

PARTIAL AND TOTAL DISPLACEMENT MIGRATION
IN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

*Christine M. Rodrigue**

Migration is a highly pervasive element in American society, as in many others. It is therefore quite understandable that many people are interested in this phenomenon and that many of them have made great efforts to study it and contribute to our understanding of it. As a result of migration's wide scholarly appeal, the literature on it is enormous, so much so that the prospective student soon finds himself buried in a veritable mountain of books and studies.

The volume of this literature is not only discouraging to researchers, however. This vast amount of information is also notoriously fragmented. Authors are scattered among practically every social science. Unfortunately, most of them tend to focus their attention on some particular facet or scale of migration and do not give their readers an overview of how their particular study relates to the understanding of migration and residential movement as a whole. Very few seem to recognize that all types of human movement entailing a permanent change of residence are basically similar and still fewer have perceived and acted on the need for a theory which could unify all these many works on such human movement.

Curtis C. Roseman is one of the few people who have responded to this need. In his "Migration as a Spatial and Temporal Process," Roseman proposed a theory which classifies residential movements according to the behavioral characteristics of individual moves.¹ According to his theory, there are only two basic types of migration: partial displacement

*Ms. Rodrigue is a graduate of California State University, Northridge, and is presently a graduate student in Geography at Clark University.

migration and total displacement migration. Because these two kinds of migration are so different in terms of the information gathering and decision-making processes, Roseman suggests that they play completely different roles in the adjustment of migrants to the social situations at their destinations.

Migration is here defined as any permanent change in residence.² Permanence refers to a demonstrated intention to remain indefinitely in a new residence.³ For the purposes of this study, intention to remain is demonstrated by the act of purchasing a home.

A partial displacement migration is defined as any permanent change in residence in which one or more activity nodes is retained. An activity node is a place that is visited frequently or regularly by a person or household, such as a job location, shopping center, or recreational facility.

Conversely, total displacement migration describes any permanent residential move wherein all activity nodes are, without exception, abandoned for an entirely new assemblage of nodes.

Partial displacement migration constitutes an adjustment by a household to the general area with which it is most familiar. As such, it often serves as part of the processes of social mobility and assimilation as a household makes its dwelling place congruent with its spatial and environmental needs or self-perceived social status by moving to a more appropriate neighborhood.⁴ The ability to distinguish differences in the social environment declines as distance lowers the quality and quantity of information available to a household about a particular area.⁵ Households move relatively long distances in response to job opportunities or to the perceived environmental attributes of distant regions and then often find that they must soon make partial displacement migrations in order to make their dwelling places suit specific needs or their socio-economic status.⁷ Viewed in this way, total displacement migration does not play the same role in social mobility and

assimilation that partial displacement migration does.⁸

If Roseman's argument is viable, partial and total displacement migrants could be expected to differ in a number of respects. It is the purpose of this author, then, to examine three such variables: (1) reasons given for moving; (2) average reported annual income; and (3) the distance between origin and destination.

The first variable to be examined is the set of reasons given for moving: if partial displacement migrants are making fine adjustments in the site and situational natures of their dwelling places and total displacement migrants are moving in response to job opportunities and general environmental amenities, this difference should be reflected in the reasons given for moving.

The second variable is a comparison of the average reported annual incomes of the two groups. Those households which are able to overcome the costs of moving relatively great distances might be expected to have higher incomes than those moving shorter distances.⁹

The third variable considered is a comparison of the distances the two groups of migrants move. For any particular area, there must be some distance below which most moves are partial displacement migrations and above which most moves are total displacement migrations. That is, as distance increases, the number of activity nodes retained probably decreases until, finally, the number of nodes retained reaches zero. That point may be thought of as the distance threshold dividing the two groups of migrants.

This study focuses on migrations made into or within the San Fernando Valley. The Valley is a large area of post-World War II suburban development, located on the northwest side of Los Angeles. With a present population of approximately one and one-half million, the Valley is divided into some twenty-one towns. Due to the rapid influx of migrants since the war, these many towns have completely coalesced into a single

conurbation. It is likely that only the long-term resident can perceive the differences among all of the component communities. Many are nowadays little more than postal districts of the City of Los Angeles¹⁰ (Figure 1).

