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THE ROLE OF THE EXTENDED FAMILY  
IN MIGRATION AND ADAPTATION IN BRAZIL

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Migration to urban and to other rural areas is an important process in the economic and social life of Brazil as of other Latin American countries. The growth of industrial centers and the continuous expansion of the agricultural frontier has accelerated migration from the more densely settled rural areas. The characteristics of the migrants, the nature of the migration process, and how migration is related to economic development have been the focus of increasing study in recent years.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to indicate the role of the extended family in the process of migration using data from a recent study of migration and adaptation in rural and urban areas of central Brazil. Before presenting data from this study let us turn our attention to the findings of studies in other countries to give this paper a cross-cultural perspective in keeping with the theme of this section. While few studies have focused specifically upon the role of the family in migration, many have dealt with the family and kinship in connection with migration.<sup>2</sup> We shall consider only those studies which deal with the extended family as a factor in the migration process. We are not concerned with the effect of migration upon the nuclear family.

The role of the family in migration, of course, is dependent upon the importance of the family in the larger society. If the society is explicitly or implicitly kinship oriented, it is likely to play a much more important role in migration than if it is non-kinship oriented.<sup>3</sup> In societies in which kinship plays an important role in all affairs migration is likely to be viewed as a means of extending the opportunities of the family or kinship group. This is in fact the argument of LePlay as to the significance of the stem family in industrializing countries.<sup>4</sup> Migration in this case is viewed as a temporary condition, or if permanent, one in which the migrant sends money back to the family and assists other family members in becoming established, thereby contributing to the enhancement of the status and security of the extended family. Under conditions of declining resources due either to soil depletion or to population increase, migration may be a condition of survival of the extended as well as of the nuclear family units.<sup>5</sup>

The function of the stem family in migration is found in the Irish country family,<sup>6</sup> in the Polish Peasant family,<sup>7</sup> and in mountaineer families in the United States.<sup>8</sup> Thomas and Znaniecki state that "when the peasant emigrates, it is usually with the desire to earn ready money and return home to buy land." As a result most of the early Polish immigrants to the United States did not take up farming, but instead sought work in the mines, on railroads and in steel mills where they could earn most cash with the least preparation and investment. Polish

emigrants who moved to urban centers in their own country returned every year to their native village with money and stories of their experiences.<sup>9</sup>

The maintenance of strong family ties with migration is found among Italian emigrants to London.<sup>10</sup> The London families were a kind of extension of the home families based in Italy. This was strongest among the higher status families. Kinship among the Italian families in London carried with it a set of rights and obligations and was not only an instrument of social expression as it was among the English. All families interviewed had been asked to help some of their kin migrants at some time or other. Assistance to kin ranged from hospitality to providing jobs, money and legal protection. There was a continual exchange of services and assistance between kin in Italy and kin in Britain. These close kinship links acted to slow down the assimilation of the Italian families into English culture and society. They also served as a kind of cushion between them and the discrimination against them in London.

The tendency of kinship ties to retard the assimilation of Appalachian migrants into urban centers of the United States has been noted in Kentucky.<sup>11</sup> The greater difference of the environments to which the family moves, the greater the tendency to maintain family ties. Families moving from Tennessee to Detroit maintained closer ties than those going to Nashville or to nearby locations.<sup>12</sup> In the face of an unfamiliar or unfriendly environment kinship ties are maintained between local and migrant family members. Higher status families continue interaction with the home family when opportunities are closed to them for becoming fully integrated into the receiving society, as was the case with the Italian migrants, and lower status migrants continue such interaction because of their inability to become assimilated into the new environment because of a lack of skills and resources necessary for such integration. When they become unemployed or fail to obtain adequate

housing or social opportunities, they may return to their home community. Whether upper or lower status, the branch of the family remaining at home has strong social, if not economic, reasons for maintaining ties with the migrant individuals.

The study of 109 migrant families by Schwarzweller and Brown in Kentucky gives further support to the function of the extended family in migration.<sup>13</sup> Level of living, income and occupational level were maintained following moves outside of the area. This stability of the families throughout the process of migration would not likely occur without the support of the family system. Families in the "upper" class tended to move as whole nuclear families, while those in the "middle" and "lower" classes tended to move as individuals with the older members maintaining a homestead in the locality. The "upper" class having the resources and contacts to make a transfer of the whole family could assure continuity of the family in the new location with less dissipation than was true of the "middle" and "lower" class groups.

Migration to urban centers by members of joint families failed to disrupt family ties in an Indian village.<sup>14</sup> More joint families than non-joint families migrated to urban centers. The migrant members maintained their contact with the village and most sent money to the village. This pattern was more common among the upper class in which the joint family is strongest.

