

European Sociological Review, Vol. 13 No. 1, 55-77

Socio-economic Attainment, Regional Disparities, and Internal Migration

By Guy L. Coté

Abstract:

Despite many refinements, the now classic analytical approach of Blau and Duncan (1967) to the study of stratification has not succeeded in explaining why indices of social fluidity seem to display such remarkable constancy over time and across societies, or why massive educational reforms during the post-war period have had so little impact on the reduction of inequalities. Consequently, emphasis has to some extent shifted, during the 1980s, towards other approaches likely to yield fresh insights into these problems. This paper's contribution to the subject is to present evidence, using the 1973 Oxford Mobility Survey, that regional disparities and work-life internal migration are both significantly associated with the manner in which people transform their social background into socio-economic attainment, and that psychological and structural explanations are compatible with observed regularities. The paper is part of a larger study (Coté, 1983a) which uses the dimension of geography to study stratification processes. Methodologically, it highlights the use of residual estimation techniques to overcome under-identification problems when examining the effects of migration and regional disparities on socio-economic attainment.

Biographical note:

Guy L. Coté died in the Fall of 1994, at the age of 69. He first attended Oxford University after World War II as a Canadian Rhodes Scholar in Chemistry but he then turned to a long and distinguished career as a film maker. At age 55, he returned to Oxford in order to complete first an M.Phil., and then a D. Phil. in Sociology. He studied geographical and social mobility with great distinction, and the paper published here is representative of this effort. The final editing of the manuscript was done by John Goldthorpe and Paul Bernard, from a version the author had produced for the April 1987 meeting, in Nuremberg, of the Research Committee on Stratification of the International Sociological Association.