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# the rural-urban migrant network in Kenya: some general implications

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Rural-urban ties have long interested students of African cities, migration, and social change (Amin 1974; Gugler 1969; Kuper 1965; Mitchell 1959; Parkin 1975a; Watson 1958).<sup>1</sup> Mayer identifies three basic models to characterize research in the field: “detrribalization,” “alternation,” and “sets of relations” (1962:584-585). The oldest is the “detrribalization” model, which stresses unidirectional change. The migrant moves from an integrated rural community to a “westernized” urban setting. Through contact with a new culture in the city, the migrant develops different behaviors and loses his tribal identity (Wilson 1941, 1942; Malinowski 1945; Mair 1938; Southall and Gutkind 1957). In this view the urban setting is seen as unstable, disorganized, chaotic, and even dangerous for those who leave the shelter of rural, tribal authority (Watson 1958:3). Such conclusions about the negative effects of city life are not limited to African studies. Wirth (1938), Redfield (1947), and many of their students see them as products of urban settings in general.

The “alternation” model is a reaction to the detrribalization approach and is best exemplified by urban research in the Copperbelt in Zambia (Gluckman 1960, 1961; Epstein 1958, 1964, 1967; Mitchell 1956, 1966; Watson 1958). These authors stressed the study of the urban system in its own right, with its own social organization, communities, neighborhood relations, and network patterns. Gluckman in a classic remark said that the African who leaves the rural area is first of all a townsman and only secondarily a tribesman (1961:68-69). In this conceptualization, the rural and the urban

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*Rural-urban migration patterns in many settings involve extensive contacts between the city and the country. Such contacts are conceptualized as a rural-urban network of kin who share resources and who visit frequently. Neither setting can be viewed independently of the other. Six antecedent conditions are suggested that should encourage the formation of rural-urban network migration systems. The influence of the rural-urban network in Kenya is illustrated with data on family and household organization and by patterns of visiting and sociability between city and country residents. Familial ties remain stable within the network; rural contacts are positively associated with urban success and longevity, and social ties include rural and urban kin. The data come from broadly-based survey information as well as from a more intensive ethnographic study of one such rural-urban familial network. Findings from both these approaches mutually support the rural-urban network model.*

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are two independent social fields although the individual migrant may move back and forth between them (Mayer 1962:579). Each setting has its own rules governing social behavior, and while the social order of the city is different from that of the countryside, it is nonetheless structured and regular.

Mayer criticizes the “detrribalization” and “alternation” models as inadequate to account for variation in social behavior among individuals or groups within the city. His study of the “Red” and “School” Xhosa in East London (South Africa) showed great variation in the types of behavior and values found within the city and in the extra-urban ties maintained by migrants (Mayer 1961, 1962). He shows that town-located behaviors are not always “typically” urban and that migrants may continue to base their actions on rural norms, to share intensive contacts with like-minded fellow migrants, and to interact frequently with rural relatives. In African cities as elsewhere, one basic dimension of social differentiation is that of style of life (Clignet and Sween 1969; Greer 1962; McElrath 1968).<sup>2</sup> The identification of separate social fields located in rural and urban areas fails to account for situations where the city and the country affect each other (Amin 1974; Bradfield 1973; Bugnicourt 1974; Gugler 1971; Leeds 1973; Miner 1965; Rowe 1973) or situations where the norms and expected behaviors in the city and the countryside are not strikingly at odds (Bruner 1967). The opposition of rural and urban social organization, which has been a key element of much social thought for years, is not always an empirical reality (Jackson 1969).

Mayer proposes his “sets of relations” model to explain the diversity found in some African urban environments. Our analysis extends Mayer’s “sets of relations” model by describing the city of Nairobi, Kenya, where the goal of most migrants is to maintain a high level of contact with their rural families. Visiting and various forms of exchange between the rural and urban areas are frequent, migrants plan to leave the city when they no longer need a cash income, and rural and urban goals are hard to separate.

Our data, obtained using different methods and working independently, support similar conclusions about the origins, definition, and effects of rural-urban ties. Ross (1975a) worked in Shauri Moyo and Kariokor, two neighborhoods near the center of Nairobi. He collected data through participant observation and interviews with 498 men and women on a wide range of topics, including rural-urban ties. Weisner (1973b, 1976) utilized a small network sample of families from both urban and rural areas that incorporated rural-urban relationships in its design. Forty-eight families, all from the same rural area in western Kenya, were studied. Half the families had members living in one Nairobi housing estate, Kariobangi; the other half were living on farm homesteads in the rural area, Kisa.

The intensive *network* sample directly studied the rural-urban social field within a single microlevel unit formed by migrants from one rural area to one urban housing estate. The *survey* sample confirms the wider generality of the findings from the network sample and provides data on the effects of migration from a wide range of migrants, differing in income, urban experience, and ethnic background. We believe that such samples and techniques are important contributions to urban research of this kind, as the validity of findings is greater when independent studies using different methods converge on the same conclusions (Campbell and Fiske 1959).

