

This paper examines immigrants' socio-economic mobility in socially, historically, and culturally distinct countries. Drawing on the case of Peruvian migrants who are dispersed across the globe, it addresses how contexts of reception matter to immigrants' adaptation and settlement patterns.

Although Japan began to receive large numbers of foreign migrants only in the 1980s, Peruvian migrants in Japan share many commonalities with their counterparts in the U.S., a more traditional destination for immigrants. Generally of urban middle-class backgrounds, Peruvians migrated to these countries mostly during the 1980s and the 1990s. Although they both experience initial downward economic mobility by engaging in manual labor, over time, they tend to fare better in the U.S. than in Japan. According to the results of the survey I conducted among 86 Peruvian households in both countries, Peruvian migrants in the U.S. move into white-collar, better-paying, and stable (with benefits) occupations in higher proportions than their Japanese counterparts. They are also more likely to own businesses in the U.S. than in Japan. This is so despite the fact that Peruvians in Japan receive preferential hiring practices and legal privilege as Japanese descendants (automatic entitlement to work visas and advantage in obtaining permanent residency). Regardless of their length of stay and legal status, Peruvian migrants in Japan largely remain confined to unstable manual jobs, in comparison to the U.S. where a higher percentage of them move into better working conditions over time. Who makes it in America and how? And why not in Japan?

Generally, there are two ways for immigrants to make it—through independent entrepreneurship or by way of professional and educational achievement. Both are important, and in particular, higher education obtained in the U.S. provides a key to

upward economic mobility for Peruvian migrants. In Japan, however, the primary mechanism of upward economic mobility is limited to independent entrepreneurship. Having a less diversified immigrant labor market and relatively limited opportunities for immigrant entrepreneurship, Peruvian migrants in Japan lag behind their U.S. counterparts in attaining economic and occupational success. To explain this difference, the paper examines in detail the immigration policies, business practices, the racial/ethnic hierarchies, practices of discrimination, and hiring practices comparatively.

A recent country of immigration, Japan has not yet successfully incorporated foreign migrants into the mainstream. Japan is not alone, however. Cross-national comparisons have shown that other relatively recent countries of immigration, such as the U.K., also lag behind the U.S. in providing immigrants with successful economic opportunities. Contexts of reception are important in explaining different patterns of immigrant adaptation, which, in turn, may shape immigrants' further migratory patterns and future aspirations. As a possible manifestation of this, growing numbers of Peruvians re-migrate, and aspire to re-migrate, from Japan to the U.S., using Japan as a stepping stone to enter the U.S.