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RESEARCH REPORT

ABORIGINAL MIGRATION : A SURVEY AMONGST CHERBOURG RESIDENTS.*

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Australian society offers its major rewards to people who live in cities. Whether in employment, entertainment, housing or welfare facilities, urban centres can generally offer more and better. This is a gross generalization, of course, but it must be seen as a major factor underlying rural-urban migration in Australia today. This is true whether migrants are Aborigines or Europeans - despite the fact that Aborigines generally end up in just those urban areas where the limits of the generalization can be most clearly seen.

Concentration of population in major cities continues to increase. While Rowley, (1972) found it difficult to answer the question of whether Aborigines are becoming big city dwellers at the rate of the rest of the community, it is clear that the rate of urbanization amongst Aborigines has increased sharply over the last few decades. Formerly in New South Wales, and probably in other south-eastern states, Aborigines predominantly moved into smaller urban centres (Know, 1972). Now large concentrations live in the slum areas of all state capitals, while others are spread through some suburban areas.

These people live in conditions which are not generally regarded as acceptable: there is well and long documented evidence from Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide that Aborigines suffer from inadequate housing, low paid employment, over-zealous police, inadequate social services and many other forms of discrimination. (Barwick, 1963; Smith, Biddle and Cornwell, 1966; Gale, 1970; Rowley, 1972; Gale, 1974). Presumably, movers are either ignorant of conditions (which is often assumed) or cities

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* Cherbourg, Queensland.

offer advantages which outweigh the disadvantages. This article is a report of a study at Cherbourg Settlement in Queensland, which sought the attitudinal basis of Aboriginal migrant decision-making. The material is presented particularly in the hope that secondary school teachers can use it to help with social science and geography topics dealing with urban areas, migration, rural-urban differences, discrimination and so on.

METHODOLOGY

In 1972-73, 106 residents at Cherbourg were interviewed in an age-stratified sample (10-19 years, 20-29 years and over 30 years). This sample was representative of the 550-600 people aged over 10 years. Each respondent was asked to make a rating of fourteen attributes for three locations. The three locations were their area of origin (Cherbourg), and their Most Desired Alternative (MDA) and Least Desired Alternative (LDA) from amongst five potential types of destination. Altogether six locations were rated. These were from most conservative to most innovative (Petersen, 1958) in terms of respondents' attitudes to them. The locations were - Other Reserves, Stations, Cherbourg, Small Country Towns, Large Towns and Cities. This paper is based on statistical analysis of these data. After presenting and discussing results, I will briefly outline some strategies which teachers could use to help create awareness of migration problems amongst both black and white pupils.

ATTITUDES TO MIGRATION

Respondents made clear distinctions between the different types of location which they rated. They were quite aware of the alternatives open to them and rated locations on their separate merits.

Table I shows the fourteen attributes which respondents rated. For each location, attributes are ranked according to the median scores of responses. Thus for Other Reserves, the most attractive attribute was Entertainment and least attractive was Police.

Administration, Community Participation, Freedom of Movement, Material Possession, Medical, Police and Religion all ranked much the same at Cherbourg as at other locations. With certain exceptions - relatively worse Administration and Freedom of Movement on Other Reserves and relatively better Police in Small Country Towns -

TABLE I
MEDIAN RANKINGS OF LOCATIONAL ATTRIBUTES
FOR RATED LOCATIONS

ATTRIBUTES	LOCATIONS					
	OR	S	Ch	SCT	LT	C
Administration	11	6	8=	5=	9	9
Community Participation	10	12	10	11	10	10
Education	5	10=	2	9	7	8
Employment	6	2=	8=	14	11	11
Entertainment	1	10=	13	5=	2	3
Freedom of Movement	13	4=	4	2	5	4
Friendship	9	1	1	1	1	5
Housing	8	2=	12	10	12	13
Material Possessions	7	4=	6	7	3	6
Medical	2	13	3	3	4	1
Police	14	7	14	13	14	12
Racial Prejudice	12	9	7	12	13	14
Recreation	3	14	11	8	6	2
Religion	4	8	5	4	8	7

NOTE : OR = Other Reserves, S = Stations, Ch = Cherbourg,
SCT = Small Country Towns, LT = Large Towns, C = Cities.