### **rural-urban interdependence**

Rural and urban social systems, while spatially separated, are often socially, economically, and politically interdependent. Cities in Africa are growing primarily as a

result of rural migration, while the countryside is changing economically as a result of money earned in the city by these migrants. This linkage of city and country requires us to conceptualize social and economic life as a common social field in which both rural and urban residents can and do participate, rather than as two discrete social systems with a clearly marked border between them. For most migrants to the city the question is not “to which social system do you owe allegiance—city or country?” Rather, people seek to maximize relations in both places by using resources derived from one setting to strengthen social ties and make life more secure in the other. A question often asked by social scientists—“how urbanized are migrants to cities in developing countries?”—seems in this light a somewhat ethnocentric way of phrasing the dilemma of many African migrants. Most migrants are constrained by social and economic obligations in *both* city and country; urban employment has important consequences for the quality of rural life, for kinsmen of migrants living on rural farms, and for kin trying to find work in the city.

Residing in a city does not mean shunning rural ties and obligations. Living in the country does not mean failing to look to city relatives for assistance and comfort. In West African cities, for example, one well-documented mechanism for maintaining strong ties between urban- and rural-based kin is the voluntary association, often organized in the city on the level of the village or clan in the rural areas. These organizations help to socialize new migrants arriving in the city as they become familiar with the urban area and look for housing and jobs. At the same time, voluntary associations help longer term residents maintain social ties and keep up with the news from home (Little 1965; Barnes 1975).

Frequently migrants to African cities and even individuals born in town maintain close ties to rural relatives (Hanna and Hanna 1971:45-47; Gugler 1969, 1971; Adepouju 1974; Hart 1974). Most migrants in town state a desire to return to the country later in life, and burial societies that transport the bodies of those who die in the city to their rural homelands are important throughout the continent. Frequently the urban wage earner pays the school fees and purchases modern tools for rural kin. Several systematic studies using survey data have shown high levels of visiting rural areas, remitting money home, maintaining land holdings, and building rural homes by city dwellers (Gugler 1971; Caldwell 1969; Johnson and Whitelaw 1972; Parkin 1975b). Gugler’s study in eastern Nigeria shows intensive contact between city and countryside and the ways in which social and economic fortunes in one location have important and immediate consequences in the other.

Strong rural-urban ties are far from universal. For example, the literature on the urbanization process in Latin America and for many groups coming to North America stresses the one-way nature of the migration process. People leaving the countryside have a weak desire to return to it and in fact return much less frequently than migrants in most of Africa (Nelson 1976). Even within Africa we can identify variations in the migration process and the strength with which rural-urban ties are maintained. Two important questions need to be asked about this variation: what preconditions, or societal and ecological characteristics, are likely to be associated with the maintenance of strong rural-urban ties, and what kinds of individuals (in terms of age, ethnicity, SES, sex, life cycle, and so forth) are likely to have high levels of participation in rural-urban networks? Before turning to our data, which provide a partial answer to the second question, we will discuss the first one by offering six hypotheses that will need to be confirmed through further comparative research.

**social-ecological factors encouraging rural-urban ties** Six preconditions seem to be related to the emergence of the rural-urban linkages we find in Nairobi (Weisner 1973a:80-86; Gugler 1971:416-419; Mitchell 1969:175). The first specific condition often closely associated with the maintenance of the rural-urban network is the availability of rural resources to the migrant. Land is the most obvious and important of these resources in Kenya, but livestock, shops, and control of useful skills are also possibilities. In the Kenya case, not only are these resources available to urban-based migrants, but resources earned in the city are directly converted to strengthening rural holdings.

Second, control of these resources by patrilineal, patrilocal groups of males, who are also those who migrate to cities, insures the absentee ownership pattern necessary for control of lands. Such residential and ownership patterns are, of course, common throughout most of Africa.

Third, there often are family members available to reside and work on the farm. The migrant's wife is typically charged with farm work in the absence of the husband, and she maintains the male migrant's two households. Two factors are important in insuring the availability of wives for these responsibilities: the absence of strong affective ties between husband and wife and a pattern of division of labor that has women doing the tasks necessary to support a subsistence farm. The absence of strong affective ties encourages, or at least permits, men and women to be residentially separated for long periods of time without severe strains being placed on the marriage. The pattern of sexual division of labor favoring women (or both sexes if women also engage in trade or migration) for the performance of farm duties ensures that women can and will perform the tasks necessary to maintain the farm and the rural household. Polygyny, an institution widespread in Africa, is particularly conducive to these structural features (Sawyer and LeVine 1966; Clignet 1970:37-38).

