

# The Temporal and Social Embeddedness of Migration: A Methodological Exploration Using Biographical Analysis

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*There has been much criticism of studies of migration as time specific event, but few attempts to provide alternative schemas for interpreting the migration process. The paper seeks therefore to make a methodological contribution by outlining a socio-temporal framework for migration analysis. The value of the schema is illustrated using biographical research amongst migrants in and to rural Scotland.*

*Keywords: Internal migration, childhood, rural space, embeddedness, biographical methods, Scotland, rural.*

In terms of migration research, the recent shift in the ontological and epistemological stance of the sub-discipline of human geography, has meant a reduction in the emphasis given to migration as an event specific to one point in time (White and Jackson, 1995; Findlay and Li, 1999). Both international and internal migration have increasingly been interpreted in terms of the temporal and social embeddedness of human decisions. This methodological shift brings with it a new challenge to population geographers: namely, how can we best conceptualize the new understandings which have been achieved of how migration as a process changes both 'places' and 'people'? To achieve this, new frameworks need to be identified which are suitable for interpreting how the socio-temporal and cultural contexts, in which the lifecourses of individual migrants are immersed, impact on places through social practices such as migration.

The general contribution which this paper makes is in providing a more elaborate framework for systematizing our understanding of how people interpret their migration actions. The empirical context of the paper is migration to the Scottish countryside, but our emphasis is not empirical but rather methodological. The model which we present emphasizes in particular the temporal and social embeddedness of migration decisions, and specifies constructs and processes which mediate between past experiences and present decisions, as well as between the individual and society.

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The approach taken is to start by exploring the academic literature relating to methods of researching the socio-temporal context of migration processes. We then briefly explore the goals of those researchers adopting this approach. The paper then presents a general model of these influences which has been developed by the researchers as a result of their empirical research, before turning to illustrate the relevance of the model using material collected by the authors from interviews with migrants to rural Scotland. The two specific objectives of the paper are to:

- develop a systematic framework for interpreting temporally and socially embedded migration decisions;
- apply the biographical approach to the study of internal migration, within and to the Scottish countryside.

## THE BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH TO MIGRATION RESEARCH

An individual's decision to migrate is situated in his/her entire biography, and is made in the context of the individual migrant's past, present and projected future. Any migration decision is unavoidably an expression of a person's self (Fielding, 1992) which has been shaped by the totality of the person's life history. A residential move can therefore be influenced by experiences which long predated the move, rather than just by the needs and circumstances of the migrant at the moment of deciding to move. Psychoanalysts and psychologists who emphasize the role of biological instincts and genetic constitution in the formation of the 'self' may argue that the motivational basis of human behavior has its source as far back in time as before birth (Pile, 1993). While acknowledging that this may affect a migration decision, most of the academic literature concerned with these issues focuses on the analysis of environmental and social influences on migration, mediated through the 'longitudinal integrity' (Harre and Gillett, 1994) of the 'thinking self' as expressed in individual biographies. To follow this perspective, therefore, may be described as adopting a biographical approach to research (Bertaux and Kohli, 1984; Cotterill and Letherby, 1993; Humphrey, 1993; Miles and Crush, 1993; Vansemb, 1995; Lawson, 1999, 2000).

Since individuals live amongst other people, biographies are necessarily socially embedded and as a result are structured to some extent by the economic and cultural environments in which they are located. Erben (1993:23) argues that 'it is biography that attempts to render the illusive self as the allusive self, in its intriguing spirally journey between the unique experience of the individual and the general experience of groups'. The choices people make throughout their life courses, including their choices to migrate or not to migrate, are therefore often socially referenced and involve their understanding of social norms and cultural practices (Evans, 1993). Choices of residential location are particularly susceptible to influences of generalized perception of places, such as the influence of the social representation of the countryside on rural migration (Halfacree, 1994).

The social embeddedness of biographies raises the issue of the relationship between the individual and society. Giddens' (1984) structuration theory provides a useful framework for interpreting the relationship between agency and structure, a relationship, which he describes as a duality. This is conceptualized as the structural properties (rules and resources) of social systems being 'both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems' (Giddens, 1979:69). According to Sayer (1983:109), the theory of structuration has avoided 'the twin errors of voluntarism (actors act independently of constraints) and structuralist determinism (the conditions do the acting)'. Individual actions and decisions (including migration decisions) thus draw on, but are not strictly determined by, social rules and resources. However, people's knowledge of the conditions of their actions is 'bounded' (Livesay, 1989), as suggested by Giddens' (1984) concept of 'practical consciousness'. This refers to the taken for granted, unacknowledged interpretations of social conditions drawn upon by individuals in their everyday activities. Though usually unacknowledged, practical consciousness is not inaccessible. In this sense it is quite different from 'the unconscious'. Important though the concept of the unconscious may be (Pile, 1993) (both within a structuralist perspective and from a psychoanalytic position), it lies beyond the remit of our current investigative framework.

Our methodological position therefore rests not only on the paramount importance accorded to people's 'conscious' expressions of the meaning of migration, but also on those aspects of consciousness which affect actions in a less-than-discursive, subconscious manner. As far as migration research is concerned, the methodological challenge is how to unveil these usually unacknowledged conditions of migration decisions. Findlay and Li (1997) have argued that it is possible to bring practical consciousness into the discursive level by conducting intensive interviews which ask migrants to talk 'around' the subject.

The biographical approach may have been increasingly deployed by migration researchers, but this raises the question as to what the goals of this approach have been amongst those using it. Perhaps, the most common goal has been to identify the unacknowledged conditions relating to migration actions. By talking to people about various aspects of their lives, which may or may not appear to be directly related to their moves, Li and Findlay (1996) have illustrated, for example, the multiple layers of social discourse which inform people's imaginings of their self-identity and of the implications of mobility for identity change (Findlay and Li, 1997). The politics of identity change has been a particularly popular research venue in recent years (Cresswell, 1999; Elmhirst, 1999). Others have used the approach to reveal the dynamics of particular processes such as the gendering or radicalization of migration (Teshfahoney, 1998; Willis and Yeoh, 2000). As McKendrick (1999) has argued, it is often necessary to use qualitative approaches not only to reveal the nuances of complex migration processes but also to raise new questions for later quantitative work.

