

THE MIGRATION INTENTIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ULLAPOOL

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INTRODUCTION

This article reports the results of a small research project, which investigated the migration intentions of a group of people aged 14-16 from the area in and around Ullapool, in the North-West Highlands, and compared the results with those of a similar study carried out in rural Ireland some 25 years ago with a comparable age group. Hannan (1969) examined voluntary migration from rural areas, the basic assumption of his study being Einsenstadt's assertion that 'migration results primarily from the belief that certain basic aspirations can not be satisfactorily fulfilled in the home community' (quoted by Hannan (1969, p.196)).

Hannan found the most predictive factors influencing migration intentions to be:

Most predictive	Beliefs about one's ability to fulfil occupational and income aspirations locally
	Level of community satisfaction
Least predictive	Attitude towards local community's social amenities

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Hannan's ranking of predictive factors fits in with most theories of migration. For instance, Moisley, when discussing de-population, has said that 'the fundamental problem is low personal incomes and the lack of means to increase them' (Moisley 1962). Other theories of migration stress the importance of social factors rather than economic ones in influencing the decision to migrate. Littlejohn saw rural de-population as one aspect of the dominance of the town over the country. This dominance could not be explained entirely on an economic basis, and in part found expression in the low value put on isolation by those living in both town and country: 'the country people, for their part, were perfectly well aware of this attitude towards them, and knew it was the attitude of the majority of society. Further, they accepted it ... and applied it to those who lived even further from "civilization" than themselves' (quoted by Smout (1986, p.81)). Littlejohn perceives this attitude to have its roots in the fact that there is an absence of opportunity in the countryside to associate with a sufficiently wide range of people. This, in addition to geographical distance from facilities that matter, like pubs, cinemas, football grounds, dance halls, etc, means that the need for association can only be met by going into town, and thus the rural 'community' ceases to be one that is cared about. This explanation fits in with the 'bright lights' theory, which holds that young people move from rural areas to towns to partake of leisure facilities not available at home. Rosemary Lumb, however, views this theory as being based on a simplistic idea of both migration and young people's aspirations and values. She demonstrates this by pointing out that the validity of the bright lights theory can become questionable when faced with, as in the Highland case, the decline or cessation of the tendency for young people to move to towns; if the theory were true, such a change would suggest an unlikely reversal of values (Lumb 1980).

The results of this study, and their comparison with Hannan's, will enable us to go some way to evaluating these theories of migration, and to discuss their significance in relation to the findings.

This study's hypothesis was that the majority of the respondents in this study would intend to leave the area. The factor 'attitude towards local community's social amenities' was expected to play a much more important role for people intending to leave than the minor one it played in Hannan's study. This expectation was based on my own experience of living in Ullapool, where I felt - and perceived those around me as feeling - that a lack of social amenities was a large part of the stimulus to move away.

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Another factor - expectations of migration from significant others (for example, parents, relatives, teachers, peers, etc) - was also expected to play an important role in the respondent's migration intentions. This was not measured in Hannan's study. I thought this was an important factor because - again through personal experience - I felt that it is regarded as almost inevitable by teachers, parents, peers and the community as a whole that young people will want to leave the area, and further, that it is beneficial for them to do so, in terms of better opportunities, 'broadening horizons', etc. I felt this was apparent to such an extent that those who leave the area - even for a short time - are regarded as more capable or more achieving or more socially aware than those who do not, the basic underlying assumption being that anyone who does not leave has not done so because s/he does not have the skills or motivation to do so, rather than because they may choose to stay.

The perception that leaving is desirable fits with Littlejohn's finding of the dominance of town over country. Such a dominance is prominent within 20th century Western culture. Often towns and cities are portrayed as progressive and 'fast-living'. In comparison, the 'country' (encompassing all areas outwith urban sprawls) is the antithesis - backward and lifeless, requiring to conform to the city ideal in order to gain credibility and desirability in its own right in terms of social attraction to the young. Such a social construction of the countryside can have a pervasive influence on perceptions of rural life (Shucksmith et al 1994, p.21).

Birks takes this idea to the extreme when he states in his study of Stratherrick near Inverness that, as migration is necessary for success, it is 'required of all those who are not to fail' and so in the local view 'life in the area must always be the life of failures' (quoted by Lumb (1980, p.26)). Sewel suggests that parents and pupils of the remote Highlands and Islands have similar values and aspirations to those pertaining in the wider society: they have the same estimations of what is a 'good job'; the only difference is that such jobs are not usually available in the home area (quoted by Lumb (1980, p.25)). In this sense the 'climate of mobility' which exists in the Highlands enables migration to take place easily. There is no conflict between values and eventual behaviour, as it is expected that children will leave and parents will stay. Again, this begs the question of why parents and pupils of the Highlands and Islands share similar ideas of what a 'good job' is when such jobs often are not available in the area.

METHODS

A questionnaire was given to all pupils in the 3rd and 4th year of Ullapool High School in 1993. These years were chosen as they offered a group who were old enough to have given thought to migration but young enough not to have made an actual decision. The questionnaires were completed in a classroom environment, where respondents were asked to fill them in individually, but could discuss it with each other and ask for assistance if needed. To enable comparison with Hannan's study, the questionnaire was designed to gauge views on concepts such as:

- migration intentions;
- respondent's beliefs as to whether their occupational and income aspirations could be fulfilled locally;
- level of community satisfaction;
- attitudes towards their community's social and leisure facilities;
- major social background characteristics.