Fourth, the level of agricultural technology must be relatively simple. Simple hoe agriculture, as practiced widely throughout Africa, does not involve the management of complex machinery, draft animals, or other valuable and scarce resources. If these were needed, and if they were owned by men, it is less likely that men could, or would, leave women to manage them alone with little or no direct supervision.

Fifth, it is likely that there must be a common kinship, language, and cultural unity within a given rural area sufficient to enhance urban social support within the migrant population. The necessity to ensure norms of reciprocity and to maintain some common cultural standards and ethnic ideals must rest on some such common social and cultural practice.

Sixth, the effective distance or travel time and cost from the rural home area to the major urban center and target of migration must be "moderate." Rural areas too near cities are suburbanized, that is, they become weekend homes for populations basically entirely dependent on the city. Rural areas very far away—for instance, over a day's travel by bus—restrict the opportunity for rural-urban contacts and visiting. Travel becomes a major expense that cannot be borne very often. Families are less able to commute and maintain two households.

The more numerous and intense are the factors identified above, the stronger rural-urban ties are likely to be and the more important it becomes to consider the city and the countryside as a single social field. In Kenya, where our data were collected, and in eastern Nigeria, where Gugler worked (1971), conditions are favorable to the development of strong ties, and rural-urban social organization is of great importance. Not all migrants maintain equally strong ties to the countryside, however. Perhaps many

urban-rural ties are maintained due to insecurity and are discarded when a secure position in the city is achieved. An alternative hypothesis is that rural-urban ties are seen as valuable in their own right and therefore will be strongest among those migrants best able to afford the relatively high cost of maintaining them. Our data suggest the latter to be true: rural-urban ties, rather than being a transitional phase for insecure migrants, actually increase in strength among individuals who are more successful in the city. In this situation, both the detribalization and the alternation models of urban life are inappropriate, and we need instead to understand the mutual relevance of city and countryside. To see this mutual relevance we now turn to the case of Nairobi.

**Nairobi: the setting** Nairobi, Kenya's capital city, has a population that grew from 250,000 to over half a million between 1960 and 1970. It is the home of about half the urban wage earners in the country and contains nearly half the urban population of the nation. Its rapid growth is primarily due to immigration from the rural areas, and the demand for urban services and amenities has far outstripped the ability of a relatively responsive and prosperous city government to supply them.

Nairobi's population overrepresents young male adults.<sup>3</sup> Less than 5 percent of the adults were born in the city and few have spent their entire adult lives there. The commitment to urban life, in the sense of permanence of residence, remains weak. This lack of permanence extends to feelings about the appropriateness of Nairobi as a place to celebrate the major thresholds in the social life cycle—birth, initiation, marriage, childbirth, and death (Ross 1975a:51-54).

Unlike migrants in West African cities, Kenyans for the most part have not committed themselves economically to permanent urban life. For example, money is almost always invested in land in the rural areas before it is spent on a house or business in the city. This strategy is explained as lower risk over a man's lifetime. Men argue, for example, that if they die, their wives can quickly spend cash that is left or lose a business through mismanagement, but they can always live on the *shamba* (farm) and plant enough to support the children. Rural holdings are also seen as safer in case of political turmoil or economic recession. One important constraint on the purchase of rural land for men working in the city is the burden placed upon them to pay school fees for their children. Education is viewed as an investment in the future and there is great pressure on parents (including pressure from children themselves) to send their children to school. A man who is able to educate a child through secondary school believes that the child will assume some, if not most, of the responsibility for the education of the man's other children as well as for his own care when he grows older. For example, a father may deliberately forego the purchase of land in order to educate a child (often a son). He hopes that once the child has a higher degree and a good job, the son will purchase the land on which his parents can live in their old age. Unfortunately, in recent years the number of individuals with high levels of education (secondary school or above) has far outstripped the demand for skilled personnel in the labor force, and the assumption that education will automatically lead to high-paying, secure jobs is in fact increasingly tenuous.

Older residents of Nairobi have less formal education than younger migrants. Many older persons are now being displaced partly because the education system is turning out better-trained workers. Many displaced workers remain in the city but time is not on their side. Ultimately most return to the rural areas for increasingly long periods of time, and if they are lucky they will gain a small income from the planting of a cash crop such as tea, pyrethrum, or coffee, in addition to occasional work.

The economic and social plans made by urban migrants depend heavily on their attachments to rural kin. Most migrant men and their families are alternatively “permanent newcomers” to cities and “perpetual returnees” to their rural home communities. This mixed rural and urban life cycle depends on the existence of complex and permanent attachments between city and country families. To describe this family context we will consider three questions: migration and rural-urban family structure, contact between urban residents and the rural areas, and social networks among migrants in the city.