The principal purpose of our application of the biographical approach in this paper is to develop a framework for understanding the temporal and social embeddedness

of migration as a first step in tracing from the tapestry of people's life histories the threads of influence which have informed their migration decisions. Of course for many researchers the search for frameworks and generalizations is not important. They have adopted the biographical approach because of their interest in the particular context or situation of their migration study (Li et al., 1995; Ogden, 2000; Silvey and Lawson, 2000) and have found the greatest value of this perspective to be in its ability to highlight difference whether this be located in 'place', 'politics' or 'culture'. This is not out of purpose here, although the significance of rural Scotland as the site of our engagement is something that we would acknowledge as being important in affecting the interpretations achieved by our study. While acknowledging the value of celebrating difference, we would nevertheless assert the ongoing worth of research oriented towards identifying commonalities and would argue that population geographers need to pay more heed to how generalizations can be achieved based on qualitative research. The attempt to systematize and to generalize seems sadly to have been lost amongst many of the recent advocates of a re-theorized population geography (Graham and Boyle, 2001). Our study contributes to the case made by McKendrick (1999:45) that geographers should abandon essentialist views of the relation between specific methodologies and epistemologies (Sayer, 1992). The material which follows upholds the view that epistemology should inform rather than preclude methodological strategy. In this paper we would therefore affirm the value of our structurationist approach (Giddens, 1984), worked through using biographical methods in informing a more systematic understanding of the general influences bearing on migration to rural Scotland.

## RURAL MIGRATION

Any study of migration to rural areas is undertaken against the backdrop of an abundant academic literature (Champion, 1989; Champion et al., 1998). The 'population turnaround' experienced by the countryside since the late 1960s represents a switch from the earlier pattern of net population decline as a result of rural people moving to cities, to a pattern of net population growth as a result of in-migration from cities (Halliday and Coombes, 1995). Most (but far from all) studies of migration to rural areas (like migration studies more generally) have legitimated their analysis through reference to categories of migrants and migrant motivations derived from some form of numerical or statistical analysis of census or survey data. Categorization of migration in this way is not a neutral act. One of the consequences of the categorization procedure is that inevitably it separates the migration act from its wider context as explanations are sought for population movements in terms of predefined 'causal' categories such as 'quality of life' (Williams and Jobes, 1990) or 'rural employment growth' (Cloke, 1985).

The outcome of conventional quantitative survey methods has been to establish a bewildering list of 'explanations of counterurbanization (Champion, 1989:236)

that might lead one to conclude that 'counter-urbanisation' as a label is no more than a chaotic conception (Sayer, 1992). The complexity of the counterurbanisation process has been one argument used for adopting the biographical approach. Rather than losing the wider picture, as tends to happen when dominant reasons from migration are solicited, Halfacree (1994:165) stresses the need to use methods that 'recognize the variety of both spatial scales and experiential environments that may be involved in any one act of migration' (see also Halfacree, 2001). By allowing migrants to reveal the multiple considerations influencing their moves, he argues that the key identifying feature of migrants to rural areas is their shared actions powered by their (potentially diverse) imaginings of the meaning of migration to rural places. This perspective puts interpretation of the interweaving roles of structure and human agency as central on the research agenda since it is these forces which mold the intentions to live in a rural environment which therefore become crucial to an understanding of migration to rural areas.

While migration research has paid some attention to the social embeddedness of residential moves, it appears that little work has considered how the decision to live in the countryside is embedded in people's life histories. There have of course been a number of studies outside the context of rural research which point to the importance of migration history to subsequent migration behavior (Bailey, 1989; Bailey, 1993), while in a rural context previous research has indicated that childhood experiences, including both direct experience of living in or travelling to different environments and indirect experience through reading stories set in the countryside, can influence perception of rurality in adulthood (Harrison et al., 1986; Squire, 1993). What remains unknown is whether these earlier experiences, through influencing a person's perception of places, can shape later migration decisions. We would argue for using a biographical approach in tackling this issue.

## METHOD

Our biographical study was based on people's personal accounts of their life experiences. In-depth interviews were conducted as part of a larger project undertaken in 1997 involving a questionnaire survey of nearly 700 households from six different areas in rural Scotland. The interviews, which form the empirical basis of the paper, were undertaken with a sample of respondents who had indicated in the returned questionnaires their consent to participate in follow-up interviews. Our objective was to select a typical group of migrants to the Scottish countryside based on the migrant typology developed in an earlier phase of the research project (Stockdale et al., 2000). Most of the interviews were carried out with the individuals who had completed the questionnaire for their households, but in a small number of instances the respondents' spouse also made substantial contributions to the discussion. The sample consisted of 38 persons (15 male and 23 female). Their ages ranged from 21 to 82, with the majority of the participants aged between 35 and 49 years old. A

variety of family structures were included: never married, married (and remarried), divorced and widowed. Half of the households were made up of two generations, about 40 percent having school-aged or younger children. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted one to two hours. They covered several major topics (including migration history and experience of rural life, influences on migration decisions, impact of moves on the interviewees and their families, and on their local community, and perception of the effects of in-migration). A parallel study carried out by the authors in the English countryside also included a series of in-depth interviews (Findlay et al., 1999). Material from the interviews in this parallel survey is not used in this paper, but the issues raised in the parallel study suggested that the Scottish case was far from unique and that generalizations could safely be made well beyond the context of the immediate study sites in Scotland.

The interviews were taped and subsequently transcribed. Informed by the qualitative analytical methods advocated by other researchers (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), our analysis of the transcripts involved a cyclical process of reading the texts, interpreting and abstracting themes, coding and further organization of themes, further interpretations and eventually the formulation of the model. While taking the interview transcripts as the primary research materials reflecting how people make sense of and represent their life experiences (including migration), our analysis inevitably involves the 'double hermeneutic' (Sayer, 1992:35) of our interpretation of the interpretations expressed by the interviewees. Recognizing that the process of knowledge production is problematic in itself, we acknowledge that our interpretation is only one of many possible ways of making sense of the interview materials.

