the early seventies and twenty-seven by 1980 (Morse, 1965). Although natural increase remains relatively high in most of Latin America, studies disclose that the most significant demographic fact in contemporary Latin America may well be the mass movement of people from rural areas to urban centers (Smith, 1960; Harr, 1963; Ducoff, 1968; Arriaga, 1968).

## **Migration Incentives**

According to migration literature the decision to migrate usually can be assigned to one of three general categories: 1) conditions associated with the generating area ("push" factors). 2) conditions associated with the area of destination ("pull" factors), and personal considerations (Lee, 1966). The causes of migration from the rural areas are many. Undoubtedly, the pressures of rural poverty assist in driving the farmer toward the city, but frequently poverty is a result of a myriad of social and economic variables, e.g., lack of education, a land tenure system that enables a few to monopolize the best lands (*latifundia*, where the small farmer is unable to provide an adequate return for his large family (*minifundia*, and where primitive methods of cultivation become progressively less productive (Eidt, 1962; Morse, 1968; Stewart, 1965; Fischlowitz, 1969).

The "pull" factors of urban areas also take many forms. The economist tends to consider job opportunities as paramount, but educational facilities, entertainment, and even crime have been considered in the literature (Herrick, 1965; Stewart, 1965; Stone, 1965). In reality, however, the decision to migrate most likely results from a combination of "push" and "pull" factors. Therefore, the bleakness of opportunities in rural areas coupled with a more promising future in the city is an appealing explanation for migration (Mar, 1961; Randall, 1962; Herrick, 1965; Sahota, 1968; Stevens, 1968; N. Adams, 1969).

Although most studies of internal migration in Latin America have been directed toward the urban sector, some investigations have employed a variety of socio-economic conditions to explain the flow of migrants to rural areas (Sariola, 1960; Crist, 1963; Gonzales, 1966; Minkel, 1966; Miller, 1968; J. Adams, 1969). These studies stress the dynamic importance of frontier settlement influenced by government programs as well as privately-generated schemes.

Even though the causes of migration are customarily divided into push-pull factors, these objective considerations are also filtered through the attitudes and decisions of individuals. Internal migration, therefore, is not merely a demographic response to specific social and economic conditions, but a direct and overt behavioral response (Morse, 1965).

### **Distance and Spatial Mobility**

In addition to origin and destination differentials, studies of migration include an additional, intervening variable -- that of distance. Most empirical studies support the distance-decay thesis that, as distance increases from the receiving center, the volume of migration decreases (Gossman, et al., 1968). An increase in distance may decrease the volume of migration for several reasons. An economic influence may prevail -- the greater the distance, the greater the cost. Distance also may deter the flow of information from the urban centers to potential migrants living within the migration field of a receiving area. Lack of knowledge of this receiving center may engender psychological barriers to inhibit the move. Although numerous Latin American studies have focused on one or another of these conditions (Whetten and Burnight, 1956; Elizaga, 1965a; Flinn, 1968; Sahota, 1968; D. Adams, 1969; Thomas, 1969), only Stephens (1970) employed various aspects of the distance variable per se in an attempt to explain internal migration to an urban center in Guatemala.

## Migration Differentials

Migrants do not represent a random sample of a nation's population. Migration tends to be highly selective according to the social, economic, and biological characteristics of the migrants. Sufficient evidence exists in the migration literature to permit the formulation of several basic generalizations regarding these attributes.

### *Age*

The typical migrant tends to be younger than the average population of his country and, in addition, younger than the urban population that receives him (Germani, 1961; United Nations, 1961; Hutchinson, 1963; Miro, 1964; Elizaga, 1965b; Stone, 1965; Thomas, 1969). More than six out of ten migrants to Santiago, Chile, arrived before their twenty-sixth birthday (Herrick, 1965). In San Salvador, sixty-six percent were in the age cohort fifteen to forty-four, twenty-five percent were under fifteen years of age, while only nine percent were forty-five years of age or over (Ducoff, 1962). Almost eighty percent of the migrants from rural Colombia left before the age of twenty-five, while approximately ninety percent departed before age thirty (Adams, 1969). Moreover, 42.5 percent of the migrant population residing in Guatemala City were between the ages of 15 and 29 at the time of their arrival (Thomas, 1969).

The young tend to migrate more than do other age groups, since at this time of life one seeks such essential life styles as a vocation, a wife, and a place to settle. Furthermore, moving is easier for the young because usually social ties are not so well fastened, commitments are fewer and weaker, and the spirit of independence prevails (Thomlinson, 1965).