**migration and rural-urban family structure** A decision to migrate to a city depends in part on how a person perceives the probability of success in finding work there as against the chances for making money in the country. We can conceptualize the entire set of people who have reasonably high perceived probabilities of success in finding jobs as a single *migrant-eligible pool*.<sup>4</sup> At any one point in time some of these will actually be in the city as successful wage earners, some will be unemployed in the city trying to find work, and others will be in the rural home area.<sup>5</sup>

Although barely 10 percent of Kenya’s population currently lives in towns or cities, a far larger proportion of the population has at some time in their lives resided or worked in a town or city. The Kariobangi-Kisa network sample provides a striking illustration of a pattern typical of most rural areas of Kenya. Of the twenty-four men in the rural-resident half of the network sample, only one man had never been employed or a resident in a town at least once. In a census of 108 rural homesteads in Kisa, 94 percent of the homestead heads had at some time been away from their rural homes and employed in town. Furthermore, when the rural and urban resident halves of the network sample are compared in terms of the number of years that the men had been away from Kisa, there is no significant difference between the two groups. Thus within the migrant-eligible pool there is a good deal of physical movement between rural and urban locations as economic conditions, opportunities, and needs shift. This physical movement indicates involvement in a common social field spanning urban and rural. The existence of this pool of migrant-eligible men is paralleled by the wives, children, and other kin of the migrant eligibles living either in towns or in the rural home areas. Some of these kin will always be in town, some always in the country, but the larger number will move back and forth between the two locations.

Identifying precisely the migration decision or even the actual act of migration for many people in Nairobi is difficult. Many young children are first exposed to the city when visiting their fathers or other relatives for a short period of time. As they grow older they may come during school vacations or in search of work. Even living with a relatively prosperous relative, a person with no savings and no source of income will wear out his welcome and have to leave the city. Depending on the cost of the trip and an individual’s perseverance, this pattern may be repeated up to a dozen times before a job is found. Migrants then begin contributing to an urban household and see their stay in the city as relatively secure. In the network sample, men had made a median of three visits for the purpose of seeking employment before work was found. Some of the men were newly arrived and still looking for their first job, and others had been in town for over a decade in the same position. Most had been back and forth between Kisa and Nairobi two or more times.

Families within the network of kin remain intact and typically maintain two households. All but two of the twenty-four urban network men in Kariobangi had a functioning rural farm and home. The survey sample data reveal the same pattern. Sixty

percent of the men and women in Shauri Moyo and Kariokor reported having rural land holdings; the married men report that half of their wives and 57 percent of their children are living in the city while the rest are in the rural areas (Ross 1975a:37, 47). Survey and network data indicate that with increasing income the tendency for the family to be separated (for example, the man, wife, and children to be living in different locations) decreases, but at the same time the tendency for the family to maintain two households increases. Increased urban income and job stability is thus associated with an increasing number of *commuter* households and a smaller number that are exclusively rural or urban.<sup>6</sup>

The presence of a wife and family in the city usually indicates that the family can afford the higher cost of having the entire family live in the city. For some, location of the family is seasonal. Many wives come to Nairobi for short stays between planting seasons, when there is relatively little farm work to be done. In some cases a united family may mean that a relative or some other person is caring for the rural farm. Finally, the presence of the nuclear family in the city can indicate a family with no rural land rights or holdings but not necessarily one which has cut its ties to rural kin.<sup>7</sup>

High turnover of commuting personnel is reflected in the complexity of household types formed in the city and country as a result of migration. The network sample illustrates some of this flexibility. The household of each of the twenty-four network migrants to Kariobangi was classified as either nuclear, two generation-expanded (nuclear plus members of the ascending generation of the husband), expanded plus joint siblings (two generation-expanded with coresident male siblings of the migrant), empty, or subnuclear (such as spouse and some children).

The first column of Table 1 shows the family type for each of the twenty-four urban network men with family members in city and country locations combined (if family members lived in both places). Six of twenty-four urban migrants had an empty rural dwelling, as shown in column 3 row 1. The remaining eighteen had rural households of varying types. Nine had a spouse and children living in the country (subnuclear); three men were home on leave, although due to return to the city (nuclear); six were expanded homesteads of varying size and complexity (rows 4 and 5). Urban households (column 2) never were expanded in form; men either lived alone or with other men in a room (subnuclear, ten cases) or had their spouses and at least some children in town with them (nuclear, fourteen cases). Country and city domestic groups and households are interrelated and their forms change frequently as members move back and forth. A census of only one setting would thus give a very distorted view of rural-urban family life.

Table 1. Percent of types of urban network families and urban and rural households for urban network sample.

