

MIGRATION TO AMERICAN SAMOA*

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Migration, both internal and international, is the "major regulator of demographic change in many of the small Pacific nations" (Connell, 1984a:175). In the past, migration tended to be circular - often seasonal and of short duration (see Bedford, 1980; Chapman, 1981; Prothero and Chapman, 1984). However, there is now substantial evidence that migration within and from the Pacific is permanent and involves longer distances (Shankman, 1976; Connell, 1983 studies; Connell, 1984a and b; McPherson, 1985). International migration beyond the South Pacific also appears to be increasingly important (Connell 1984b:307).

There has long been concern within the Pacific that the costs of migration outweigh the benefits, particularly for international migration (see Connell, 1983, especially country reports 18 and 22). Thus, as Connell (1984b:310) has noted "countries must understand the rationale for migration in order to devise strategies to minimize or redirect some migration streams, while encouraging others, in order to generate a more appropriate form of development." Since "migration behavior (also) has such an important bearing on the causes and consequences of population trends" (Connell 1984a:175) an understanding of migration will also aid in the understanding of population dynamics in many South Pacific nations.

What is planned in this study is an investigation of the characteristics of international and, to a limited extent, internal migration in the Pacific and in a second study the characteristics of migration from the Pacific to the United States. These investigations should illuminate the individual rationale for migration and inform policy making in the area of migration.

Ideally one would like to discuss migration among all nations of the Pacific. However as Greenwood and Stuart (1986) have shown, the different ways

in which countries collect migration data and define migration make even a simple 2 x 2 matrix of international migration flows of doubtful accuracy. As a consequence we will focus on migration to American Samoa. The advantage of using American Samoa is that the 1980 Census allows us to investigate the detailed characteristics of several migrant groups - Western Samoans, Tongans, and Samoans born in the U.S. and to compare these groups with the American Samoa-born population. By comparing these characteristics with those of the home or country of birth populations it may be possible to uncover the rationale for migration in the Pacific, since migration in the Pacific is primarily a Polynesian phenomenon (Connell, 1987).

The flow of Pacific migrants to American Samoa dominates the flow from American Samoa to other Pacific countries. For example, in 1981 individuals resident in Western Samoa but born in American Samoa were only 11 percent of those resident in American Samoa but born in Western Samoa. In 1976 only 265 individuals from other Pacific countries were enumerated in the Tongan census (0.3 percent of the population). Of these a very small percentage would have been American Samoan.

A Model of Migration

Many paradigms have been used to explain migration (see Sahota, 1968; Bedford, 1980; Chapman and Prothero, 1983; Connell, 1984a). By far the most successful, and the one used in this study, is the economic or human capital explanation of migration (Sahota, 1968; Sjaastad, 1962; Greenwood, 1975). Basically individuals or families migrate to increase their well-being, principally their economic well-being.