To implement these objectives, data were gathered through a telephone questionnaire submitted to 51 recent migrants into or within the San Fernando Valley. The questionnaire included a brief introductory speech and questions relating to the reasons for moving, the distance moved, the socio-economic characteristics of the migrants and, in order to differentiate the two groups of migrants, the activity nodes retained. Seven types of activity node were selected: job location, grocery stores and supermarkets, shopping centers or department stores, children's schools, churches, friends' residences, and recreation points (Figure 2).

Names and addresses of all persons buying homes in selected San Fernando Valley tax districts during the month of September, 1974, were obtained from the Los Angeles County Tax Assessor's Office. Telephone numbers were then acquired from the telephone directory distributed in March, 1975. The map in Figure 3 indicates the locations of the tax districts chosen for this study.

The sample obtained may contain a bias favoring middle income households and it excludes all those in which Spanish is the only language spoken.

There is a major distinction in terms of the first variable, reasons given for moving, between households making partial displacement migrations and those making total displacement migrations (Table 1). Almost all of those making partial displacement migrations did so for reasons relating to the site and situational characteristics of the dwelling place. Such small-scale environmental reasons include wanting to buy one's own home, wanting a larger house, and a dislike for the old neighborhood. Only 5 percent moved for job-related reasons. On the other hand, less than a third of total displacement