	Urban Network Families (Combined)	Urban Households of Migrants	Rural Households of Migrants
1. Empty	—	—	25.0 (6)
2. Subnuclear	—	41.7 (10)	37.5 (9)
3. Nuclear	54.2 (13)	58.3 (14)	12.5 (3)
4. Two Generation	25.0 (6)	—	8.3 (2)
5. Two Generation And Joint Sibs	20.8 (5)	—	16.7 (4)
Totals	100.0 (24)	100.0 (24)	100.0 (24)

Data on network family interchange further support this view. Of the twenty-four urban network households, twenty changed their composition for lengthy periods of time (lasting at least one month) during a twelve month period of continuous observation. Similarly, the rural households of the urban migrants recorded related changes in 73 percent of the homesteads, and there even were changes in 39 percent of the rural homesteads of the matched nonmigrants. At the same time that these high rates of visiting were occurring, the *proportion* of all urban nuclear households remained relatively stable, nearly 60 percent. Frequent movement and flexibility of household composition within network families does not imply unstable rates of occurrence of household or family types for the entire network. Quite the contrary, stable overall patterns persist as the direct result of variability of urban and rural network families through time.

Our discussion of the migrant-eligible pool and the rural-urban family network assumes that similar pressures are operating on the families within these units. Thus, we expect that regardless of residence in city or country, at any one point in time most network men's families (not their households) would have similar personnel within them and would function in similar ways. Our data support this hypothesis: urban migration does not fragment families or lead to structural differences among the families of urban migrants and similar rural nonmigrants. In fact, families of urban migrants and their rural matched counterparts in the network sample have very similar kinds of family units and the rural-urban network is similar to the rural Kisa community, as is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Percentages of types of families in Kisa census, urban network, rural network, and total network samples.

	Kisa Census Families	Urban Network Families	Rural Network Families	All Network Families
Nuclear	64.1 (59)	54.2 (13)	62.5 (15)	58.3 (28)
Two Generation—Expanded	29.3 (27)	25.0 (6)	12.5 (3)	18.8 (9)
Two Generation and Joint Sibs	6.5 (6)	20.8 (5)	25.0 (6)	22.9 (11)
Totals	99.9 (92)	100.0 (24)	100.0 (24)	100.0 (48)

The major difference between the total network sample (column 4) and the Kisa rural community as a whole (column 1)—in other words, between the rural community base and the rural-urban migrant pool—is the higher percentage of expanded joint families within the network sample and somewhat lower percentage of two generation units. This condition occurs because the network men are younger (median age of thirty-four) than the rural community as a whole (thirty-nine years old). Younger men tend to live in expanded joint families since they have not inherited land as yet, while older men have more often formed independent nuclear family units of their own, and still older men have grown sons with them in their homestead.<sup>8</sup> This residential-familial pattern is characteristic of all Abaluyia families, and men in the migrant pool are equally influenced by the effects of this life cycle.

**rural-urban contact** City dwellers continue to maintain high levels of contact with their rural kin. In fact, our data suggest that these ties *increase* in strength as an individual becomes more established and successful in the city. Thus rural ties are maintained not

only as a hedge against potential failure by marginal urbanites. These ties ease the transition from rural to urban life and also allow people to live in the city without considering it home. In one survey sample pretest, each respondent was asked if he or she would like to live in another part of the country or in Nairobi for the next five years. The sample was young (average age 26.5 years) and yet only 54 percent (N = 98) said they wanted to stay in Nairobi for even five years. When asked where they would prefer to live when they grew old, only 23 percent chose the city.<sup>9</sup>

To measure the intensity of contact with the rural areas, each respondent in the Shauri Moyo-Kariokor survey sample was asked a series of questions concerning four behaviors: visiting and spending time at home, having relatives visit and spend time in the city, receiving food from the rural areas, and sending money home to support individuals in the rural areas. In addition each person was asked about land ownership outside the city. The responses, presented in Table 3, show the high levels of rural-urban interaction. Visiting in both directions is reported by four-fifths of the sample, and this figure does not include contact with rural kin who may be resident in Nairobi. The same high proportion send money to rural relatives, with 44 percent reporting they do so at least once a month. About half the sample report receiving food from rural relatives. In Nairobi this rural food indeed helps some urban dwellers to live more cheaply. It is most important, however, as a symbolic act that stresses the link between the rural family and its urban members. Finally, three-fifths of the sample report having land holdings in the rural areas. While only 20 percent of the farms are seven acres or larger, the land holdings are important bonds between the rural and urban households.

The network sample's intensive ethnographic data on rural-urban ties confirm these survey data. Visiting includes money sent to the country and food brought to town. News and information spread amazingly rapidly. Illnesses and crises in the country are known within a day without any phone use; every newcomer or returnee makes a round of visits and leaves letters, news, and gossip. Parkin's study of the Luo in Nairobi (1975b) also suggests that a high rate of circulation of personnel between rural and urban households is particularly important in keeping long-term urban dwellers informed about rural developments and opportunities.

