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<td>Author(s)</td>
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Migration And The Social Structure
(A Sociological Framework)

By

Mohd Shamsuddin Sopian
MIGRATION AND THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE
(A SOCIOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK)

BY
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1. Introduction

This paper is not an attempt to traverse the current issues of rural-urban migration, which is the primary concern of the main speaker on the topic. It is rather an attempt to provide a sociological framework in explaining migration, by citing examples and problems of rural-urban migration in other parts of the world.

2. Migration and the Social Structure

Migration is defined broadly as a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence (Jackson, 1969: 285). The question of distance or territory involved in the definition is a very controversial one. Everett S. Lee (Jackson, 1969: 285) in defining migration does not take territory or boundary into consideration. Ferenczi (1969: 68) on the other hand took due consideration of boundary. This is because Ferenczi dealt with international migration, which carried political implications. Anyway, both of them were looking at migration from different perspectives. Whatever the definition we are using, migration involves more than just a change of address. It is a change from one social, cultural and sometime physical environment to another. A migrant often finds himself a stranger in a strange environment, the one very much different from the social system he emigrates from. Leaving one's locality means leaving one's socio-cultural values and adopting another. Therefore making a decision to emigrate is not an easy thing. So, when one emigrates, there must be a very good reason for it. It is due to these social implications involved in migration that I intend to seek explanation by applying sociological theories, in other words, it is an effort to find the nature of interaction between migration and the social structure. Migration differs from the other two demographic components, mortality and fertility, in the sense that it is very hard to measure, and an effort to formulate theories of migration have so far achieved very little success (UN, 1973: 209). This is because migration involves human behavior which is always hard to predict. It has both the additive and the separative effects, while fertility (additive) and mortality (separative) has only one definite effect.

3. The Social Structure

Fig. 1 shows a comprehensive idea of what Merton (Coser, 1975) means by a social structure. The central idea in Merton's theory of a social structure is "the choice between socially structured alternatives" (Coser, 1975: 12). A social structure is shaped by institutional patterns, such as norms, a legal system, family structure, and these are the variables that decide human alternatives in their actions. Motives, information sanctions, etc., are also shaped by what Merton calls structural induction of motives. These will in turn shape the development of social character which seem to have a reciprocal relationship between them. Humans, as social organisms often have a choice in their social interaction, and these choice of actions will form a certain structure. To Merton, these are "patterns of choice behavior" (Coser, 1975: 13). He conceptualizes a social structure
as being comprised of the patterned arrangements of role-sets, status-sets and status-sequences (Loomis, 1965: 248). This is very important in analysing migration especially when it involves the cultural structure, which consists of institutional norms, that control the means or acceptable modes of reaching out for these goals and of values which include patterns of beliefs and attitudes. It is within these concepts that I intend to discuss the patterns of migration and the factors leading to it.

Everett S. Lee (Jackson, 1969: 285) in his formulation of a theory of migration derived at four general topics associated with the factors of migration, which are summarised in Fig. 2. Clearly enough the set of +s and −s both at the origin and destination are defined differently by every migrant. There are positive and negative factors and some are neutral denoted by 0. The intervening obstacles represent the difficulties a migrant will encounter in the course of his movements. Lee lists out the factors as follows:

(a) Factors associated with the area of origin
(b) Factors associated with the area of destination
(c) Intervening obstacles
(d) Personal factors (Jackson, 1969: 285).

The model put forward by Lee here is by no means perfect, and I do not intend to defend it either. It is quite inadequate, especially when it comes to dealing with types of migration. It cannot explain forced migration or transmigration and a lot of other things. This model is chosen because of the first two factors which is very relevant in the context of this analysis, and directly connected with the theme of this essay.

(a) Factors associated with the area of destination

The push and pull factors related to migration has been extensively discussed in the literature (Rovacs, 1975; Thomas 1972; Jackson 1969). The push factors can be termed as the driving force which prompts an individual to move from one’s usual residence due to economic impoverishment, social disorder or social and political displacement of an individual in a society. While the pull factors are those forces which tend to lure an individual to a place that offers him or her a better opportunity in life. Very often, a combination of these two forces will speed up a migratory act. These forces that push and pull might not be purely economic (Ravenstein, 1889: 286), but originate far deeper in the social system.
Fig. 1

**Schematic Outline of Merton’s Approaches of the Social Structure**

- **Institutional Patterns Shaping Alternatives**
- **Individual Choice Behavior:**
  - Motives, Information
  - Sanctions Bearing on the Alternatives Presented
- **Rates of Institutionally Consequential Behavior**
- **Development of Social Character**
- **Structural Induction of Motives Control of Information and Sanctions**

Gugler (Jackson, 1969), in his study of rural urban migration among the tribes in the Sub-Saharan Africa, came to a conclusion that migration was just a matter of norms. He observed that, among the Red Xhosa in Sudan, a migratory act was to prove that one is a man and capable of taking up responsibilities upon reaching adulthood. It is nothing more than an initiation ceremony. An old man in this society will have more confidence in handing over his wealth when the son returns from the towns, because this will ensure that his wealth is in good hands.