### *Sex*

More females than males migrate to urban areas of Latin America, since many women are able to find jobs as domestic servants or other similarly unskilled occupations. Women who have been widowed or separated from their husbands also migrate to cities to seek employment or a spouse (Ducoff, 1962). Supporting studies in Santiago, Chile, indicate that the sex ratio is 72.0 and that there were only 52 men for every 100 women within a migrant group aged 15-24. In the age cohort fourteen years and over, there were only sixty-four men for every one hundred women (Herrick, 1965; Elizaga, 1966). In San Salvador, sixty-one percent

of the migrants compared with fifty-two percent of the non-migrants were women. Whetten (1956) found in Mexico that a somewhat higher percentage of native-born females than males were living in a state other than that of their birth, while Miro (1964) disclosed that the urban sex ratios were as low as eighty-eight in Costa Rica, Chile, and El Salvador.

Most studies support the generalization that rural-urban migrants are better educated than the average person living in the area of out-migration (Browning and Feindt, 1969), but frequently less educated than the urban societies that receive them (Balan, 1969; Bock and Intaka, 1969). In rural Colombia the average level of education of non-migrants is significantly lower than that of the migrants (D. Adams, 1969). In addition, migrants who had moved out of the department of birth had higher levels of education than those who had moved within the department. In Guatemala City the internal migrant was better educated than the average Guatemalan at the time he arrived but somewhat less educated than the average city native (Thomas, 1969).

Several studies, however, take issue with the thesis that the individual arriving in the city is better educated than the native. A study done in Mexico implied that most of the migrants from the town of Tlalcingo who had migrated to Mexico City were illiterate, and a prime reason for moving to the capital was to take advantage of the city's educational facilities (Butterworth, 1962). In San Salvador, the frequency of illiteracy is much higher among the migrant (sixteen percent) than the non-migrant population (eight percent) (Ducoff, 1952).

### **Step-Wise Migration**

Several migration studies have included a discussion of the process by which a migrant moves from his rural environment to a major urban center. The migrant moves from his rural birthplace to a city by a series of steps, or stages, first to a local village, then on to a larger town, and eventually to a major city. One person may execute this step-wise migration process, or it may be accomplished by successive generations. It appears that the latter process occurs in many Latin American countries (Hutchinson, 1963; Stevens, 1968; Bock and Intaka, 1969). Specific empirical studies support the urban-origin thesis, but do not consider migration to the generating centers. Approximately fifteen percent of the internal migrants to Buenos Aires had migrated from rural areas, while more than one-third were born in medium-sized towns (2,000-20,000) and fifty percent in cities of over 20,000 (Germani, 1961). Forty-two percent of the migrants living in a

slum city of Bogota were born in urban places of over 2,000 inhabitants (Flinn, 1968), and almost one-half of the migrants living in Guatemala City were born in an urban area, specifically a department capital (Thomas, 1969). In Guatemala, the migrant who left the department capital for Guatemala City was replaced in the regional center by other migrants from nearby small towns or adjacent rural areas.

It appears, therefore, that the small towns in Latin America generally have been less than effective as administrative, marketing, and service centers. Meanwhile, even these few functions may be eroding as leaders desert the small urban centers for the large cities while their replacements are families of landless farm workers (Morse, 1965).

### **Consequences of Migration**

One of the principal manifestations of the urbanization process in Latin America is the existence of extensive belts of slum areas in and around major urban centers. Names assigned to these slum cities vary from country to country, e.g., Argentina, *villa de miseria*; Brazil, *favela*; Chile, *callampa*; Colombia, *tugurio*; Guatemala, *barrios marginales*; Mexico, *colonia proletaria*; Panama, *barriada bruja*; Peru, *barriada* or *tugurio*; Uruguay, *cantegrute*; and Venezuela, *rancho*. Assuming That the migrant was unable to find or afford adequate housing once he arrived in the city, Latin Americanists historically have viewed these areas as the direct result of internal migration (Mar, 1961; Mar, 1963; Elizaga, 1966; Margin, 1967; Rogler, 1967; Delgado, 1969). A recent review of slum city investigations, however, revealed that in many instances the inhabitants of the slum areas are natives of the urban centers (Man.,in, 19L)7). Regardless of its origin, the slum city may still be a considerable improvement over the living conditions in the former rural environment of the migrant population (Turner, 1955).