The higher an individual's socioeconomic status, the greater the intensity of his contact with the rural areas, as is shown in Table 4. People who have the skills most essential for success in the urban community are those people who maintain their rural links most strongly. Maintenance of intense ties is positively related to a person's level of education, income, and rural land holdings.<sup>10</sup> In Nairobi, most individuals who sever their ties with the rural areas or maintain them at a low intensity appear to do so primarily because of economic necessity, rather than out of social choice. The data from the network sample also confirm these findings. Those persons with more stable, better-paying jobs and higher education were more likely to visit their rural homes, to maintain a larger and more efficient farm there, to have a better quality homestead, and to share more income with their rural families.

Rural-urban contacts are economically and socially important for migrants, although there are some burdensome and conflict-inducing aspects as well. An individual is hardly free to spend his earnings as he wishes. Obligations to relatives can lead to considerable annoyance for urban dwellers and a feeling that advancement is hardly possible. In general, however, migrants to Nairobi continue to maintain strong ties to the countryside, and the higher status urbanites are the least likely to ignore their rural, "traditional" attachments.

Table 3. Intensity of contact with the rural areas.

1. In the past year what period of time have you spent with your family at home?		
None	21%	(N = 105)
One week or less	16	(81)
One week to month	32	(157)
1-3 months	15	(73)
3-6 months	6	(31)
Over 6 months	<u>9</u>	<u>(46)</u>
	99%	(493)
2. How often did you travel home this past year?		
Never	22%	(109)
Once	29	(141)
Several times	34	(167)
Once a month	8	(41)
Once a week or more	<u>7</u>	<u>(34)</u>
	100%	(492)
3. Have relatives from home come into Nairobi and visited you in the past year?		
Yes	81%	(402)
No	<u>19</u>	<u>(94)</u>
	100%	(496)
4. About how many people came to visit you?		
0	20%	(100)
1-5	53	(257)
6-10	13	(65)
11-20	4	(21)
Over 20	<u>9</u>	<u>(46)</u>
	99%	(489)
5. Many families send food to their relatives living in Nairobi. In the past year has your family at home sent you any food?		
No	49%	(244)
Yes	<u>51</u>	<u>(252)</u>
	100%	(496)
6. (IF YES) How often did they send you food?		
Once a week or more	3%	(16)
About once a month	7	(34)
Several times during the year	34	(168)
Once	8	(38)
Never	<u>49</u>	<u>(244)</u>
	101%	(500)
7. In the past year have you sent any money to help relatives at home?		
Yes	80%	(399)
No	<u>20</u>	<u>(97)</u>
	100%	(496)
8. (IF YES) How often did you send money?		
Once a month	44%	(218)
A few times this year	31	(151)
Once this year	6	(28)
Never	<u>20</u>	<u>(97)</u>
	101%	(494)

Table 3 (cont'd)

9. Do you have a <i>shamba</i> (farm) outside of Nairobi?		
Yes	59%	(294)
No	41	(203)
	100%	(497)
10. (IF YES) How many acres is it?		
no farm	41%	(203)
1-3 arces	24	(117)
4-6 arces	15	(74)
7-10 acres	9	(47)
10-20 acres	6	(31)
Over 20 acres	5	(24)
	100%	(496)

Table 4. Contact with the rural areas by education, income, land ownership, and size of land holding.

	Correlation	Sample Size
Education	.20 <sup>†</sup>	(492)
Income	.29 <sup>†</sup>	(484)
Land Owner	.19 <sup>†</sup>	(497)
Size of Land Holding	.18 <sup>†</sup>	(494)

<sup>†</sup>Statistically significant at the .01 level.

**social networks in the city** Individuals in a city locate themselves in social as well as physical space. When a person first arrives in Nairobi, he stays with relatives from the rural areas.<sup>11</sup> After getting a job, many newcomers move into a place of their own or at least assume a share of the household expenses. Housing is scarce in the city and the City Council is the largest renter. As a result neighborhoods are more ethnically heterogeneous than in most West African cities. In Nairobi there are only a few areas in which there is a highly developed sense of community or neighborhood (Ross 1973a, 1973b). Particularly for men, intraneighborhood ties are weak and a great proportion of men's social and economic activities occur outside the confines of the neighborhood (Ross 1975a:49-51).

Individuals' social networks are more determined by ethnicity and social class than by neighborhood. Only 6 percent of the survey sample respondents said their closest friend was from a different ethnic group and a different social class (Ross 1975a:73).<sup>12</sup> Of the two principles, ethnicity is about four times more powerful than class as a predictor of friendship patterns.<sup>13</sup> Church attendance, which is very high in Nairobi generally, is based on affiliations developed within the rural areas, not urban residence. The congregations of most churches tend to be ethnically distinctive and drawn from a larger number of urban neighborhoods. For example, almost 85 percent of the survey sample reported attending church at least occasionally, but only 6 percent of them go to church in the neighborhood where they live.

