CHAPTER THREE

Key Issue One: Why do people migrate?
Humans have spread across the earth during the past 7,000 years, mainly as a result of migration.

What is migration? A permanent move to a new location.

Geographers document from where people migrate and to where they migrate and they study reasons why people migrate.

Most people migrate in search of three objectives: economic opportunity, cultural freedom, and environmental comfort.
Migration

- Who played the computer game, “The Oregon Trail?”

- What were some of the physical barriers to migration this game presented or in general?
Geographer E.G. Ravenstein wrote an outline of 11 migration “laws” that serve as the basis for contemporary geographic studies. To understand where and why migration occurs, Ravenstein’s “laws” can be organized into three groups: the reasons why migrants move, the distance they typically move, and their characteristics.
Migration

- A type of *mobility*
  - Migration is a permanent move to a new location
  - Migration = relocation diffusion
    - The spread of a characteristic through the bodily movement of people from one place to another.

- The flow of migration always involves two-way connections.
  - Emigration: migration *from* a location
  - Immigration: migration *to* a location
Migration

- The difference between the number of immigrants and the number of emigrants is the **net migration**.
  - Net in-migration: when the number of immigrants exceeds the number of emigrants.
  - Net out-migration: when the number of emigrants exceeds the number of immigrants.
Mobility is displayed in a variety of ways.

- Your trip from home to school every weekday, etc.

- These types of short-term, repetitive, or cyclical movements that recur on a regular basis (daily, weekly, monthly, or annually) are called **circulation**.

- There is also *seasonal mobility*; for example, college students who move to a dorm each fall.

*Did you know that the average American moves once every six years?*
Reasons for Migrating

- Most people migrate for economic reasons
- Cultural and environmental factors also induce migration, although not as frequently as economic factors
- Ultimately people decide to migrate because of push factors and pull factors.
  - A **push factor** induces people to move **out** of their present location.
  - A **pull factor** induces people to move **into** a new location.
Most people migrate for economic reasons.
- Job opportunities
- Natural resources
- Population growth
- United States and Canada
Cultural Push and Pull Factors

- Cultural factors can be especially compelling push factors, forcing people to emigrate from a country.

- Two main reasons:
  - Slavery or prisoners
  - Political instability/borders and wars (ethnicity)
    - Refugees: people who are forced to migrate either and can’t return home for fear
Refugees: Sources & Destinations

Major source and destination areas of both international and internal refugees. Where and why is the most refugees?
According to the United Nations, **refugees** are people who have been forced to migrate from their homes and cannot return for fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political opinion.

- 33 million refugees in need of protection or assistance in 2005 ([www.refugees.org](http://www.refugees.org))
  - 12 million forced to leave their country
  - 21 million people forced to move within their country
- Two largest groups: Palestinians and Afghans
- Internal refugees: Sudan and Colombia
Environmental Push and Pull Factors

- People also move for environmental reasons, pulled toward physically attractive regions and pushed from hazardous ones.

- Pulled to: mountains (Rocky Mountains), seasides (Florida beaches), and warm climates (Arizona)

- Pushed from: hazards (too much/too little)
  - Floodplains: the area of a river subject to flooding during a specific number of years, based on historical trends
Environmental Push and Pull Factors

Hurricane Katrina: a major natural disaster represents an environmental push factor for forced migration.
Environmental Push and Pull Factors

The Dust Bowl in the 1930s led to forced migration from the Great Plains to California and elsewhere. What were these people called?
Intervening Obstacles

- Intervening obstacles
  - Where migrants go is not always their desired destination.
    - Environmental or cultural feature that hinders migration
  - Historically, intervening obstacles = environmental
    - Had to walk, big oceans, Oregon trail, etc.
  - Transportation technology = limited environmental intervening obstacles
    - Today, we need passports/visas and politics keeps us from moving
Ravenstein’s theories made two main points about the distance that migrants travel to their new homes:

- Most migrants relocate a short distance and remain within the same country (country to city).
- Long-distance migrants to other countries head for major centers of economic activity.
Internal Migration

- Internal migration = movement within a country
- Two types:
  - Interregional migration = movement from one region to another (Midwest to the South)
  - Intraregional migration = movement within a region (Detroit to Grand Rapids)
International Migration

- International migration: permanent movement from one country to another

- Two types:
  - Voluntary (chosen - economic)
  - Forced (compelled – cultural)

- Migration transition
  - International migration is most common in countries that are in stage 2 of the demographic transition
    - Improved economic conditions
Characteristics of Migrants

- Ravenstein noted distinctive gender and family-status patterns in his migration theories:
  - Most long-distance migrants are male.
  - Most long-distance migrants are adult individuals rather than families with children.
Gender of Migrants

- Ravenstein theorized that males were more likely than females to migrate long distances to other countries.
  - Searching for work

- U.S. immigrants: during the 19th century and much of the 20th centuries.
  - About 55% were male; but the gender pattern reversed in the 1990’s, and women now constitute about 55% of U.S. immigrants.

- Mexicans who come to the United States without proper immigration documents—currently the largest group of U.S. immigrants—show similar gender changes.
From the late 1980’s males constituted 85% of the Mexican migrants, but since the 1990’s women have accounted for about half of the undocumented immigrants from Mexico.

The increased female migration to the United States partly reflects the changing role of women in Mexican society:

- Then: rural Mexican women were forced to marry at a very young age and stay in the village and take care of the children.
- Now: Mexican women are migrating to the U.S. to join husbands or brothers already here, but most are seeking jobs.
- At the same time, women also feel the increased pressure to get a job in the U.S. because of poor economic conditions in Mexico.
Family Status of Migrants

- Ravenstein also believed that most long-distance migrants were young adults seeking work, rather than children or elderly people.
  - For the most part, this pattern continues to be true.
- Recently an increasing percentage of U.S. immigrants are children—16% are under age 15—as they are coming with their mothers.
- Migration patterns from interior regions of Mexico (rural) mainly to states that border Mexico.