Our analysis considers influences on migration decisions at not only the discursive but also the subconscious level ('practical consciousness'). In doing so, it raises these questions: Is 'practical consciousness' a useful concept to understand how people lead their lives? Has our research process managed to tap some aspects of practical consciousness, which may have a bearing on migration? A positive answer to the first question is epitomized in the following interview excerpts:

It's very difficult actually to answer these questions in depth because they're not things I ask myself normally. I don't think about living. I just live. (Mackay<sup>1</sup>)

I don't consciously reflect on it but no doubt it shaped and molded me as a person. (Douglas)

The above quotations highlight the fact that in our research experience and that of other researchers (Cotterill and Letherby, 1993), in-depth interviews which examine people's life histories and identities can often encourage participants to consider issues which they do not usually think about. Respondents reacted positively to the research strategy, in the sense that while acknowledging that they 'did not think about living', the difficulty of reflecting on taken for granted values was more than compensated by the recognized worth of considering the influences which 'mold'

people. Thus our experience was that the interviewees cooperated with the interview strategy which created a situation that deviated from their daily routines and required them to reflect on aspects of their lives in which they are normally unreflexively immersed. In Giddens' (1984:5) terms the approach opened up discussion of the 'unacknowledged conditions' of action. It helps overcome the paradox identified by Halfacree (1994) whereby migrants offer diverse discursive rationalizations of their actions while at the same time identifying common values in terms of features elicited from their practical consciousness.

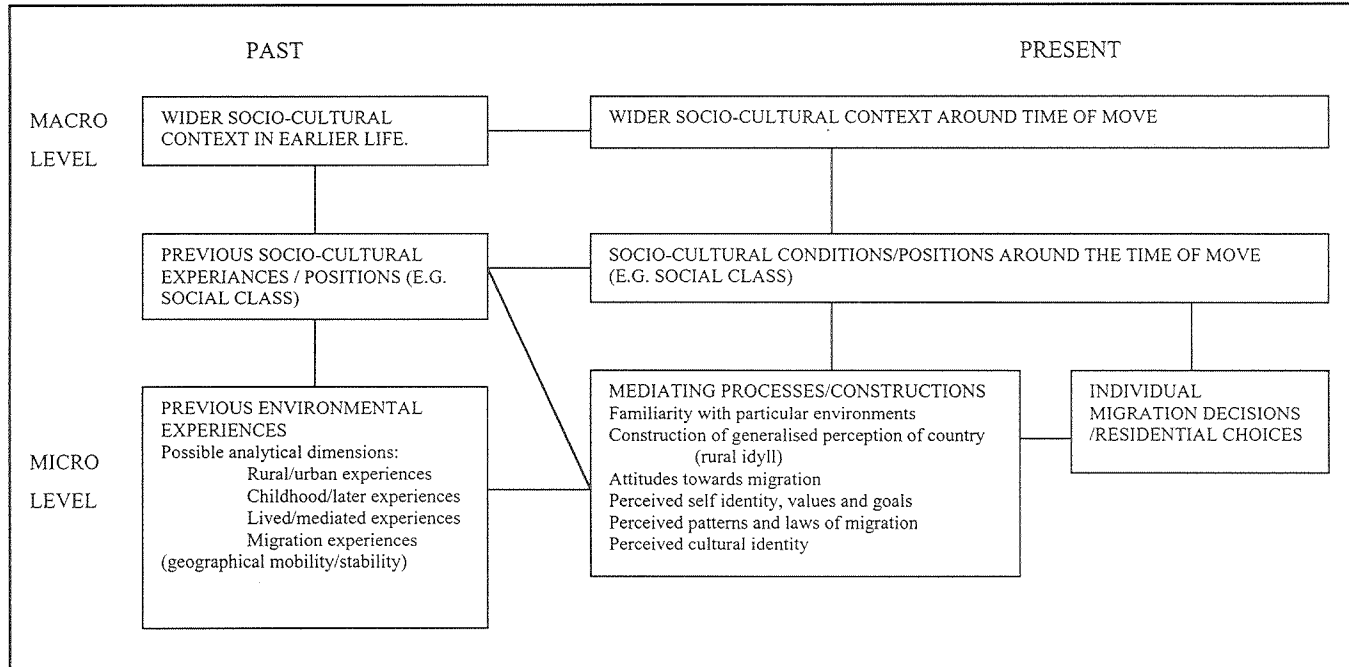
Critics might challenge that the interviewees' narratives could have been determined by our research agenda. We believe, however, that the interview accounts were not rigidly directed by our pre-conceived ideas. While our presence and our interview questions influenced the interviewee's line of thought, their responses often opened up unexpected new avenues for exploration. The construction of biographies, therefore, involved a process of negotiation in which usually hidden meanings and influences on behavior were continuously defined and re-defined.

#### A MODEL OF TEMPORAL AND SOCIAL EMBEDDEDNESS OF MIGRATION DECISIONS

Having explained our methods we now present the 'model' or framework that emerged from our interpretation of the interview materials. We then proceed to provide evidence in the last part of the paper to support the 'model'. Use of the term 'model' may be reminiscent of the behavioral approach to migration taken by some population geographers in the past, but use of the term is not intended to imply a deterministic or probabilistic approach to the topic. Rather the 'model' that is being sought here can be viewed instead as an illustrative representation of the kinds of processes uncovered by biographical inquiry. What is therefore intended is to establish a schematic framework allowing generalities relating to migration to be discussed.

Figure 1 presents the general analytical framework derived from our research. Although temporal and social embeddedness can be conceptualized as two different constructs, by considering these two aspects of embeddedness in the same model, we wish to highlight that a person's life history is constructed through the interaction of the individual with society over time. Taking up Halfacree and Boyle's (1993) suggestion that the migration decision is subject to the influence of 'multiple currents', Figure 1 attempts to specify some of the currents which may be involved. Space does not allow us to take into account all the possible influences on migration decisions (such as biological pre-disposition/constraints). Within the framework, we are particularly interested in illustrating how previous experiences have an impact on later intentions to move. Our transcripts also provided material to illustrate the influence of socio-cultural positions on migration and the importance of the wider cultural

Figure 1: The temporal and social embeddedness of migration.





context of migration decisions. Space does not permit elaboration of this aspect of the model in this paper. Given the attention directed to socio-cultural issues by Li et al. (1995), it seems appropriate to privilege here discussion of those aspects of the model which have not previously been the focus of research interest, namely the temporal embeddedness of migration decisions. This remark needs however to be set against the recognition that temporal embeddedness is in some ways the stretching over time of social embeddedness. This is not to say that historically specific events such as the demographic structure associated with being born during a baby boom cannot also have long-term implications for the migration of an individual over his or her lifecourse (Pandit, 1997; Plane and Rogerson, 1991).