Another possible consequence of rural-urban migration involves fertility differentials (Hutchinson, 1961; Macisco, et al., 1969). The migration of Puerto Rican youth to the United States could have contributed to a decline in the birthrate of the Commonwealth (Stone, 1965), while migrant women had lower fertility rates than non-migrants (Meyers and Morris, 1960). In Mexico, a rise in urban fertility may be directly attributable to the presence in the city of large numbers of rural migrants whose attitudes toward family size are essentially traditional (Zarate, 1967a; Zarate, 1967b).

### **Research Guidelines In the Seventies**

Before venturing farther into the seventies, geographers in general, and Latin Americanist geographers in particular, might benefit from rereading Edward A. Ackerman's classic article, "Where is a Research Frontier?" (Ackerman, 1963). The author's plea that problems be solved by using the scientific method generally has been accepted by the profession. Few purely descriptive studies are proposed, and fewer still accepted by funding agencies and leading graduate schools. Ackerman also stressed that geographers need to employ statistical techniques in research. Certainly this trend continues and quite possibly has reached proportions never envisioned by Ackerman when he wrote the article. In this regard, he did issue a veiled warning that the profession should be careful that "our computerized mathematical colleagues do not lead us to a dead end and that nonsense is not removed by hardware and symbolic logic."

Ackerman also appears to have correctly diagnosed the increasing importance of the "systems approach" to problems of spatial distribution and spatial structure. Research teams have handed together in an attempt to understand some of our most perplexing problems, e.g., the central city and urban societies, environmental pollution, population growth, and other ecological problems. Each of these areas attracts geographers who attempt to discover and explain regularities in spatial process and structure.

There appears to be considerable correlation between Ackerman's views in the early sixties and the problems confronting migration specialists in the late sixties (Mangalam and Schwarzweiler, 1958). Although the notion still persists that migration is a random phenomenon and the decision to migrate is a unique individual response to one's total environment, this emphasis of the idiographic approach runs counter to the spirit of scientific inquiry, which seeks similarities rather than differences, and generalizations, not unique situations. The failure to integrate these generalizations and to construct a viable migration theory may stem from the lack of primary source data. Normally, census information does not reflect basic social and psychological processes that may affect migration behavior. If this be the case, more studies should be based on data generated by the investigator to suit his own particular research problem.

When one does employ Latin American census and other statistical data, he should be aware of their limitations (Darbo, 1964; Mortaro, 1964a; Mortaro, 1964b; Elizaga, 1965c). In even the most developed countries, census enumerations are never precise, and errors of commission and omission are

inevitable. These discrepancies vary from country to country and should be familiar to the individual researcher.

### **Consequences of Out-migration**

As for specific migration movements to be considered in the seventies, rural-urban studies probably will continue to have an important place in migration research. If the spatial effects of migration continue to interest geographers, however, future research might be directed to the impact of out-migration on the generating centers. Several studies have already considered this problem (Alexander, 1961; Lowenthal and Comitas, 1962; Parr, 1966), but if the rapid pace of urbanization continues this could be a fertile area for future research.

### **Intra-urban Mobility**

Recent estimates are that approximately fifty-five percent of Latin America's population will live in urban areas (2,000 and over) by the year 1975, while over ninety million people will reside in cities of one million inhabitants or over by 1980 (Morse, 1965; Durand and Palaez, 1965). If the present rate of urbanization continues, greater attention might well be directed to the study of the migration process within a given urban setting. To date, researchers have conducted their investigation in landscape laboratories other than Latin America. A review of recent intra-urban investigations have been presented by Moore (1966), Simmons, (1968), Boyce, (1969), Moore, (1969a), and Brown and Moore (1970). Empirical research is numerous and includes a variety of approaches as well as testable hypotheses (Heiges, 1968; Brown and Moore, 1968; Brown and Longbrake, 1969; Moore, 1969b; Johnston, 1969; Adams, 1969; Clark, 1969; Moore, 1970). The lack of similar investigations in Latin America is probably attributable to the lack of data as well as research personnel interested in the topic. We might hope that migration and urban specialists will give increased attention to intra-urban mobility in Latin America during the remainder of the seventies

### **Behavioral Approach**

Although most migration research employs a variety of demographic variables in an attempt to explain migration networks, many investigators recognize the importance of personal considerations, individual behavior, or decision-making processes as they apply to the migration scheme (Wolpert, 1965; Wolpert, 1965; Brown and Moore, 1968; Wilkie, 1968). This general trend toward behavioral



studies in geography research most likely will involve migration research in Latin America, since the decision to migrate is such a highly personal one. Whether investigators to undertake such studies will be generated from the present group of Latin Americanists or from topical specialists with other areal interests is not the real problem. History has shown that, where a social problem exists, the social science investigator is certain to follow. This is the way of research.

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