The character of individual friendship networks in the city also reveals the importance of rural-urban ties to city dwellers. Interestingly, increasing education, income, and even length of residence in Nairobi are unrelated to choosing one's closest friend from one's

own ethnic group. However, when individuals are asked to name their *three* closest friends in the city, income and education are weakly related to extratribal choices. A clear tendency exists for residents of the city to select friends from outside their birthplace but within their ethnic community, as urban residents' education, income, and the proportion of their lives spent in the city increases. The selection of friends is apparently made from a broad base within their ethnic community (Ross 1975a:68-70), and urban social choices are not incompatible with the maintenance of rural ties.

Accepted patterns of reciprocity and trust are central to the continuation of the rural-urban friendship network. Clansmen are often those with whom one feels safest engaging in exchanges involving trust and scarce resources. Such social exchanges define close friendships for Nairobi migrants: assistance in finding housing, jobs, and food; carrying messages between home and the city; or watching out for goods left in town or for one's rural lands and family. Such responsibilities and obligations involving both town and a rural home can most easily be shared with fellow clansmen in the rural-urban network. A quarter of the network sample men chose another member of the same sample as their closest friend in the city. Most selected men from the same or adjacent rural locations, rather than from the same urban neighborhood. Analysis of sociometric data on intranetwork social preferences using multidimensional scaling techniques showed that: (1) the major factor predicting social proximity is subclan, maximal lineage affiliation; (2) the next most important variable is social status (education, income, years in the city); (3) rural or urban residential status is a less important variable (Weisner 1976). The maintenance of social contacts with one's kin group is nearly as important and prevalent a pattern among urban residents as it is among those living in the rural areas.

## conclusion

Rural-urban bonds in Kenya are characterized by high levels of two-way interaction between the city and the countryside. Changes in the city and its opportunity structure will have clear and immediate effects in the countryside in terms of population structure, economic resources, and probably political orientations. Our argument is that social behavior must be conceptualized as taking place in two locations within a single social field. Analyses that do not investigate the interaction between the two settings or do not see them as part of a single social field are likely to draw a number of false conclusions concerning the nature of the social change process, family structure, and the economic nature of migrant and peasant life.

The kind of rural-urban model we have presented here differs from the traditional Wirth-Redfield models or the alternation model, which have stressed the differences between social life in each location.<sup>14</sup> In part this is due to the desire of Gluckman, Mitchell, and others to view the effect of the urban environment as an independent variable. The Copperbelt of Zambia did show striking independent effects of a changing authority system as a migrant moved from his rural village to work in the mines. While quite aware of the high levels of interaction between the Copperbelt and the rural village, Gluckman considered it more productive to see city and country as analytically distinct. Thus, two different theoretical explanations of behavior could be developed: one which was appropriate for rural life and one for urban life. We are suggesting that social theory must account for behavior in both settings at the same time, partly because the migrants themselves see their behaviors in the two fields as interdependent and partly because the

patterns of interaction and psychological ties between the two areas are important factors that account for attitudinal and behavioral variations throughout Africa today.

Familial networks are important innovations arising out of the need to maintain dual residences and resource bases rather than primarily the result of modernizing knowledge and information about new forms of social organization. These rural-urban networks are neither traditional nor modern; they are innovations drawing from both rural and urban influences.

Exactly how does the nature of rural-urban ties affect still other behavior? Nelson (1976) offers a variety of hypotheses concerning the ways in which permanent migrants to the city are likely to behave differently from those she calls "sojourners." Less permanent migrants are likely to make fewer demands for urban services and are less likely to join formal organizations; they also express different types of political interest. The survey data from Nairobi show that high levels of contact with the rural areas are related to political participation and political alienation, although the specific form of the relationship depends upon ethnic group membership (Ross 1975b).<sup>15</sup> More complete investigation of the consequences of different patterns of migration is essential and ought to focus on both intersocietal and intrasocietal differences. As Cornelius argues (1971:110-112), migrants to any city are typically heterogeneous, and therefore to find a common reaction to the urban, much less rural-urban environment, is unlikely (see also Pelto and Pelto 1975).<sup>16</sup> Before specifying specific consequences then, we may need to distinguish among groups of migrants in different urban settings.<sup>17</sup>

It would be difficult to evaluate the consequences of the rural-urban network system without focusing on the household, neighborhood, and larger units for analysis. An exclusive focus on the individual obscures the structural processes at work in shaping family and community response to migration. Many of the studies we have reviewed did focus on individual responses in a bounded social and physical space, and we would question the value of relying on this analytical unit.