The position adopted is a critical realist one (Sayer, 1992). In relation to the proposed framework (Figure 1), this affirms the reality of the various dimensions of lived experiences and structural elements subsumed in the model, but at the same time, also emphasizes the fundamental role of the hermeneutic act in accessing reality. To that extent, what has been accessed by the research is the interpreted past and present of the interviewees, rather than the objective events or structures which a naive realist position would assume. Thus the various influences listed in the model are to be understood as the current 'sense-making effort' of the interviewees in the context of the research process. There is clearly scope for further development of the model as for example in the exploration of how the 'past' and so-called 'present' positions of the interviewees interweave with their expressed future intentions concerning migration.

Figure 1 identifies four different dimensions of previous experiences (rural/urban, childhood/later, lived/mediated, and migration experiences). Each of these four dimensions was linked by the interviewees to their subsequent migration actions and various combinations of these interpretative threads can be used to describe the diversity of their residential histories. For example, some people had direct childhood and adult experience of living in the same rural area for many years with little geographical mobility; some were born and educated in rural areas, moved away and lived largely in urban areas later in life and then recently moved back to their home areas; others were brought up in urban areas but had learned about country life indirectly through, for example, reading, and then moved to a rural setting later in life. This corroborates research by Fava and Desena (1988). These earlier experiences impinged on later residential choices via the mediating processes or constructs suggested in Figure 1. These constructs are labelled as 'mediating' because they are elements of an individual's consciousness through which the impact of society and past experiences on present actions is channelled. Although they will be discussed one by one in later sections of this paper, these constructs are not mutually exclusive but are often implicated in one another. While our discussion will focus on the link between earlier experiences and later migration decisions, we are not suggesting that immediate social conditions are unimportant. Some interviewees described their migration decisions as 'not premeditated' and as being triggered mainly by circumstances around the time of the move. However, we believe that in order to fully understand migration intentions

and decisions, it is necessary to consider the influences of earlier life events. Even supposedly 'impromptu' decisions to move may be underpinned by reasons which reflect the migrants' (self) perceptions and identities, which are shaped by the totality of their life experiences.

Figure 1 recognizes the embeddedness of actions at the individual micro-level in higher level social processes and structures. The model assumes that an individual's life reflects the wider socio-cultural context of her/his epoch. People's previous environmental experiences (or their constructions of such experiences) are part and parcel of their subsequent socio-cultural experiences and are closely linked to their social positions. The mediating processes/constructs suggested in Figure 1 are theorized to be influenced by both past and current social conditions/positions (e.g., social class). Present socio-cultural conditions/positions can affect migration decisions by influencing perceptions, beliefs and identities etc. (labelled as mediating processes/constructs in the model) which underlie the decision to move or not to move. At the same time, these conditions/positions constitute 'real' resources for, and constraints on, such decisions (e.g., the availability or otherwise of monetary resources associated with a person's social class). Social conditions/positions or the wider socio-cultural context (and their meanings) may change over time but as the past is constitutive of the present, the dialectic of individual/society is interwoven with the dimension of time.

Having presented the model, we now turn to illustrate the empirical validity of the schema outlined in Figure 1. Drawing on the interviewees' accounts of their life histories, the next part of the paper briefly examines some of these issues by considering examples of the 'multiple currents' impinging on residential decisions. In order to achieve this we have selected quotes from a large number of different biographies, thus sacrificing the longitudinal richness of individual biographies in order to provide the reader with an account that is ordered in a fashion that matches the logical sequence of Figure 1. We start with interview material which illustrates the top right hand box of Figure 1 (i.e., how people's perceptions of their former socio-cultural context influenced their understanding of migration).

## THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXTS ON MIGRATION INTENTIONS

Interviewees often interpreted their migration decisions as being set in the wider social contexts of their former lives. The migration in which they had participated was represented as a general 'social' force. Thus for example, Pollock commented:

It seemed to be all of a sudden people wanted to move into the country. And they were prepared to pay much more money than a house can be mortgaged for, what's in bricks and mortar. There seems to be a perceptive value of being in the country and having a bit of a ground....

It seemed to be what people were looking for at the time. I don't know if they still are. (Pollock)

Pollock therefore illustrates the recursive relation between social structure and agency implicit in Giddens view of structuration. Counterurban flows were often seen as associated with more than just the immediate movement of property values and were located by interviewees in relation to wider social discourses. As Pollock notes, there was a 'perceptive value of being in the countryside', and this social construction produced practices that affected the structure of house prices such that:

We found that every time we were making a bid for a property we were beaten by thousands of pounds, way over the worth of the property.... (Pollock)

While traditional models of urban to rural migration might focus on house price differentials as an explanation of some aspects of rural in-migration, Pollock and other interviewees explained, therefore, that the collective behavior in which they were entrained went beyond this. The popular belief about the 'perceptive value' of country living alluded to by the interviewees not only contributed to the decision to migrate, but it also contributed to the need to bid higher for rural properties in order to succeed in gaining access to certain types of rural homes, and in so doing played a part in structuring rural house prices with all the implications that this has for the nature of rural geographies (Cloke et al., 1994).

As argued by Bunce (1994:206), the rural idyll 'has been...woven into the very fabric of...modern Anglo-American culture' through mechanisms such as mass media and development marketing agencies. The interviewees' decision to live in rural Scotland was thus a manifestation of the cultural values they had been exposed to throughout their lives and were not simply an expression of popular discourses at the time of their move. In turn, moving into the countryside had further bolstered these culturally constructed values, thus completing the 'duality' circle which Giddens (1979; 1984) has described as underlying all social phenomena.