In a tribal society close ties with kin and tribe may prevent permanent migration. The male goes to work in the towns or cities for a temporary period and returns. Meanwhile he sends money to his family and maintains as close contact as possible with his family and village.<sup>15</sup>

Studies of urbanization in Latin America have indicated the importance of family and kinship ties. "Family" reasons were found to play an important role in the choice of Buenos Aires as a place to reside.<sup>16</sup>

Relatives are the nucleus of the contacts of the head of the household in the city and contact is also maintained with relatives more than with friends in the place from which they came. Pearce observes that the kin-group continued to be the most important basis of social contact and material aid in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro for migrants to the city.<sup>17</sup> Mutual assistance is provided in the form of temporary lodging or acquiring a favela house, making contacts for employment and in some cases financial assistance. Visiting occurs regularly and frequently among relatives, but little among non-relatives.

Studies of kinship and migration indicate that in kinship-oriented societies integration into the culture at the new location is retarded by kinship ties. Those of higher status tend to maintain their status in the kinship system from which they came while establishing themselves in the new location. Those of lower socio-economic status also depend heavily upon relatives for assistance and for social contacts in the new location. However, there is little evidence as to what specific kin provide what specific types of assistance and how this varies by socio-economic status.

The main thesis of this paper is that the extended family plays an important role in the process of migration and adjustment in Brazil and that this role is greater in families of higher social and economic status. While the argument can be made that migration is one means of extending the power and influence of the extended family, the evidence for this is beyond the scope of the data at hand. Kinship is important at all levels of Brazilian society, but it is more important at the higher levels in this kinship-oriented society in which other institutions have not replaced the particularistic forms of social interaction. While the extended family in the lower status level performs a similar function, it is not able to provide access to job opportunities,

financial aid and other forms of material and social assistance as are families of higher status. Yet, at all status levels the stress and strains of migration are alleviated by the help of extended family members.

#### The Samples

Data for the paper are drawn from a rural and an urban sample in central Brazil to provide tests of the hypothesis under two sets of conditions. While the data from the two samples are not quite comparable, the two sets of data do provide evidence for comparing the role of kinship in migration to rural and to urban areas.

The rural sample consisted of 291 family-households or about one-tenth of the households in the municipio of Itumbiara in southern Goias. The area is one in which in-migration reached a peak about 1960. In-migration was stimulated by the construction of a paved highway through the county connecting Sao Paulo and Brasilia. The in-migration coincides with the shift from extensive cattle grazing to more intensive rice growing supplemented with corn and other crops.

Four-fifths (80 percent) of the rural sample migrated to the county as adults. About one-third (32.7 percent) had lived there 1 to 5 years, one-fourth (25.8 percent) had lived there 6 to 10 years, and 21.3 percent had lived there for 11 years or more. There is considerable shifting of the tenants or sharecroppers from farm to farm each year, and with the decline in productivity of rice, movement out of the county is likely to offset the in-migrants in the future.

The urban sample consists of 653 family-households constituting about 2 percent of the households in the urban areas of the Federal District of Brasilia. The urban areas include the satellite cities

with the slum areas as well as the central city, which is the seat of government.

Since the federal capitol was completed at Brasilia in 1960, all residents are of comparatively recent origin. Only about half (53.0 percent) of those living in the urban area lived there 6 years or more, one-fourth (24.7 percent) lived there 3 to 5 years, and about one-fourth (22.3 percent) lived there less than 3 years. Most of the older residents came during the construction period, hence tend to include a higher proportion of those of lower occupational status. More of those arriving in Brasilia during the two or three years following the inauguration of the capitol include the professionals, entrepreneurs and politicians.

#### The Extended Family and Migration

According to the stem-family theory, the desire on the part of the family and of its individuals to maintain and to improve their status is a major factor in migration. However, migration is not likely to occur unless local opportunities are limited. If asked why they move, most persons are not likely to indicate that it was because of family aspirations that they did so. Instead they are likely to indicate their dissatisfaction with existing conditions or their desire to seek better opportunities. Hence indications of reasons for moving are not likely to be a good indication of family influence.