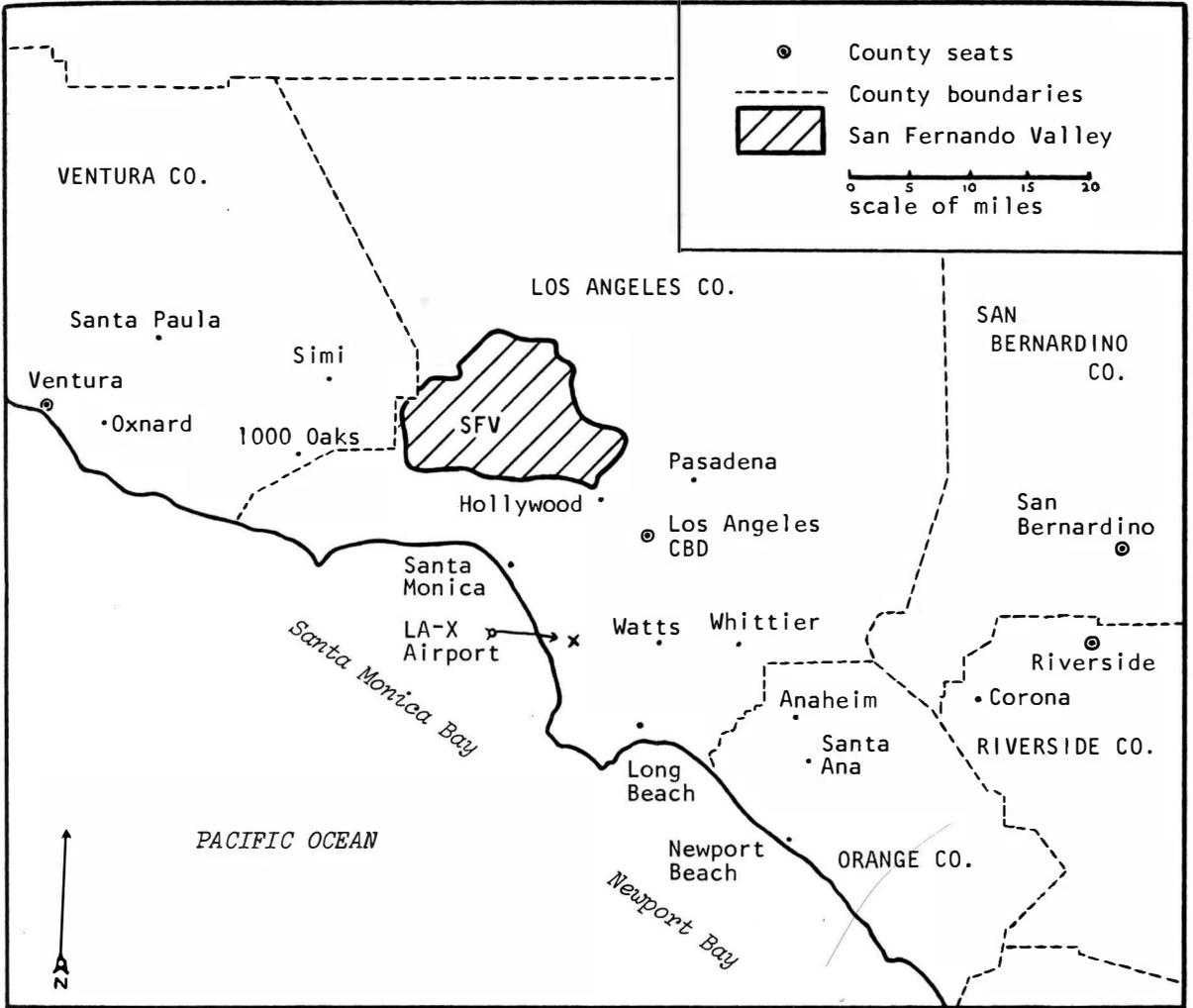


Figure 1. The San Fernando Valley in Relation to Southern California.

Introduction: "Hello, my name is Chrys Rodrigue. I'm a student at the University in Northridge and I'm doing a study for one of my classes on why people move. It would be a lot of help if you could answer a few questions for me."

- 1) Have you moved in the last year?
- 2) What were the reasons for your move?
- 3)
 - a. Where did you move from?
 - b. What are the nearest cross-streets to your previous address?
 - c. To your present address?
- 4)
 - a. Do you (or your spouse) still have the same job as you did before you moved?
 - b. Do you still shop at the same grocery stores or supermarkets?
 - c. Do you still shop at the same shopping center or department stores?
 - d. Do you have children? Do they still go to the same schools?
 - e. If you go to church regularly, do you still go to the same church?
 - f. Do you still visit friends and relatives from the old neighborhood regularly? (About how often?)
 - g. Do you still go to the same nightspots, restaurants, movie theaters, etc., as before?

(Miscellaneous comments)

- 5) What are your ages?
- 6) What is your ethnic or racial background?
- 7) Could you state your (family) yearly income within a thousand dollars?

(Miscellaneous comments)

Figure 2. Questionnaire Employed.

