

International Migration and Human Development: A Cross-National Analysis of
Less-Developed Countries, 1970-2005

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Description of the Topic

Historically, international migration in developing countries has been directed predominately toward developed countries. More recently, however, international migration in developing countries has become more globalized to the extent that migrant flows now include a broader variety of both sending and receiving countries (Castles and Miller 2003; Nyberg-Sorenson, Hear, and Engberg-Pedersen 2002). The globalization of migration has coincided with a trend toward more prevalent South-to-South movements, with persons increasingly moving between developing countries (Nyberg-Sorenson, Hear, and Engberg-Pedersen 2002). Indeed, one-half of all migrants from developing countries now move to another developing country (Ratha and Shaw 2007), and South-to-South migration has become as prevalent as South-to-North migration (Martin and Widgren 2002).

The present level of international migration in developing countries has raised new and important questions regarding the impact of these movements for development outcomes. In a world in which international migration is produced in large part by persistent cross-national differences in income levels (Hatton and Williamson 2006), policymakers and development practitioners are searching for ways to utilize the mobility of people to raise income levels and promote development in both sending and receiving countries (Annan 2006; UN 2006; WB 2006).

However, there is little systematic cross-national evidence regarding whether or how international migration affects development outcomes in migrant-receiving countries in the developing world. Previous cross-national studies (Frey and Al-Roumi 1999; Frey and Field 2000; Lena and London 1993; London 1988; London and Williams 1988; 1990; Moon 1991; Moon and Dixon 1985; Nolan 1988; Nolan and White 1983; 1984; Shandra, Nobles, London, and Williamson 2004; Shandra, Nobles, London, and Williamson 2005; Shen and Williamson 1997; 1999; 2001; Wimberley 1990; 1991; Wimberley and Bello 1992) have neglected the role of international migration as an explanation of variation in development levels. Moreover, when it has been studied, the development implications of international migration have been examined almost exclusively in terms of the effects of remittances on

migrant-sending countries (Adams Jr. and Page 2005; Cohen 2005; Durand, Parrado, and Massey 1996; Gammeltoft 2002; Haas 2005; Martin and Straubhaar 2002; Massey and Parrado 1998; Stark 2004; Taylor 1999; Taylor, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouchi, Massey, and Pellegrino 1996a; 1996b; WB 2006). The impact of international migration on development outcomes in migrant-receiving countries has not been addressed systematically across countries and over time.

Theoretical Focus

My aim is to assess whether and how international migration affects development levels in migrant-receiving countries in the developing world. Population dynamics (fertility, mortality, and migration) are vital to the prospects for development (Barlow 1994; Crenshaw, Ameen, and Christenson 1997; Kelley and Schmidt 1995; Preston 1986). The relationship between population dynamics and development is commonly expressed in terms of the demographic transition, which describes the shift from high fertility and mortality toward lower fertility and mortality that occurs with economic development and modernizing social structures (Kirk 1996). The historical experience of developed countries generally demonstrates that persistently elevated fertility and mortality rates are impediments in the demographic transition toward advances in development, including improvements in economic development, literacy, and longevity (Lee 2003).

In this respect, international migration is important because it is a population dynamic that can affect the factors that promote or impede the demographic transition toward improvements in human development: “Immigration is the wild card: it can hasten or slow these trends” (Kent and Haub 2005: 7).

Despite its potential importance, the study of migration remains a relatively under-theorized area of research (Portes 1997) compared to the attention given to fertility and mortality as explanations of development. Yet as a component of population change, migration may indeed impact fertility and mortality rates, each of which is known to be associated with the demographic transition toward improved living standards.

Migration into less-developed countries might undermine human development levels by placing additional stress on already over-burdened infrastructures. Urban areas in many less-developed countries provide evidence of this relationship. While cities were once considered, “islands of privilege” (Harrison 1982: 145), with lower fertility and mortality rates and higher standards of living for residents, they are increasingly becoming “unhealthy islands” (Stephens 1996: 9) as the advantages of urban life for health outcomes deteriorates. Indeed, there is renewed concern over an emerging “urban penalty” (Harpham and Molyneux 2001: 119) associated with health outcomes in urban areas of many developing countries.