Taylor (Jackson, 1969) conducted research in West Durham to determine the role of motivation in migration. After interviewing 240 coal miners from 5 villages in west Durham, who had migrated to the coalfields of Yorkshire, East Midlands, West Midlands, Somerset and Wales, he found out that migrants were very highly characterised by social and economic aspirations (Jackson, 1969: 31). From this study, he categorised the reasons to migrate into four distinct groups and called them the "motivational structures". They are aspiration, dislocation, immediate situational structures and unique personal factors. And each of these will in turn produce four distinct types of migrants which will have different attitudes and characteristics in the receiving society. They are the Aspiring, Dislocated, Resultant and Epiphenomenal, respectively. So, taking into account that a certain social structure will produce the dislocated, the aspiring and phenomenal personalities, migration statistics is going to be very high. This is very much agreed to by Amin (1974: 65), who showed that migration as a result of social displacement in West Africa has been a dominant feature.

Another important determinant of social structure is education. A literate society is very much different in its structure from an illiterate one. This determinant is also an important factor in influencing education. Caldwell (1969, 56), when referring to migration in Africa says that "schooling turns people towards town life". With education people are more mobile due to the introduction of new ideas. This is due to the out-reaching of urban influence that came together with education, hence modernization. Studies in developed countries have found no consistent relationship between migration and educational attainment (Speare, 1969: 55), but various studies of migration in developing countries (Speare, 1969; Nam 1968; Caldwell, 1969) have found out that
educational attainment and migration are directly correlated. Applying Merton's model of social structure, rural-urban migration is a result of social displacement in the rural social order where by an educated person finds himself no longer useful in the context of the rural social structure. Kuroda (Nam, 1968: 339) in his study of internal migration in India, reports that the Calcutta Industrial Region Survey indicates that the average level of education among migrants is considerably higher than the general population in the states of origin, but lower than the average level among indigenous urban residents.

Table I illustrates a very interesting relationship between education and migration in Taiwan. The greatest rates are found among those completing senior school and that males in general are more mobile than females. From the table, it can be seen that the general movement is from a less developed to a more developed area, along the continuum, with the least rates found among those with lower educational attainment. The most interesting feature presented by Speare in this table is the greater rates of migration among females in rural towns compared to their male counterpart. The flow is very great to cities and urban towns with 42.7 and 45.5 per 1000, respectively. Compared with males, in this category, more females migrate to areas with greater urbanization. Socially, in a developing society, females with high education, is much more displaced in the social order than males. She is forced to leave for an area where she will be much more utilised. Areas which can offer her jobs and a lifestyle that suits her educational attainment and aspiration.

Caldwell (1969), in his study of African rural-urban migratory behavior, with a special reference to Ghana, observes that there is a difference between the north and southern regions of Ghana relating to its social structure. The north is more traditional in character and migration will definitely produce strains in its kinship ties. This is especially true in the case of females. If she emigrates and gets married in the towns, the relationship between her and her kin will virtually break off because she is no longer considered a member of her household. In this case, the propensity to migrate for northern Ghana is very much less compared to the north where the social structure is more open in character.

Caldwell (1969: 59) also found out that occupation is the single most important factor that decides migration. The people least likely to migrate are those whose economic activities are very closely related to the land, that is farmers. Others who depend on skill for their livelihood are very mobile people. Again looking back to Merton's idea of social structure, these can be termed as the role-sets, that results from the development of social character. In other words, the development of social character will determine a person's propensity to migrate. This is especially true in seasonal migration when the whole labour-force categories get affected. In Africa, there has been a lot of movements among farmers between harvests (Hance, 1970: 144). While waiting for the next harvest they migrate to towns to take up jobs as construction workers, handicrafts, etc.
Table I