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these seven attributes were seen as fairly constant and were not likely to greatly affect a decision to stay at Cherbourg or move elsewhere.

Some attributes served to keep people at Cherbourg. Education ranked very well because of the attempts of the Cherbourg State School to adapt its programs to Aboriginal primary school children and to

liaise with the community. Employment was reasonable compared to locations which were otherwise more preferable. Most importantly, Friendship rated very high and Racial Prejudice was better than at other locations. Especially for older people who had had previous experience of the alternatives, Cherbourg provided a great deal of security from a hostile world.

On the other hand, Entertainment, Housing and Recreation were thought to be very bad at Cherbourg and would encourage younger people especially to move. Cities were particularly attractive for Entertainment and Recreation. This showed that there was certainly an element of truth in the much over-emphasized "bright lights" motive for migration. Yet respondents on the whole were quite aware of urban problems as the low rankings for Employment, Police, Housing and Racial Prejudice show.

In Table 2, the rankings based on median scores are shown for all attributes combined. Ratings were made by respondents on a five point scale where very good was scored as 1, and very bad was scored as 5. The median of all responses was 2.10 (QD = 0.68). Attributes with medians higher than this were better than average and those below as worse than average in the respondents overall assessment. The further away from the middle two attributes (Recreation and Entertainment), the more important an attribute was likely to be in assessing locations. The top ranking attributes again show concern for individual and family security, while the bottom ranked attributes show strong concern about rights and discrimination.

For individual locations attributes which were significantly better or worse than average were also found and used to develop a measure of place utility. This concept was developed in behavioural geography as "a measure of the attractiveness or unattractiveness of an area, relative to alternative locations". (Simmons, 1968)

The jargon and the technical procedures matter little here. What is important is that the measure provided a convenient summary of a complex set of data. Table 3 shows the results. Positive scores summarize the extent to which a location was attractive, and negative scores the extent to which a location was unattractive. Strength of feeling about a location was gauged by totalling + and - scores. Ambivalence towards a location was found by dividing the low score by the high score, with the resulting ratio ranging from an unambivalent 0 to a completely ambivalent 1.00. As a measure based on ordinal rankings it is only the relative - and not the absolute - values which are important.

TABLE 2
OVERALL IMPORTANCE OF ALL ATTRIBUTES

Attributes	Rank	Median	Quartile Deviation
Friendship	1	1.72	.65
Medical	2	1.88	.53
Education	3	1.92	.48
Freedom of Movement	4	1.95	.57
Religion	5	2.00	.49
Material Possessions	6	2.01	.44
Recreation	7	2.05	.81
Entertainment	8	2.14	1.01
Administration	9	2.16	.69
Employment	10	2.21	.93
Community Participation	11	2.22	.75
Racial Prejudice	12	2.30	.80
Housing	13	2.38	.98
Police	14	2.56	1.05

TABLE 3
PLACE UTILITIES OF RATED LOCATIONS

PLACE UTILITIES	LOCATIONS					
	OR	S	Ch	SCT	LT	C
+	2	0	125	85	36	142
-	103	0	194	0	0	96
Total	105	0	419	85	36	238
Ratio	.02	-	.43	-	-	.68

Note: OR = Other Reserves, S = Stations, Ch - Cherbourg,
SCT = Small Country Towns, LT = Large Towns, C = Cities.

Cherbourg itself aroused very ambivalent reactions. Welfare aspects ranked highly, but there was very strong criticism of other attributes. The settlement was especially unpopular amongst younger people. Other Reserves rated consistently badly, and were the most undesirable alternatives to Cherbourg. Attitudes to the other conservative choice, Stations, were very neutral. They were likely to attract some migrants interested in stock work but not to create a continual flow.