Migration ostensibly plays an important role. Persistently elevated infant mortality rates in urban areas (Brockerhoff and Brennan 1998) are attributable, at least in part, to the spread of infectious diseases in the cities of developing countries. Immigration is important here because human mobility, by definition, increases the risk of transmitting infectious disease: “The frequency of contact, the density of the population and the concentration and proximity of infective and susceptible people in an urban population promote the transmission of the infective organisms. The constant influx of migrants susceptible to infection and possible carriers of the new virulent strains of infective agents, together with the inevitable increase in household numbers, foster the transfer of...microorganisms” (Satterthwaite 1993: 91). Hence the growing literature that documents the relationship

between migration and HIV/AIDS (Brewer, Hasbun, and Ryan 1998; Decosas and Adrien 1997; Hunt 1989; Lurie, Williams, Zuma, Mkaya-Mwamburi, Garnett, and Sturm 2003; Mabey and Mayaud 1997; Quinn 1994).

In addition to being detrimental to infant mortality, immigration may also be detrimental to human development if it is associated with higher fertility rates. This may occur in one of two ways. First, to the extent that it promotes increases in infant mortality rates, immigration will place upward pressure on fertility rates. Persistently elevated infant mortality rates promote high fertility rates because families want to ensure that an appropriate number of children survive. Second, immigrants generally exhibit higher fertility rates, particularly when they originate in rural areas (Brockerhoff 1995; Hirschman 1994; Zarate and de Zarate 1975). These fertility patterns are embedded in cultural norms and expectations and can be resistant to change, at least in the short-term: “traditional values are typically rooted in rural environments and among recent migrants to urban areas. Cultural values, however, may persist long after the structural conditions in which they originated have eroded” (Hirschman 1994: 216). Thus, immigration may raise fertility rates, slowing the demographic transition, and potentially impeding human development.

Data and Method

I conduct a series of cross-national panel analyses that examine the effect of international migration on development outcomes over the period, 1970-2005. I begin the analysis by examining the impact of international migration on the human development index (UNDP 1990), a weighted composite index comprised of literacy rates, per capita incomes, and life expectancies. In an attempt to understand more thoroughly how international migration impacts human development, I then examine two demographic components of human development: infant mortality rates and total fertility rates.

The focal independent variable is international migration, which is operationalized as the total stock of foreign born in the country. The analyses control for a broad array of variables that measure important political, economic, and demographic factors known to be associated with development, including female enrollment rates, the prevalence of healthcare entities, labor force participation rates, democratic development, the spatial distribution of the population, the age distribution of the population, the level of international trade, foreign investment rates, and the level of domestic investment.

Data are drawn from the World Bank’s (2007) *World Development Indicators*, the United Nations’ (2005) *Population, Resources, and Environment Database*, the United Nations’ (2006) *World Population Prospects*, and the International Monetary Fund’s (2007) *Balance of Payments Yearbook*. The period 1970-2005 reflects the broadest time horizon that is possible with current data. As is common in cross-national methodology, the sample is limited to less-developed countries in order to avoid confounding divergent social processes. A total of 34 less-developed countries are included in the analysis. Countries are included in the analysis if they have complete information on each of the variables.

The analyses employ random and fixed effects panel estimation techniques to model unobserved heterogeneity, which allows for more precise estimates in the presence of unobserved, time-constant, country-specific effects (Frees 2004; Halaby 2004).

Contributions of the Study

This study advances our knowledge of development in several ways. First, by assessing the impact of international migration, I incorporate a new explanation of development into previous models. Second, I analyze the impact of international migration alongside a variety of other potential domestic and international explanations of development identified in previous studies. Third, I examine the effects of international migration on a more extensive set of outcomes that incorporates both economic and non-economic factors. Fourth, I use more recent data on developing countries and employ more modern estimation techniques that address some of the methodological concerns identified in previous studies. Finally, I examine the impacts of international migration on development outcomes across countries and over time. This allows a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between international migration and development compared to previous studies.

Preliminary Findings and Timeline

As of September 2008, I have gathered and cleaned the data and conducted preliminary analyses. There are three central findings from these preliminary analyses. First, higher levels of international migration are associated with lower scores on the human development index over ten-year periods, net of all controls. The subsequent analyses investigate possible paths through which international migration might lower human development. These analyses indicate that international migration is associated both with higher rates of infant mortality and with higher fertility rates.

I am currently exploring whether the impacts of migration on development is moderated by several factors, including state institutional capacity, geographical region, and population growth rates. The analyses will be finalized by the end of October 2008. The final draft of the paper will be completed by February 2009.

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