Although relocation to rural areas was partly motivated by the popularized countryside ideal, this was not the only factor seen by the interviewees to be influential. For example, those who had moved away from rural Scotland, before returning at a later date, sometimes described their moves in terms of 'local traditions':

Most of the people in the village, the older ones are people who knew me and expected us to come back anyway. It seems to be a long tradition in Skye.... ... people left the island, found work and they eventually come back and retire on the island, either for family links or—a lot of people left the islands basically to find work, or they went into mainly the Merchant Navy. After...they (had) made money, they came home,

either to the family croft or whatever the family was doing, maybe to look after the older people. That's how things happened. Being the only boy in the family, it was always sort of expected of people that you will come home some time. (McCaig)

Here we see an illustration of the second box on the right hand side of Figure 1. To McCaig, his moves away and back to Skye fitted into the wider picture of local socio-cultural practices. He had grown up witnessing the moves made by his forefathers, learning about other people's migration experiences, and hence extending his own social and geographical understanding and imagination through such mediated experiences. By following their footsteps, he had helped to maintain this 'long tradition' of migration. While it would be simplistic to reduce his movements to ones merely bounded by tradition, his moves were nonetheless in accord with social expectations and filial responsibilities, particularly those seen to apply to male offspring of single-child families. His migration decisions were thus set within specific cultural traditions, with parents and those in the older generations being the major transmitters of cultural norms. It is interesting to note in passing that McCaig's experience was far from atypical. Some 15 percent of migrants moving to rural Scotland from England are Scots-born return migrants (Findlay et al., 1998).

Using the interviewees' discursive and reflexive interpretations of the social context of their own actions, the above quotations illustrate the argument that 'when people tell their life-stories, culture speaks through their mouth' (Bertaux, 1981:260). However, culture is pluralistic rather than singular, and the interviewees' construction of social norms were colored by their social positions and by the interfacing of their life paths with the different cultures in which they had been immersed. Sometimes the interviewees were able to consciously identify the positions from which they considered the issue of migration. But very often the socio-cultural influences on their perceptions and actions either remained in their practical consciousness or were not articulated in the interviews. Nevertheless, by taking into account their biographical details, we were able to make inferences about these unacknowledged influences. Focusing on the interviewees' interpretation of the general forces governing migration we can examine how the construction of such generalizations are structured by people's former and current socio-cultural positions.

Another interviewee, Mrs. Douglas, interpreted her migration experiences as crucial in shaping her values and outlook, and setting her apart from her relatives. Her residential moves had been undertaken for her husband's career advancement. These moves had a significant impact on the financial situation of the family and had contributed to their upward mobility, and created a cultural rift between herself and her (geographically and socially) non-mobile working class siblings. The following extract elaborates her views regarding this difference:

Family functions we find quite strained just because it's a different culture. I mean we've got I wouldn't say different values but we are in a different income bracket. So we can maybe afford things and spend money more...and they spend their money in a slightly different way to the way we would spend it.... They can't grasp that your job's taken you away and it might take you somewhere else. They think, you're here, that's it. You've made the conscious decision of coming here. But life goes on. To them life goes on the same year in year out whereas our life does change year in year out. Even having children I mean their children never went to university or college. Our aspirations for our children are always—well I always thought greater than my sisters' and my brother's children....

I think living in different communities and in different environments our children can blend in with all sorts of people. They'll talk to people in all environments. They don't see it as a problem whereas maybe my family do. (Mrs. Douglas)

To Mrs. Douglas, the class division was revealed not only in the way the meaning of migration was interpreted but also in other values and aspirations, such as those for her children's past education. Mrs. Douglas also stated the benefits of previous migration experiences for the development of her children, which in turn were seen as advantageous to their future employment prospects. Furthermore, she expected her children to move for jobs, as she perceived many people in professional/managerial career would do for career advancement. Her narratives revealed her implicit acceptance of the existing social class structure and the continuation of this structure in the next generation. This acceptance was further manifested in her everyday life, as in how she educated her children and managed her finance. Her current actions followed the norms which she deemed appropriate to her current social class on the basis of her past experiences. They also were interpreted as ensuring a privileged position for her children within the existing social system. People's current positions in the social hierarchy were construed largely as personal (and parental) achievements, thus reinforcing the meritocratic basis of class structures. Migration, with its association with past improvements in opportunities, was therefore seen as a legitimate route for future upward mobility within the social system. In effect, such discourses rendered the existing social system as nonproblematic. It was constituted as a 'given' within which moves, both geographical and social, could be structured through the power of human agency and with little acknowledgment of past, present and future structural constraints. Arguably such a construction of the relations between migration and class position is particularly typical of groups moving into the Scottish countryside and is one reason for the potential conflict between incomers and longer established rural residents.

## TEMPORAL EMBEDDEDNESS: INFLUENCES OF PREVIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL EXPERIENCES ON LATER MIGRATION DECISIONS

If the previous section explored some of the socio-structural and cultural forces in which migration is embedded, we now turn to briefly consider how the values which inform migrants' decisions arise from individual and family dimensions of people's life histories (the lower left box of Figure 1). Table 1 presents a polyphony of voices illustrating the importance of past experiences.

### *Previous Rural Experiences and Familiarity with Particular Environments*

Many interviewees had earlier experiences of living in the countryside, even amongst those whose last move was from an urban environment. Others who had not lived in rural areas themselves during childhood nevertheless had links with the countryside stemming from their parents or grandparents. For those migrants who now lived either in their area of rural upbringing or a rural area in which their family had roots, familiarity with the area was important to them in explaining their residential choices. In these cases, familiarity was also associated with a feeling of attachment to place. McEwen (see Table 1) represents the views of many interviewees that the particular areas they lived in offered them a sense of 'home' and security, often because of strong community ties.

As Relph (1976:38) points out, 'to be attached to places and have profound ties with them is an important human need'. While people's social ties often extend beyond the specific location of their current residence thus rendering a sense of place which can transcend spatial boundaries (Massey, 1993), localized ties were often seen by our interviewees to be particularly strong in certain rural communities in Scotland.

Table 1: Voices expressing how past experiences planted the idea of migration.

McEwen	I feel my family they were all born here. My mother was born here and all my aunts and uncles and—they were all here. My daughter works for horses. Her animals are all here. I feel this is where I want to be.
Brown	I've always been attached to the country.... I suppose it's my background. I was born into it, lived in it. I suppose I liked it.
Thompson	I'd never lived in the country. I'd always lived in a town, so I didn't know any difference.... Because you did not know any difference, you just put up with what you've got.... But once we'd done it, we did like it.... Once we started living out of the town and away from people, we quite liked the quiet and the health.... I think now if I had to go and live in the middle of a town, in a terraced house, I would find it very restrictive because I like it here. There's more freedom.

