Costa Rica: An Emigration Anomaly

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Introduction

Migration Rates for Central America

Source: CIA World Factbook Online
Why is the migration trend in Costa Rica at odds with the rest of Central America?
Excessive emigration can cause problems with development
  - Workforce Strain
  - Brain Drain
  - Remittances
Costa Rica could offer solutions to developing country emigration problems
Literature Review

- Political
  - Push: Civil War, oppressive regimes
  - Pull: More perceived political freedom, different form of government

- Economic
  - Push: Unliveable wages, large class gaps, lack of job opportunities
  - Pull: Perceived sense of economic mobility, better wages

- Social
  - Harder to separate, education system, health care system
  - Cumulative Migration Theory

*Combination of all three*
Political Motivators

Push
- Civil War
  - Costa Rica had no Civil War in the 1980s
  - Interview: “[tenemos] un ejército que cause guerras” (*we had an army that caused wars*)
- No oppressive regimes
- Drug traffickers
  - Interview: “Que los narcotraficantes nos usen como puente para llevar drogas a América del Norte o Europa.” (*The fact that drug traffickers use us as a bridge to carry drugs to North America and Europe*)

Pull
- Primary receiving countries are US and Spain
Economic

GDP Purchasing Power Parity per capita

Source: UN Human Development Indicators and CIA World Factbook Online
Economic Cont

- Push
  - Roughly $11,000.00 GDP PPP
  - Economic Prosperity
  - Poverty and class separation does exist

- Pull
  - Big cause of emigration in the rest of Central America
  - One interviewee had family that emigrated due to better economic options abroad
Social: Education

Percent GDP spent of Education Annually

Source: UN Human Development Indicators
Social: Education Cont

- More annually spent on education than US (CR: 6.3% US: 5.5%)
- Interview: “es el mejor a nivel de centro america” (it is the best of its kind in Central America)
- Free and mandatory until 15
- Public University better than Private
- However, still emigration due to post-graduate scholarships and awards
Social: Health Care

Percent of GDP spent on Public Health Care

Source: UN Human Development Indicators
Social: Health Care cont

- Not the best
- Interview when asked about access to public health care: “No lo suficiente, pero si hay acceso,” (not sufficient, but there is access)
- My medical emergency
- Only one mentioned emigrant due to health care
  - “alguna enfermedad extraña “ (a rare illness)
Social: Cumulative Migration Theory And Natural Disasters

- Migration due to perceived sense of community in host nation
  - Cubans in Miami
- Costa Ricans don’t really emigrate, therefore no real migration pattern that results in a sense of community in host nation
- Many interviewees mentioned Natural Disaster as a potential motivator
Conclusion

- Mix of socio-economic reasons for lack of emigration.

- Also no emigration because there was no 1980’s Civil War
Further Implications

- Develop most post-graduate work
- Develop more natural disaster response networks
  - Including other developing countries
- Peaceful political development and changes of power are key to prevent emigration.