About one-fifth of the respondents of the rural area of Itumbiara said they came because of relatives. This was over six times the percentage who came to Itumbiara because of friends living there. An even higher proportion of the rural sample (two-fifths) talked with relatives before moving. This was also true for the rural migrants to Brasilia. Of those moving to urban areas in Brasilia, only

one-fourth obtained their information from relatives, while one-sixth talked with friends. The impersonal media, the radio, newspapers and magazines were more important sources for the urban sample, but only one-sixth of the urban migrants depended upon such sources. These findings support those of Hutchinson to the effect that only a small percentage of the migrants to urban centers in Brazil sought advice or assistance from relatives, or from anyone living in the city.<sup>18</sup>

However, once established, relatives bring other relatives. Of the rural migrants in southern Goias, 30.6 percent said relatives moved there after they had moved, while this was true for 40.7 percent of the urban migrants in Brasilia. The high figure for Brasilia is explained by the fact that Brasilia had a higher rate of in-migration than did the rural area in southern Goias, which was located about 300 miles from Brasilia. As high as 62.7 percent of the urban Brasilia sample had relatives living in the area at the time of the interview. These figures show quite clearly that relatives tend to follow relatives in the migration channels in Brazil.<sup>19</sup>

#### Extended Family Contacts by Length of Residence

Interaction with family members and relatives is an indication of the functional role of the extended family. An index of extended family contacts was based upon responses to five questions pertaining to visits with parents, parents-in-law, brothers and sisters, brothers and sisters-in-law and with other relatives. Responses were categorized as "never," "less than once a month," "once or twice a month," "once a week," and "three times a week or more." These categories were weighted from "0" to "4" and added to make the Index of Extended Family Contacts.

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### Kinship Contacts and Occupational Status

The classification of the Itumbiara sample into eight occupational groups based primarily upon land tenure provided a basis for testing the hypothesis that kinship contacts are higher among the higher status groups. Two-thirds of the sample (66.3 percent) are sharecroppers, unskilled or semiskilled workers, with a smaller proportion of renters (7.6 percent), small farmers (12.0 percent) and large farmers, with 100 hectares or over (14.1 percent). While the natives include a higher proportion of large farm owners than do the migrants, the actual number is only 14 out of 37 total large farmers.

In support of the main hypothesis of this paper, occupational status is positively associated with extended family contacts. The index of Extended Family Contacts is positively associated with occupational status ( $r = .233$ , significant at .01 level). This association is highest for those migrants who have lived in Itumbiara less than 5 years and lowest for the natives (see table 3). This suggests that migration provides an opportunity for an increase in extended family contacts by those of higher occupational status. It is surprising that there is no association between occupational status and extended family contacts for the natives, but it was shown that contacts with relatives other than parents is low for the natives.

When we consider the special types of interaction among kin, we find that it is the interaction with parents and with brothers and sisters that is most highly associated with occupational status ( $\chi^2 = 13.88$ , 2 d.f.,  $P < .001$  and,  $\chi^2 = 14.59$ , d.f. 2,  $P < .001$ ). Interaction with parents-in-law, with brothers and sisters-in-law is associated at the .05 level and visits with other relatives at the .20 level (see table 4)

The hypothesis is also supported by data from the urban sample of Brasilia. Visits to parents, visits from parents, visits to other relatives and visits from other relatives are all highly associated with occupational status. Visits to parents and visits to other relatives living outside of Brasilia are most highly associated with occupational status (see table 5). Only 11.2 percent of those in the status category of unskilled and "low" skilled laborers, as compared with 61.6 percent of those in the highest status category, visited their parents once a year or more. (see table 6) A similar contrast is found with respect to visiting other relatives. (see table 7) There is less difference between the high and low occupational status groups with respect to visits from parents and from other relatives.

Interaction among kin is also associated with other indices of social and economic status for the rural sample. It is positively associated with size of property ( $r = .195$ , significant at the .01 level), literacy ( $r = .217$ , significant at the .01 level) and with level of living ( $r = .248$ , significant at the .001 level). It is also associated with social participation at a significant level ( $r = .147$ ,  $P < .05$ ).

#### Mutual Aid and Occupational Status

The association of occupational status with extended family interaction is also indicated by the amount and type of assistance exchanged with parents, relatives and friends in the rural sample. The higher status group had exchanged 3.0 as compared with 2.3 types of help for the low status group. However, there was no difference by occupational status in the number of types of help exchanged with other relatives (2.2 for both groups) and only slight differences in the number of types of help exchanged with friends by status

(1.7 and 1.9 respectively for the low and high groups). The high status groups particularly give more help in times of sickness than do those of lesser status. They give and receive more of certain types of assistance among other relatives, especially lending money, exchange of tools and help in times of sickness, although the differences are not statistically significant. However, there is less living with other relatives among the farm owners and less exchange of help in farming. Apparently, living with relatives other than parents in Itumbiara is a function of need more than of strength of family ties. Farm owners are more likely to exchange farming operations with friends rather than with relatives.