As in the example above, these ties are often linked to family networks. The residence of several generations of a person's family in the same area can contribute to a sense of place continuity, despite other physical or social changes, which might have occurred in the area. This sense of localized social attachment was so influential that it often overwhelmed other perceptions such as that migration to somewhere else would be more beneficial in terms of career advancement and other factors. The important role of feelings of home in influencing migration has also been acknowledged by North American researchers such as McHugh and Mings (1996) and Slack (1996).

While attachment to childhood places of residence can be an important influence on some residential moves, many interviewees claimed that they wanted to live in a rural landscape, which was different from that of their upbringing. For example, moving from the English countryside to the Scottish Highland and Islands involved a change in scenery, climate, cultural traditions, and social and physical structure of the settlements. Even within Scotland, there is a diversity of rural environments and communities, often characterized by the interviewees in terms of the degree of remoteness. Despite this apparent diversity, the interviewees who had lived in different rural locations often identified generalized, nonlocation specific features of country life. Familiarity with and attachment to the kind of environment which is deemed rural, rather than attachment to a specific rural location, was used by some interviewees to account for their residential choice. This is exemplified by Brown (Table 1) who had lived in an agricultural area in England for many years before migrating to the Isle of Skye in Scotland. His original and current places of residences had distinct differences but they both constituted the de-territorialized space of 'the country' which was known to him because of his environmental experiences.

Familiarity with places, apart from being associated with a sense of security, also implies a certain level of knowledge and understanding of the way of life associated with particular places or types of environment. Inevitably, some interviewees did not have a direct childhood experience or knowledge of country life, but migration in later stages of life had enriched their environmental experiences and expanded their geographical imagination. Thomson (Table 1), for example, had spent her childhood and early adult years in England and had no aspiration to live in the countryside until she moved to Scotland, where she first stayed in a farmhouse. She subsequently considered this move to be crucial in introducing her to a different physical and cultural environment. What had previously been unknown to her (or only known as a mediated experience) was now part of her life. Her move had increased her understanding of Scotland and of rural life and had also altered the criteria she used to determine and evaluate subsequent moves.

### *Lived/Mediated Childhood Rural Experiences and the Construction of Generalized Perception of Country Life (Rural Idyll)*

While familiarity is important in shaping residential choices, this construct alone does not necessarily entail a preference to live in the countryside. The interviewees

reported that their conception of rurality was important in their residential choice and many believed that even people who had had little experience of country life preferred rural settings to cities. Thomson's remark above highlights some of the benefits seen to be associated with country life—peaceful, healthy, free. These and other benefits were often cited by the interviewees for their residential choices, reflecting a general belief in the 'rural idyll' much discussed in the academic literature (Cloke et al., 1994; Halfacree, 1995). It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss in detail the interviewees' perceptions of rurality and to rehearse once again material that has already been reviewed well elsewhere (Halfacree and Boyle, 1998). Rather we wish to focus attention here on how such perceptions have been formed. Whilst acknowledging the influences of current social forces such as mass media in the popularization of the countryside ideal (Bunce, 1994), this section examines some examples of how residential choices can be affected by a perception of rurality which is rooted in a person's direct and indirect (mediated) experiences of rural life in earlier life stages.

To some interviewees, happy memories of growing up in the country contributed to their interpretation of what the countryside could provide for them as adults and also for their own children. Their current perception thus involved an element of nostalgia and romanticism (Harrison et al., 1986; Squire, 1993). The idealization of childhood was associated with the idealization of rurality. The kind of country childhood they constructed often echoed that depicted in children's stories (Jones, 1997). For example,

I found it easy to grow up in the countryside. Absolute freedom. ... When I was ten or eleven I would go miles and miles and miles from my home and my parents wouldn't think anything of it. And they wouldn't have a clue where we were.... Perhaps that's something growing up in the country, you always have the perception of freedom and being able to do anything. (Researcher: Do you find that experience has affected the way you look at your living here?) ... I don't analyse, but I have no doubt it has. Perhaps that's why in the end I'm more comfortable being here. I like the freedom, the space. (Douglas)

Douglas, like many other interviewees, perceived the countryside as offering a sense of freedom. The country was a place of freedom, not only for children but also for adults. Country life was characterized as both physically and socially free, in terms of, for example, the possibility to engage in outdoor activities, or to do what one wants without interference from other people. In the case of Douglas, his childhood experiences had subconsciously (see earlier quote) shaped his perception of rurality. His desire for space and liberty, once formed, had been nurtured by his everyday experiences in childhood. These had then impinged on his subsequent residential choices through his sense of place—of being 'comfortable' living in a rural setting. While he did not normally 'analyze' the influence of his early experiences



on his outlook and actions, the interview process provided an opportunity for him to reflect and construct an interpretation of his residential preference, linking the present with the past. Rural freedom appears to have been elicited from his practical consciousness ('I don't consciously reflect on it') as an influence that 'molded' him 'as a person'.

Although not all the interviewees had lived in the countryside in their childhood, nearly all of them had had some direct experiences of travelling through or having holidays in rural areas. For example,

We had a caravan at the coast. I absolutely adored spending time in this caravan. We were terribly lucky because during summer holidays we moved to go on holiday away from home.... Six weeks of glorious freedom and we spent the whole time on the beach, walking. I suppose that idea had some influence. I loved the sea and still love the sea, would be quite happy to move near the sea. That whole idea of freedom which I suppose might have been part of it because there wasn't the same freedom at home.... That was a very idyllic part of my childhood really. (Mutch)

Notice again the identification of 'freedom' as a perceived characteristic of the 'rural'. Significantly it is recognized as 'idyllic'. Mutch's love of the sea and desire to live near it was shared by a number of interviewees. Closeness to the sea and lakes was sometimes considered to be a major attraction of certain Scottish rural areas. Mutch traced her preference to her childhood holiday experience, which was also marked by a sense of freedom. Unlike Douglas above, it was not a freedom which featured in her normal day-to-day life. The contrast between her holiday and everyday experiences, however, could serve to accentuate the attractiveness of the holiday environment. With the countryside being 'consumed' as a space for leisure, rurality becomes associated with relaxation and psychological well-being, and hence is constructed as 'desirable'.

