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Abstract:

The Oxford Mobility Survey of 1972 is used to examine the relation, (i) area characteristics (size and class composition of town, economic disparities between regions), (ii) propensity to migrate (both short and long distances), (iii) family background, (iv) educational, occupational and income attainment, and (v) patterns of friendships (as revealed by most spare time associates). The research links the preoccupations of the social geographer about unequal development and migratory behaviour with those of the sociologist about the mechanisms by which social inequalities are transmitted between generations.

The superiority of the South East region (of England) is clearly evidenced, and net migration flows follow desirability characteristics of areas. Propensity to migrate rises sharply with increasing education, and varies with work, role and social class. The residual attainment of middle-aged men who, in their work life, relocated across county boundaries is shown to be distinctly superior to that of stayers. The relative influence of fathers and mothers on stayers and migrants suggests that the former transmit exclusive goods, the latter inclusive ones. Living in heavily working class towns seems deleterious to social fluidity. Non-academic qualifications are less portable than academic ones, and hyper-selection is in evidence for men of working class origins who pursue academic studies after starting to work. Structural and psychological explanations are formulated to account for observed regularities.

The analysis also demonstrates that associational patterns are sensitive to migratory experience and that homophily decreases with increasing length of residence in place of destination. Working class migrants have more white collar spare time associates and, generally, vote less solidly Labour than stayers. Though social mobility interacts with political preference and choice of friends, controlling for the former suggests that migration promotes societal integration and may be a valuable index of structural change. Cross tabulation, multiple regression, log-linear analysis, multi-dimensional scaling and canonical regression techniques are used, as appropriate.