#### Discussion

The findings from both rural and urban samples support the hypothesis that extended family contacts are maintained more closely among the higher status than among the lower status levels. The closer the family ties, the more likely these contacts are to be maintained during and after migration to a new area whether this be rural or urban. Thus, those of higher status are more likely to maintain their ties with parents and with brothers and sisters than with more distant relatives. Furthermore, ties are more likely to be maintained with the parents and with the brothers and sisters of the husband than with those of the wife after migration, at least in rural areas. The longer the residence in the new area, the more frequent the contacts with parents and with brothers and sisters of the husband. However, this does not hold for the parents and for the brothers and sisters of the wife. Migration tends to be more disruptive with the wife's relatives than with those of the husband. They continue to be maintained by those of higher status but to a lesser extent by those of lower status.

The extended family in Brazil appears to survive the crisis of moving, and, in fact, apparently increases the solidarity of certain ties. While all relatives are given help and assistance during the first few years after moving, the ties with the husband's immediate family tend to increase over time in the new area. But whether this occurs depends upon the status of the family. Those of higher status are more likely to maintain ties with relatives of all types and particularly with those of the husband. This is no doubt due in part to their ability to pay transportation costs for visiting relatives living out of the area.

The findings of this study are in general support of those based upon studies of family-oriented European societies -- the Polish, Italian and Irish. They also support the findings of family-oriented cultures in the United States. They support the growing body of evidence that the extended family extends its influence whenever it can do so to the advantage of the family.<sup>21</sup> Whether this support results in social mobility for the individual in the Brazilian setting is still uncertain. If the family facilitates geographical mobility and if this results in the enhancement of the nuclear families' social and material status, then it can be said that the extended family contributes to the enhancement of the status of the nuclear family. But, whether the extended family contributes more positive than negative influences upon the overall occupational mobility in central Brazil requires study much beyond the scope of the present effort.

Table 1

Chi-square, Degrees of Freedom and Direction of Association  
of Length of Residence\* with Types of Extended Family Contacts  
for Rural Sample of Southern Goias

Type of Extended Family Contacts	Chi- Square	Degrees of Freedom	P	Direction of Association
Visits to and from parents	24.84	6	.001	+
Visits to and from parents of spouse	2.68	6	N.S.	
Visits to and from brothers and sisters	35.27	6	.001	+
Visits to and from brothers and sisters-in-law	6.39	6	N.S.	
Visits to and from other relatives	6.50	6	N.S.	

\* Length of residence is categorized as follows: 1 to 5 years,  
6 to 10 years, 11 or more years but not native, and native.

Table 2

Chi-square Test of Association, Degrees of Freedom and Direction of Association of Length of Residence with Extended Family Contacts With Relatives Living Away for Urban Sample of Brasilia

Type of Extended Family Contact	Chi-square	Degrees of Freedom	P	Direction
Visits to parents	14.81	12	.30	-
Visits from parents	9.61	12	N.S.	
Visits to other relatives	28.78	12	.01	-
Visits from other relatives	7.52	12	N.S.	

Table 3

Coefficient of Correlation of Index of Extended Family Contacts with Occupational Status by Migrant Status for Rural Sample of Southern Goias

Migrant Status	Number of Cases	Coefficient of Correlation
Natives	36	-.012
1 to 5 years	90	.375**
6 to 10 years	77	.163
11 and over	88	.068

\*\* Significant at .01 level

Table 4

Chi-square, Degrees of Freedom and Direction of Association of Occupational Status\* with Types of Extended Family Contacts for Rural Sample of Southern Goias

Type of Extended Family Contact	Chi-square	Degrees of Freedom	P	Direction of Association
Visits to and from parents	13.88	2	.001	+
Visits to and from parents of spouse	7.29	2	.05	+
Visits to and from brothers and sisters	14.59	2	.001	+
Visits to and from brothers and sisters-in-law	6.04	2	.05	+
Visits to and from other relatives	3.88	2	.20	+

\* Occupational Status is categorized into two groups. Low status: unemployed, day laborers, sharecroppers, skilled workers, small shopkeepers; and high status-white collar workers: farm renters, farm owners, proprietors and professionals.

Table 5

Chi-square Tests of Association, Degrees of Freedom and Direction of Association of Occupational Status with Extended Family Contacts with Relatives Living Away for Urban Sample of Brasilia

Type of Extended Family Contact	Chi-square	Degrees of Freedom	P	Direction
Visits to parents	82.85	9	.001	+
Visits from parents	41.61	9	.001	+
Visits to other relatives	96.51	9	.001	+
Visits from other relatives	35.44	9	.001	+

Table 6

Percentage Distribution by Occupational Status and by Frequency of Visits to Parents of Urban Brasilia Sample of Those with Parents Living Away

Frequency of Visits to Parents Living Away	Occupational Status				Total
	Unskilled	Semi-skilled	Skilled, Trades & White Collar	Professional & Entrepreneurial	
Never	59.2	40.9	20.9	5.6	35.4
Less than once a year	29.6	35.5	26.4	33.3	30.6
Once or twice a year	7.1	19.1	34.1	27.8	22.0
More than twice a year	4.1	4.5	18.6	33.3	12.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of cases	<u>98</u>	<u>110</u>	<u>129</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>373</u>

Chi-square, 82.85; 9 degrees of freedom;  $P < .001$ .