Small Country Towns were the most consistently popular and unambivalent alternative to Cherbourg, especially for the two older strata. Large Towns received a similar pattern of preferences, although a less enthusiastic one. Cities were seen as the most innovative alternative to Cherbourg. They were a very contentious location, reflecting a high degree of concern about conditions in them for Aborigines. Older people with previous urban experience were wary of cities, but the desire of younger people to leave Cherbourg and experience the outside world obviously outweighed racial problems in importance.

MIGRATION INTENTIONS

53% of respondents stated that they intended to migrate from Cherbourg. The percentage was highest amongst the 10-19 year stratum where 83% stated an intention to leave. 65% of those between 20 and 30 had such an intention but only 13% over 30 had. 66% of intending movers said they would relocate permanently (for the purpose of the study, this was defined as being over one year). Respondents in the two older strata opted for permanent outmigration to their MDA, if they sought to relocate at all. The picture for the youngest stratum was less stable, indicating that these people would for some time be part of a transient and frequently circular mobility pattern. 32% said they would remain in their MDA or LDA temporarily, and several indicated that they would go to both their MDA and their LDA. Such patterns should not be assumed to be different from similarly aged whites.

Table 4 gives the location of migration poles when an intention to migrate was stated. The 10-19 year stratum was the most innovative, with 50% intending to migrate to Cities, and with the next highest percentage intending to migrate to Large Towns. Over half of the 20-29 year olds intended to migrate to Small Country Towns. The few people over 30 showed a tendency to prefer Stations and Small Country Towns. Their response was the most conservative.

There was a close correspondence between place utility preferences and migration choice, as comparison of Tables 3 and 4 shows. Cities were strongly favoured, with ambivalence arising because this favour came mainly from the young. The young also favoured Large Towns. Small Country Towns were second overall preference, mainly being preferred by the older strata. Stations showed up better than in the place utility data - mainly because of the desire of a few for stock work - while Other Reserves rated very poorly in both measures.

TABLE 4
POLES FOR INTENDED OUT-MIGRATION

AGE STRATA	LOCATIONS							
		OR	S	SCT	LT	C	MDA	LDA
10-19	No.	0	5	4	8	17	30	4
	%	-	15	12	24	50	88	12
20-29	No.	1	3	9	1	3	16	1
	%	6	18	53	6	18	94	6
30+	No.	1	2	2	0	0	5	0
	%	20	40	40	-	-	100	-
Total	No.	2	10	15	9	20	51	5
	%	4	18	27	16	36	91	9

Note : OR = Other Reserves, S = Stations, SCT = Small Country Towns
LT= Large Towns, C = Cities, MDA = Most Desired Alternative,
LDA = Least Desired Alternative.

ACTUAL OUTMIGRATION

During a subsequent visit to Cherbourg fourteen months later, I found out from my main informant how many of the people interviewed had actually left the settlement. Only one of the 41 (2%) people in the 10-19 stratum, four of the 26 (15%) in the 20-29 stratum, and three of the 39 (8%) in the 30 and over stratum had migrated from Cherbourg.

The gap between covert attitudes and overt behaviour is not necessarily a theoretical problem. For many respondents, particularly older ones, a stated intention to leave had probably been more of a protest about Cherbourg conditions than a concrete intention. The low figure for the youngest stratum is partly explained by a tendency for pupils to remain a longer time at secondary school. While 22 of the sample were by this date old enough to have left school, many remained. They could still be expected to outmigrate in the future, and many had, in fact, made their intention conditional upon having left school. In the stratum with highest rate of outmigration, the middle group, less than a quarter of those who had stated an intention to leave had actually moved. A few transient migrants had been outside and returned in the time between the two visits, but jobs were in short supply in Southern Queensland during this period, and houses remained a perennial problem. Responses to locational attributes had shown that these people were well aware of these two problems for they had ranked low on the list. In the oldest stratum the difference between stated intention and actual outmigration was not significant.