MIGRATION RATES PER 1000 PERSONS AT THE ORIGIN BY EDUCATION AND MIGRATION STREAM FOR REGISTERED MIGRATION
TAIWAN, 1967

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIGHEST LEVEL COMPLETED</th>
<th>SENIOR SCHOOL</th>
<th>JUNIOR SCHOOL</th>
<th>PRIMARY SCHOOL</th>
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<th>TOTAL</th>
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<td>CITYS TO</td>
<td>CITYS TO</td>
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<tr>
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<td>18.6</td>
<td>19.6</td>
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<td>32.4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>16.9</td>
<td>24.2</td>
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<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>25.2</td>
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<td>15.1</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
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<td>13.5</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. FEMALES 15 - 59 YEARS OLD</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>21.2</td>
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SOURCE: SPEARE, A., 1969, THE DETERMINANTS OF RURAL TO URBAN MIGRATION IN TAIWAN, PH.D. THESIS, UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS, INC., ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN, pp. 56
During harvest time, urban people will migrate to villages to take part in the harvest of crops. This can happen when interchange of role-sets is permissible in the social structure. Applying Merton's outline of the social structure, this can be classified under "institutional Patterns Shaping Alternatives". There are behavioral patterns and norms in the society that will shape an individual's personality, and this will influence the individual's choice of behavior. He can go on accepting the patterns of the society's behavior or he might take measures to innovate it. If he cannot do so, he might reject the whole system of that society by adopting the patterns and norms of another society that he thinks will best suit him. As can be seen in the schema, that Institutional Patterns Shaping Alternatives has a reciprocal effect with "Rates of Institutionally Consequential Behavior", and the centre of the schema has a direct interaction with "Development of Social Character". One of the social elements central to this idea is education, whereby the development of an individual will tend to alienate him from his own society.

(b) Factors associated with areas of destination

The factors associated with the areas of destination is very much the question of adjustment and assimilation. Before a person migrates he will have to consider the extent to which he is able to fit in the social structure of the receiving society. Ex (1966) in his study of adjustment of Amboinese in Holland reports that social problems among the Amboinese are due to the failure of assimilation. He sums up as follows:

"... every noticed difference of behavior and ideas was syncretically geared to the difference in pigmentation that existed between the refugees and the Dutch. His dusky skin was the most tangible confirmation of his ingrained conviction that he was regarded by the West Europeans and especially by the Dutch, as an inferior kind of human being" (Ex, 1966: 44).

Fig. 3 shows a very distinct migratory behavior in the northeast region of the United States within 80 years between 1870-1950. It shows an inverse relationship between the migration of whites and blacks. Thomas (1972: 143) could not find any other reason for this, except that there was "a tendency for the movement of the foreign-born (whites) into urban areas to have a repressive effect upon the movement of Negroes in the same areas" (Thomas, 1972: 143). This is amounting to saying that each will avoid the other in their migratory patterns, Negroes tended to go to certain areas in the northeast, while the whites will go elsewhere. Again, applying Merton's theory of social structure, this will fit into "Structural Induction of Motives, Control of Information and Sanction". It is very essential for a society to have a structured induction of motives, and the same sets of norms, because this will bring social cohesion. That explains why, according to the outline of Merton's, the Negroes and the Whites did not converge to the same locality in their migrations.
FIGURE 3

PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN URBAN POPULATION BY RACE AND NATIVITY FOR NORTHEAST U.S.A.
1870 - 1950

PERCENT
60
40
20
0
-20

1870-1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950

--- Native white
----- Negro
----- Foreign-born white

SOURCE: THOMAS, B, 1972, MIGRATION AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT,
LONDON, METHUEN & CO., LTD., 144.
Let us now consider the case of Australia as a receiving society. For most of the migration phases, Australia has been receiving migrants from north-western Europe, and later the southern Europeans. Very few Asians or coloureds have come to settle in Australia. This is due to the difference of status-sets that occurred. In a Survey conducted in June 1964 (Richardson, 1968), respondents were asked this question:

"Your immigration policy lets only a few Asians come to live here permanently. Do you think Asian migration should be prohibited altogether, or allowed in small numbers, or allowed without restriction?"

From this question, 21% said that it should be prohibited altogether and 70% said that a small number should be allowed. This means that, taken together, 91% were not very happy with the notion of Asians coming to Australia to settle down. This attitude alone is enough to limit Asian migration to Australia to a very small number, except for transients.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, I have tried to show that the social structure is a very deciding factor in determining migratory behavior. It has an influence both on the area of origin and area of destination. The various evidences presented above showed a very closed interaction between migration and the social structure. Factors like education and occupation, that have a tremendous influence on migration, fit very well indeed in Merton's outline. Certain types of migration like forced migration, the role of distance involved, do not fit very well in that outline. This is rather understandable because human behavior just cannot be condensed into one formula - a formula that has the rigidity of physical sciences. To a certain extent Merton's theory of the social structure do explain the cause and effects of migration.
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