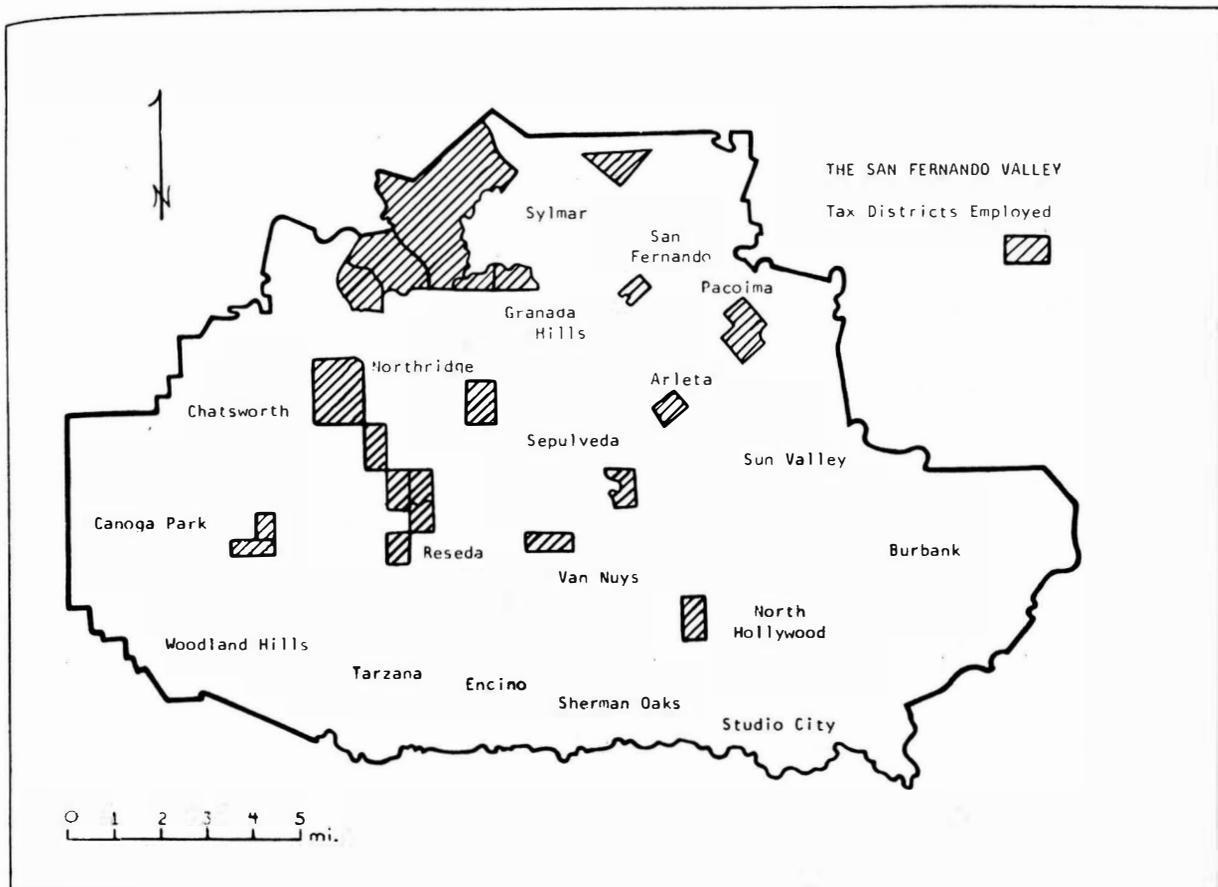


Figure 3. Location of Tax Districts Chosen.

Table I. Reasons Given for Moving.

	PD (n=37)	TD (n=14)
site and situation of dwelling place	94.59 %	28.57 %
employment/economic	5.41 %	71.43 %

migrants moved for environmental reasons. The environmental reasons were at a gross regional level, such as climate and college opportunities and, hence, are of a different nature than the highly localized reasons cited by partial displacement migrants. Some 71 percent of the total displacement migrants gave job transfers as the reason for moving.

The second variable, average reported annual income, differs significantly between the two groups of migrants. Where partial displacement migrants earned, on the average, \$17,320, total displacement migrants earned \$25,250. By employing the test designed to evaluate the difference between population means, the difference was found significant at the 0.01 level (Figure 4).

$$(x_2 - x_1) \pm 2.576 \left[s \left(\sqrt{\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}} \right) \right]$$

$$(25,250 - 17,320) \pm 2.576 (4.57)$$

$$(7,930) \pm 11.77$$

$$7,918.23 \text{ to } 7,941.77$$

0 is not included; therefore, the difference is significant at the .01 level

Figure 4. Significance of the Difference Between Average Reported Annual Incomes.

The third variable considered was the distance separating partial from total displacement migrants. In the San Fernando Valley, the distance threshold separating the two was found to lie between 45 and 50 miles. The regression of activity nodes retained reached zero between 45 and 50 miles, as can be seen from the scatter diagram in Figure 5, which