Perceptions of rurality could sometimes be shaped in childhood not by direct rural experiences, but indirectly through reading or hearing about life in the countryside:

You were brought up in your own area.... You didn't really know much about anything else. The only things you did learn about were what you read in books, or perhaps saw on the television.... The books I have read, I suppose they have probably influenced [me]—I suppose I could imagine myself living in a small rural village.... Obviously they (rural dwellers) were definitely not the same class as me, but you could picture yourself living in a nice little village somewhere. (Pollock)

And [farmers known to my family] appeared to have a good way of life. I was only seeing it from 1938, 1939 onwards. The money that

the government was putting into farming in order that we would be fed was such that these folks had a one-car life and as I grew older, I could see they were getting into two-car families. I aspired to have the kind of spending power that they had. (Fisher)

Both Pollock and Fisher grew up in urban settings. For them the country way of life was desirable because of the social status and material comfort with which it was apparently linked. Fisher maintained that in his younger days he had always wanted to work in agriculture because of farmers' perceived higher standard of living. Although later he could not achieve the goal of becoming a farmer, he nonetheless worked closely with the farming community. His earlier perception of farming was transformed over the years in response to changes in agricultural policies and practices. Nonetheless, his current place of residence was determined essentially by his need to be near the agricultural community he served, and to which he had remained committed. Pollock, unlike Fisher, had not sought to live or work in the countryside during her younger days; noting that the fictional country people she read about as a child were in a different social class to hers. She also remarked elsewhere in the interview that having a country house with horses and stables had been seen in her childhood as something 'beyond her reach'. Designating this different way of life as unattainable could however help to mystify and idealize rural living. Although she had not consciously aspired to this idealized way of life in her younger days, her current life style—having a cottage and horses, had nonetheless been influenced by her long-cherished assumptions of what constituted a good life.

In this section, we have considered how certain dimensions of the rural idyll could be shaped by different kinds of direct and indirect rural experiences. The interviewees were not entirely uncritical of the idyllic rural image they held and many were aware of the disadvantages and problems of country living, but the benefits were usually seen to outweigh the problems.

### *Childhood Migration Experiences and Attitudes Towards Migration*

Although rurality is important in the interviewees' residential choices, the meaning of their moves must also be interpreted in the context of their earlier migration experiences. When deciding whether to migrate, especially to a far away place, constructions of migration as a process, as opposed to constructions of rurality, also play a part in molding decisions. The interviews revealed a diversity of attitudes ranging from people who presented themselves as always ready to move, to those who would prefer not to move again if possible. Some attributed their attitudes to their childhood experiences:

I moved throughout my life.... It doesn't worry me one little bit where I live.... My folks moved every seven years.... I was sent away to school in England as well.... I went there when I was about fourteen... and

stayed till I was eighteen and a half.... As far as [the earlier moves] are concerned, my parents made the decisions themselves to do that.... They would tell us, we're moving to such and such a place for whatever reason. We were young and it didn't really matter too much.... So I think that's where our attitude comes from—that moving doesn't have such a traumatic effect for us as for other people. (Duffy)

Duffy, born in Scotland and educated partly in England, had moved within Scotland with his family when he was a youngster. In the interview, he presented himself as mobile and having no strong preconceived idea about where he would like to live. It can be argued that his mobility had not allowed him to stay long enough in one place to develop a strong sense of local rootedness discussed earlier in this paper. He described his last move to his current place of residence as motivated mainly by his wife's desire to live in the countryside, with himself being flexible about their residential location. As evident in the excerpt above, he clearly considered his early migration experiences as crucial in shaping his attitudes. However, experiences of having moved in a person's early life stages do not always lead to the kind of attitudes expressed by Duffy. The nature of the moves and the circumstances surrounding the moves undertaken in childhood can negatively influence the meanings given to migration. For example,

The big move I made was with my parents a long time ago.... That was a devastating move because that was a move from the countryside into... a council estate.... It was moving into a town. I'd never lived in a town in my life before. The cottage we lived in before we moved was very out of the way.... Living a town life and having next door neighbours. It was quite nasty.... [After the move], I was picked on a bit at school because I tended not to mix so much with the other children.... You see, my brother died around the same time.... I was very very miserable. I was actually at the stage when I needed child psychiatric help in order to get through.... My brother'd always been the one I leaned on.... After his death, I just felt I couldn't cope any more.... When I arrived in [that school], I was suddenly thrown into their level of learning. In some levels, it was OK but in other levels, they were one or two levels ahead.... I found it incredibly hard to pick up and they were used to that.... It possibly makes me want to not move.... I don't want to move again. I'll settle down here, that's it. (McPherson)

McPherson had moved twice in her childhood and the experience of her second move described above had a significant impact on her perception of migration. This second move was stressful in many ways. Previously she had spent her childhood

in rural environments, including early days in a very isolated setting. Moving into a council house in a built up area was thus a big shock. It involved a change in both the physical surroundings and the social milieu she lived in. School life was difficult—schoolwork was harder than she had been used to and local children were not always welcoming. Her perception of the move was also colored by the tragic event, which happened at that point of her life—the death of her brother whom she was close to. Although the cause of her brother's death was unrelated to the move, the timing of this tragedy was crucial in affecting how McPherson interpreted and coped with the changes she was going through at that time. This had in turn helped to shape her perception of migration (and of the urban setting she had moved to) and contributed to her subsequent decision not to move (from her current rural home) if possible. Indeed, in her adult life, McPherson had been rather settled in her local area. She had only rehoused twice within a ten-mile radius. She also hoped that her current residence would be her 'resting place'.

Merely documenting whether childhood residential moves have occurred without taking into account the biographical context of such moves would fail to distinguish the two interviewees above and thus overlook the importance of childhood experiences as providing the resources for people to make sense of their later migration decisions. Due to the lack of space, our discussion has ignored the role of many other aspects of childhood experiences in general psychological development and how later migration decisions were thus affected. However, the excerpts above clearly demonstrate the 'situatedness' of the meaning of migration in the context of early life history, which may be related to events (e.g., McPherson's family tragedy) often neglected by previous migration research.

### *Migration Experiences and Perceived Self-Identity*

Research on international migration has highlighted the influence of people's identity on their migration decisions (Li and Findlay, 1996). Migration in turn can lead to changes in identity (Bottomley, 1992). In contrast, internal migration studies, particularly those conducted within a neo-positivist tradition, have largely ignored the relationship between migration decisions and how people perceive themselves. Our interviews, however, have suggested that internal migration can be a major component of migrants' identity. In this section, we shall consider the relationship between migration and some aspects of personal identity, setting aside discussion of the important issue of cultural identity (Li et al., 1995).