DISCUSSION

It is clear that, taken as a group, Cherbourg residents were not ignorant of urban conditions. This was especially true of older people, for almost everyone over 20 had had previous migrant experience and everyone had friends and relatives on the move. Migrants from Cherbourg were not generally wandering waifs unaware of the evils to be inflicted upon them in a nasty world. Nor were they merely institutionalized marginal men passively reacting to a limiting institutional environment. The migrant attitudes and behaviour of Cherbourg residents were quite rational, although the rationality was bounded by imperfect knowledge of alternative destinations. The limited social environment at Cherbourg also affected the type of rationality applied to decision-making, the range of possibilities perceived and the outcomes available. Yet a central fact about migration from Queensland reserves is that migrants are active agents seeking to change their lives. Residents were only too aware of the difficulties they faced, but for movers these were outweighed by the alternative benefits of independence in environments offering infinitely greater choice than that available on a Queensland reserve.

The most likely movers were young single people not encumbered by dependents. These, however, were precisely the people to whom the generalizations of the previous paragraph were least applicable. They also were aware in general of the problems faced "outside" (an interesting inversion of the jail term, frequently used at Cherbourg), but to know employment was a problem in Brisbane was not necessarily to know how to get a job. Younger people especially lacked the particular knowledge necessary for survival and many such migrants rapidly find themselves on vagrancy charges and encouraged to return home.

Older people at Cherbourg often believed migration by the young should be opposed. This attitude was quite unrealistic, for come what may, adolescents would leave Cherbourg. Despite the worst picture which could be painted of the evils to be encountered, they believed the evils were all theirs in the world at hand. More important than the attractiveness of the city was the unattractiveness of Cherbourg. While Australian society is constructed the way it is, adolescents will continue to find Cherbourg stultifying. Some migrants will return ignominiously from their travels, others will successfully adjust. Probably the most useful preparation for movers is discussion with people who have previously travelled and who can put them on to contacts, job opportunities and housing. In the city, Aboriginal associations are the most likely source of support because they contain the very people who know most about the realities of urban existence for Aboriginals. Official services can only be peripheral to the adjustment process for most migrants.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

One other means of preparation for potential migrants is classroom activities, and I hope this article will stimulate teachers to provide more of these. Because of the different styles of teachers and because of the wide variety of classroom situations, it is only appropriate to suggest broad teaching strategies.

The most elementary use of such data is for illustration of specific syllabus topics. However, as Lippmann pointed out, factual material by itself does not necessarily improve race relations. The data and techniques could be used though to help increase sympathy with and knowledge of ethnic and racial differences (Lippmann, 1974)

Many higher level syllabi emphasize research methods. Often teachers equate research with field work, yet each classroom contains

subject material in the students themselves. Why bother with organizing transport, or why bother the Town Clerk, when you merely need sit in class and ask yourselves questions? Even in all-white classes there should be little problem in having students rate locational attributes on a scale ranging from +3 to -3, develop their own place utility measure by cumulating positive and negative scores, and compare their group reactions to those presented here. A more purely inquiry approach would be to have students list factors important to them in choosing migration destinations. The number of whites who would consider police and racial prejudice would be minimal. Apart from helping European students understand their own futures better, the contrast with Aborigines' futures could be constructive. In mixed classes the potential is obviously far greater.

However, most Aboriginal pupils are still in lower grades. Here syllabi are often less specific - which can be a considerable advantage. The scope for oral and written, individual and group work on attitudes of black and white pupils to family, employment, entertainment, recreation and police are extensive: careers counselling; discussion of which jobs in the Positions Vacant columns Aborigines will get and which Europeans will get; role playing with white landlords and black rentees; role-reversal ... no secondary teacher should have much difficulty multiplying the ideas many times over, and directing classroom activities towards finding the sort of answers which this survey showed to be necessary.

Urban planners, with their white middle-class biases, often regard Aboriginal migrants as "problems". Rightly, few Aborigines regard themselves as such, although most clearly recognize the difficulties they face. We as teachers can help in many ways to ease the adjustment process.

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