We hope our analysis will encourage more holistic, context-specific studies of migration in developing nations. Although we have developed the rural-urban, single social field, interdependence model as a general context, other models are no doubt also relevant. Our goal is to treat rural-urban difference as a variable, and to treat as an empirical problem the degree to which it is fruitful to see the rural and urban social settings as polar opposites.

## notes

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<sup>2</sup>Life style is not necessarily independent of other bases of social differentiation in cities, as Greer and other researchers in United States cities had at first posited (for example, see Abu-Lughod 1969; Berry and Rees 1969; Clignet and Jordan 1971). Thus, an important issue is under what specific conditions life styles and other bases of differentiation are independent.

<sup>3</sup>Our data refer primarily to the roles of male migrants and secondarily to the roles of their spouses and families. Occupational opportunities for women in Nairobi are limited compared to those for men, and in general most women come in contact with city life through their husbands. There are elite and trading women who are independent of male job seekers, but they are relatively few in number. However, women in their roles as participants in rural-urban networks are of powerful and crucial importance.

<sup>4</sup>Harris and Todaro (1970) have developed a formal model of the migration process that emphasizes the role of the family unit and both city and country sectors as well as the individual as a decision maker. Their conceptualization parallels some of the discussion here.

<sup>5</sup>Not all migration is rural-urban. Some men leave to work on large farms or to trade in livestock; others move in two or more steps from one city to another; still others have moved onto newly opened rural farm development schemes.

<sup>6</sup>This association depends on the number of children and other kin attached to rural and urban households and to availability of both rural and urban resource bases. We would generally predict that men identified as middle and upper level in terms of urban socioeconomic status would be more likely to commute and maintain city and country households.

<sup>7</sup>Kikuyu who lost land before and during the Mau Mau rebellion are frequently in this latter category, along with others whose land inheritances are too small to farm or live on. Such migrants search for land and other ways to obtain a stake in the rural community.

<sup>8</sup>Eleven men in the total network sample below the median age lived in two generation joint families; no men over the median age lived in this kind of family. In contrast, twenty men over the network median age lived in nuclear family units, compared to eight men under the median age.

<sup>9</sup>Rempel (1971) reports almost identical percentages in a much more extensive survey of over 1,000 migrants to eight Kenya towns. In his study, 23.5 percent of the men reported that they planned to remain in the city all their lives, another 35.5 percent hoped to stay until "retirement," 31 percent planned to leave within five years, and the remaining 10 percent were uncertain what their plans were.

<sup>10</sup>The correlation between social status and rural contact is higher among women than men due to high visiting rates among women. Thadani (1976) presents a detailed analysis.

<sup>11</sup>Eighty-five percent of the sample (N = 100) in one of Ross' pretests reported staying with a relative when they first arrived in Nairobi.

<sup>12</sup>Each respondent was asked, "Think of your three best friends in Nairobi. In what part of the city (housing estate) are they living? From what district do they come? Are these people you met in the city or knew before you moved here?" The districts of the major tribes in Nairobi are quite tribally homogeneous and therefore the tribe of the respondent's friends was inferred on the basis of his district of origin. In cases where the respondent reported that his closest friends were born in Nairobi, the case was dropped. This represented only 3 percent of the total of friends mentioned (41 out of 1,345). Friends were classified using a three point social status scale based on the rental levels in the housing estates where they lived.

<sup>13</sup>Forty-three percent of the closest friends are from both the same ethnic group and the same social class and only 6 percent are drawn from outside both the ethnic group and the class. Comparing class and ethnicity shows that 40 percent of the friends are from the same ethnic group, but a different social class, while only 11 percent are from a different ethnic group and the same social class (Ross 1975a:73).

<sup>14</sup>Both Cornelius (1971) and Nelson (1976) discuss the question of identifying variation in frequency of the different patterns on a comparative basis but do not offer statistical estimates of such differences.

<sup>15</sup>Among the Luo in Kenya, rural contact is positively associated with feelings of political estrangement, while among the Kikuyu contact is negatively associated with this attitude. What seems to happen is that the social structure of each group provides different participation opportunities and social support, so that among the Luo, the more estranged individuals are more likely to be politically active, while among the Kikuyu the two variables are not related (Ross 1975b).

<sup>16</sup>Furthermore, in our consideration of rural-urban linkages we have not dealt with the question of which rural dwellers are most likely to migrate to the city, as a number of authors have done (see Gugler 1969; Mitchell 1969). Younger, better-educated men are more likely to migrate, and a variety of other factors related to migration incidence are important (such as marital status, land holdings, and so forth).

<sup>17</sup>The level of societal complexity is also an important consideration, although we would predict similar rural-urban ties. Complex European settings perhaps also favor those more affluent: the poor are available to work on absentee-owned land. Although different from the rural-urban network, is this a plausible future outcome in succeeding generations?

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