Frequent movers in our sample sometimes saw migration as a major feature of their life history. They often described themselves as 'transient' or 'adaptable', and as more willing to move than non-migrants. Their migration experiences were deemed to have contributed to shaping the kind of people they were, as shown in Mr. and Mrs. Douglas's narratives below:

Every move you make tends to be a bit more character building or broadening.... In a way [it was] strange coming back to an area you grew up in when you're actually an entirely different person.... [Our relatives] have of course changed—they've aged and experienced but still within the same local environment. So they haven't changed nearly quite as much as we have. Completely different view of life. (Mr. Douglas)

I feel that I have...grown away from my family. I still love them very much but they're born and bred and brought up and live within a twenty miles radius of where they were born. None of them have moved away. They've never seen anywhere else.... We have gone on and grown.... ...[My family] can't grasp... the moves we've been through.... They can't grasp that your job's taken you and it might take you somewhere else. They think, you're here, that's it.... I just think it's part and parcel of my life moving. I don't have itching feet all the time. I don't want to move, but when there's a move pending, you've just got to say 'Well we've got to get on and do it'. (Mrs. Douglas)

Mr. and Mrs. Douglas' first major move was from Scotland to England for Mr. Douglas's first job after graduation. What followed was a series of moves in England and a return move to Scotland in 1989. At the time of the interview, Mr. Douglas was working abroad while the family stayed in Scotland, but there was a possibility that the household would relocate overseas. It was obvious from their accounts that their migration experiences had helped to mold their outlook and values, to the extent that they felt they had moved away from their relatives not only geographically but also socially. Their return home involved a move back to a familiar and yet different environment as they themselves were 'entirely different persons'. Other comments made in the interview suggest that they construed those who had moved frequently and those who had not to be two different types of people. Their 'othering' of non-migrants involved a superior-inferior dichotomy, implied in their perception of themselves as having 'grown' and 'changed' more than their non-mobile relatives. They clearly identified themselves with those who were mobile and now found it easier to befriend them than with non-migrants, while even their relationship with their own siblings was strained by the latter's perceived lack of understanding of the experience and meaning of migration. Mrs. Douglas believed that it was very difficult for non-migrants to understand how geographical mobility could dominate a migrant's rather unpredictable life.

As far as socio-temporal embeddedness is concerned, the above example has shown how the accumulation of moves in a person's past can shape a person's self-consciousness. The status of being a migrant constitutes the core of many people's identity, rendering past, current and future moves the essential ingredients of their existence.

## CONCLUSIONS

The transcripts which form the empirical basis of this paper may appear to some readers to present a fragmented picture, representing as they do insights into features as diverse as childhood experiences of migration and socially mediated constructions of rural life. Our purpose has not, however, been to provide an integrated interpretation of contemporary migration to rural Scotland, but instead to search for a more ambitious outcome: the construction of a model, based on biographical accounts, of the socio-temporal embeddedness of migration. Furthermore, the purpose of this model is not the identification of discrete 'variables' or categories capable of explaining subsequent migration events in the way sought by conventional cause and effect models. Instead we have been concerned to trace the multiple and inter-related currents of meaning which human agents attach to migration phenomena. The multiple currents form integral elements of the totality of people's consciousness and life experiences. We believe frameworks of the kind presented in Figure 1 are needed if the extra insights of the new qualitative methods introduced to population geography over the last decade are to be incorporated in the mainstream literature on how migration contributes to changes in people and places.

Technology and culture have both conspired to produce higher levels of internal and international mobility than ever before. But the human values which underpin these mobility trends are rooted in much longer term socio-cultural contexts. If geographers are to respond to the challenge of interpreting how and why the identities of people and places are changing in the way they are in relation to migration, they will need to think beyond the use of qualitative methods as merely illustrative devices adding flesh to the bones of pre-existing theories. Qualitative techniques, such as the biographical approach adopted in this paper, are needed to provide the fundamental methodological frameworks that produce theorization's of contemporary mobility.

In emphasizing in this paper the meanings associated with migration and place, we have privileged quotations pointing to the importance of earlier (often childhood) constructions of rurality. These earlier imaginings resulted not only from primary experiences of the 'rural' but also as a result of socially mediated imaginings derived from the media and in other ways. If temporal embeddedness is highly significant in the shaping of later values associated with the imagined 'rural idyll', other researchers (and aspects of our work not presented here) have pointed to the multiple layers of social embeddedness which shape migration decisions (Findlay and Li, 1997; Li and Findlay, 1996). As a result our model maps both temporal and socio-cultural contexts as being highly significant in shaping the multiple meanings given to migration to rural areas.

Early imaginings of place as the locus of social interactions have also been shown to be profoundly influenced by migration. For some people the migration process during the childhood years has been shown to create a sense of social insecurity and a deep desire for rootedness. In others it confirmed the potential openness of places

(Massey, 1993) and the possibility of further mobility as an unproblematic action in relation to assured self-identity within the kinds of extended social networks that now penetrate even the most traditional of Scottish rural places. The uniting features in these diverse responses are first, that the construction of what migration represents was formed at much earlier points in the lifecourse and second, that the individual's experience of social interactions (as constructed by the power of place) immediately following their migration had a profound effect in molding their later attitude to migration and to their future migration intentions.

Our interpretation of the interview materials has also given emphasis to the importance of mediating constructs, because our interviewees seemed to stress that embeddedness was as much a sense of continuity and social connectedness (Massey's definition of place) as it was a function of temporal and social processes. In this way 'place' (as the locus of social connectedness) becomes powerful in shaping migration actions over the lifecourse, as well as, of course, itself being shaped by migration through changes to the social connections of particular (rural) places.

Our work, in following current social and psychological theories of consciousness, has recognized the different levels at which the meanings of migration can be understood. This paper has sought to illustrate the kinds of developments which can emerge from such an approach in terms of increasing understanding of the temporal, social and place embeddedness of migration decisions.

## NOTE

1. In all cases pseudonyms have been used to identify interviewees. The names used in no way relate to those actually interviewed.

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