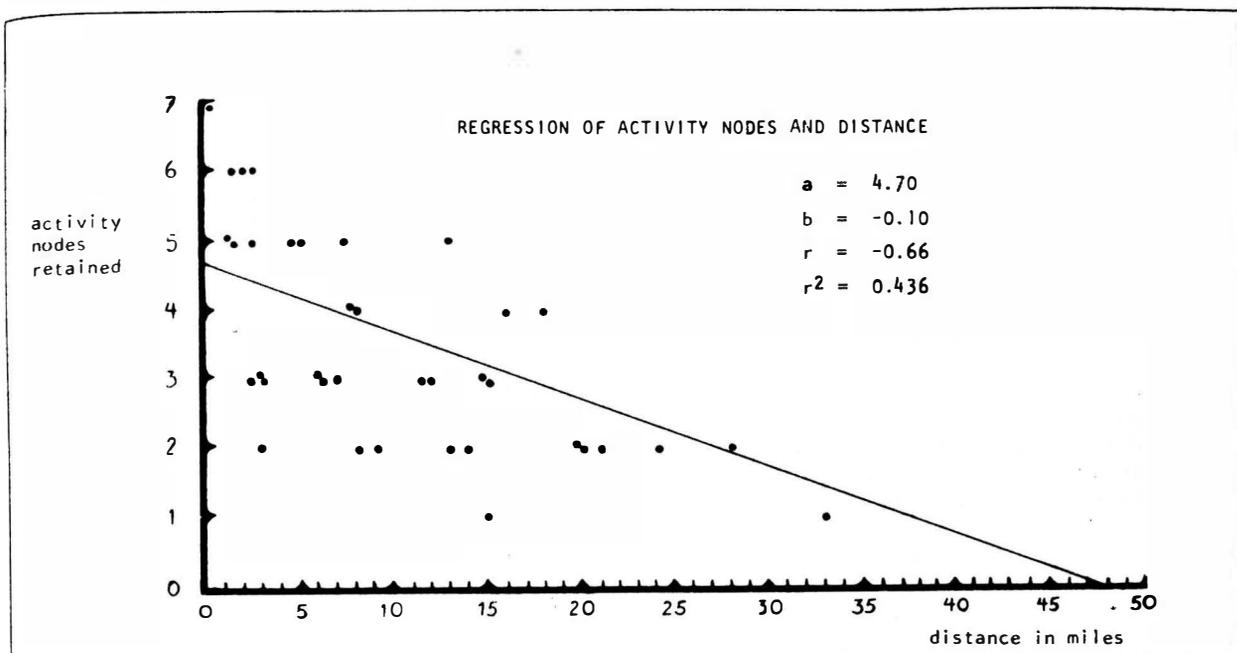


Figure 5. Regression of Activity Nodes and Distance.

plots distance of migration against the number of activity nodes retained from the previous residence.

Roseman's proposal of a dichotomy between two basic types of migration suggested that partial and total displacement migrants could be expected to differ in a number of respects. In the present paper, three characteristics that might be expected to vary significantly between the two groups were selected for investigation. It was concluded that the two groups did, indeed, differ importantly from one another in terms of the three variables considered.

This present study has demonstrated the validity of classifying migrations on the basis of activity node retention. The suggested criterion produces two distinct scales of migration which are meaningful in the context of a theory based on the behavioral processes involved in an individual act of migration.

NOTES

¹*Annals, AAG*, Vol. 61 (1971), pp. 589-98.

²Mangalam noted that change of residence is the characteristic of migration most often stressed. Following his lead, all human movement entailing "permanent" change in residence is here and in Roseman termed "migration." J. J. Mangalam, *Human Migration* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968), p. 8.

³Lee defines migration as any "permanent" or "semipermanent" change in residence in presenting his theory. However, he did not give criteria for distinguishing permanence from impermanence. Hence, in this study the author felt free to operationalize permanence in a fashion that would permit use of County Tax Assessor's property purchase data, all the while recognizing that the vast number of renting migrants would be excluded by the chosen definition of migration. E. S. Lee, "A Theory of Migration," *Demography*, Vol. 3 (1966), p. 49.

⁴Roseman, *op. cit.*, pp. 595-96.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 593-94.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 594; G. Olsson, "Distance and Human Interaction: A Migration Study," *Geografiska Annaler*, Vol. 47B (1965), pp. 24; and E. L. Ullman, "Amenities as a Factor in Regional Growth," *The Geographical Review*, Vol. 44 (1954), pp. 119-32.

⁷Roseman, *op. cit.*, p. 593.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 596; R. L. Morrill, "The Negro Ghetto: Problems and Alternatives," *The Geographical Review*, Vol. 55 (1965), pp. 339-61; and H. M. Rose, "The Development of an Urban Subsystem: The Case of the Negro Ghetto," *Annals, AAG*, Vol. 60 (1970), pp. 1-17.

⁹As per the "Rose hypothesis," i.e., that persons of higher socio-economic status tend to move greater distance. A. M. Rose, "Distance of Migration and Socio-Economic Status of Migrants," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 23 (1968), pp. 420-23.

¹⁰Except San Frenando, Burbank, and Universal City, which are independent urban entities.

The success of this researcher in utilizing purchase data available in a county tax assessor's office suggests wider use of this resource by students of migration in other contexts.