Table 7

Percentage Distribution by Occupational Status and by Frequency of Visits to Relatives of Urban Brasilia Sample Living Away

Frequency of Visits to Relatives	Occupational Status				Total
	Unskilled	Semi-skilled	Skilled, Trades & White Collar	Professional & Entrepreneurial	
Never	54.6	50.0	26.9	17.7	41.5
Less than once a year	31.3	31.9	26.4	21.6	29.2
Once or twice a year	9.6	11.2	34.3	37.3	20.1
More than twice a year	4.5	6.9	12.4	23.5	9.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of cases	<u>198</u>	<u>188</u>	<u>201</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>638</u>

Chi-square, 96.51; 9 degrees of freedom;  $P < .001$

Table 8

Percentage Distribution by Occupational Status and by  
Frequency of Visits From Parents of Urban Brasilia Sample  
of Those with Parents Living Away

Frequency of Visits From Parents Living Away	Occupational Status				Total
	Unskilled	Semi- skilled	Skilled, Trades & White Collar	Profes- sional & Enterpre- neurial	
Never	79.2	67.0	45.7	35.1	59.6
Less than once a year	17.7	21.1	31.0	37.9	25.3
Once or twice a year	1.0	9.2	16.3	18.9	10.5
More than twice a year	2.1	2.7	7.0	8.1	4.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of cases	<u>96</u>	<u>109</u>	<u>129</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>371</u>

Chi-square, 41.61; degrees of freedom, 9;  $P < .001$

Table 9

Percentage Distribution by Occupational Status and by  
Frequency of Visits From Relatives of Urban Brasilia Sample  
Living Away

Frequency of Visits From Relatives Living Away	Occupational Status				Total
	Unskilled	Semi- skilled	Skilled, Trades & White Collar	Profes- sional & Enterpre- neurial	
Never	49.3	44.7	33.6	19.2	40.6
Less than once a year	31.2	20.7	29.7	38.5	28.2
Once or twice a year	9.0	18.6	23.3	25.0	17.6
More than twice a year	10.5	16.0	13.4	17.3	13.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of Cases	<u>199</u>	<u>188</u>	<u>202</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>641</u>

Chi-square, 35.44; degrees of freedom, 9;  $P < .001$

## Footnotes

1

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op. cit.

<sup>12</sup>See also, Elmora Matthews, Neighbors and Kin, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1965, pp. 58-59.

<sup>13</sup>Harry K. Schwarzweller and James S. Brown, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup>Edwin Eames, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup>J. Van Velsen, "Labor Migration as a Positive Factor in the Continuity of the Tonga Tribal Society," Chap. XI in Social Change in Modern Africa, Adian Southall (ed.), New York: Oxford University Press, 1961, pp. 230-241.

<sup>16</sup>Gino Germani, "Inquiry Into the Social Effects of Urbanization in a Working-Class Sector of Greater Buenos Aires," Chap. VIII in Urbanization in Latin America, Philip Hauser (ed.), New York: International Documents Service, Columbia University Press and UNESCO, 1961.

<sup>17</sup>Andrew Pearse, "Some Characteristics of Urbanization in the City of Rio de Janeiro," Chap. VII in Urbanization in Latin America, Philip Hauser (ed.), New York: International Documents Service, Columbia University Press and UNESCO, 1961.

<sup>18</sup>Bertram Hutchinson, op. cit., p. 62.

19

These findings are not too different from those of a study of migrants to Indianapolis in the 1940's. Eighty-five percent of a sample of rural migrants had relatives living there, while only 40 percent had friends there before they moved. Friends and relatives were more important for negroes and southern whites than for northern whites, many of whom had previous contacts with the city (Eldon D. Smith, "Migration and Adjustment Experiences of Rural Migrant Workers in Indianapolis," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, 1953).

20

A multiple correlation analysis shows that Index of Family Contacts adds significantly to the correlation with occupational status when six other independent variables are taken into account: Area of property, length of residence, age, literacy, size of family, and number of brothers and sisters.

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See Eugene Litwak, op. cit.

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