Other variables measured in this study but which were not addressed by Hannan were: respondent's intentions towards going onto further and higher education; their main reason for leaving or staying in the area; if they felt an expectation from others to migrate; and if so, from whom. Thus this allowed comparisons to be made with Hannan's study while also investigating further hypotheses.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

All the children in the classes completed questionnaires - 21 males and 32 females, all between the ages of 14 and 16. Most lived in the village of Ullapool itself (57%) but a significant number were from Lochinver (25%) - one of the larger villages within Ullapool High School's catchment area. The other 18% were from lesser populated outlying areas and villages such as Achiltibuie, Dundonnell and Lochbroom. 28 of the respondents were in 3rd year and 25 were in 4th year.

Pupils were asked how long they had lived in the area, and how long their parents had lived in the area. This was asked in order to find out if personal experience of migration had any effect on migration intentions - are those whose families have undergone migration more likely to move themselves?

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Most of the children (66%) had lived in the area for over 10 years, with only 9% having lived there for under 5 years. The average length of time their father had lived in the area was 21 years, their mother 18 years. There was a fairly even spread among the parental origin categories, with England and Lowland Scotland featuring the most in the origin of the mother and Lowland Scotland and the local area figuring the most in the origin of the father. Forty-nine of the children had mothers and 49 had fathers. Of these, just under 1 in 5 (14% of mothers and 25% of fathers) came from the local area.

The most common occupation for pupils' mothers was a housewife (25%), and for their fathers a semi-skilled manual occupation (46%).

RESULTS

The main results will be discussed in relation to Hannan's findings.

One of the most striking results of the study was how few pupils intended to stay in Ullapool - only 4%: see table 1. While the figures for those who might migrate were similar to Hannan's, there was a marked difference in those who definitely intended to remain in the area. Considering that so many intend to leave, it becomes salient to ask why (table 2). The three main responses given to an open ended question were employment (50%), 'nothing to do' (30%) and to take up further education (10%).

Table 1

Respondent's intentions towards leaving the area

	This study	Hannan (1969)
Definitely intended to migrate	51	36
Might migrate/yes, probably	45	40
Definitely intended to remain	4	24
<i>sample size</i>	53	556

Figures shown are percentages in columns

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The above agrees with Hannan's study in that 'beliefs about one's ability to fulfill occupational and income aspirations locally' was the most cited reason for leaving (represented by 'employment' in this study). The finding is supported by respondents' answers to other questions. Those who had said they wanted to leave their area were then asked if they would stay if there were better education facilities and job prospects available. To this, 25% said yes, they would definitely stay, 56% said yes, probably - a total of 81%. The corresponding figure in Hannan's study was 72%. Thus occupational and income aspirations are a significant predictor of migration intentions in both studies.

Table 2
Pupil's reasons for leaving the area

Employment	50
Nothing to do	30
Further education	10
Don't like Ullapool	6
Don't like the people	4
<i>sample size</i>	50

The five categories were arrived at by banding respondent's answers to an open-ended question about why people intended to leave. The labels incorporated either answers the same as the label itself ('don't like Ullapool', 'nothing to do' and 'don't like the people') or a group of answers similar in meaning. For example, under 'employment' were responses such as 'to get a better job somewhere else'.

Figures shown are percentages in the column; confined to people intending to leave (table 1).

Table 3
The effect of improved facilities on intentions to stay

	This study	Hannan (1969)
Stay if better job and education facilities only	81	72
Stay if better job, education and social facilities	12	12

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Not staying under any circumstances	8	16
<i>sample size</i>	51	556

Figures shown are percentages in columns; confined to people intending to leave (table 1).

Respondents were then asked if they would be more likely to stay if, in addition to improved education facilities and job prospects, there were better social amenities. The results are in Table 3.

The relatively small extra percentage responding positively to the prospect of better social facilities shows that attitude towards the local community's social amenities was of no more than minor significance, although it could be argued that it was still an important issue to the respondents, as the second most cited reason for leaving was 'nothing to do' (table 2).

This study supports Hannan's ranking of factors predicting an intention to leave (as quoted at the beginning).

Occupational and income aspirations

'Beliefs about one's ability to fulfil occupational and income aspirations locally' turned out to be the most predictive factor influencing migration intentions, as table 4 illustrates.

Table 4

Attitude towards the areas' employment prospects by intentions to leave area

<i>intention to leave</i>	<i>response to 'where I live has job prospects which will suit me in my future'</i>			
	agree	neutral	disagree	all
yes, definitely	0	9	63	51
yes, probably	100	73	37	45
no	0	18	0	4

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sample size 1 11 41 53

Figures shown are percentages in columns.

This shows that nearly two thirds (63%) of those who doubted that they would have job prospects locally were definitely intending to leave, whereas the majority of those who were unsure about their job prospects locally were not so definite about leaving.

Level of community satisfaction

In this study community satisfaction was considerably high overall. Two questions measured this factor. One of these asked pupils to answer yes or no to the question 'Would you say you enjoy living where you do?'. To this, 62% answered 'yes'. The other asked them to respond to the statement 'I feel happy living in my community'. Only 21% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Respondents answered both questions in a similar way.

Hannan found that how satisfied people were with their community had an impact on migration intentions: he found that, among people with the highest levels of satisfaction, only 23% intended to migrate.. However, in this study, the level of community satisfaction had no bearing on intentions to migrate. In this study, nearly all (96%) of the people who said they were happy living in the community intended to migrate.

In general, the level of community satisfaction was thus not a highly predictive factor in migratory motives, although it was a good predictor of how definite leaving intentions were: 91% of those who disagreed with the statement 'I feel happy living in my community' definitely wanted to leave, whereas only 32% of those who agreed with the statement were definite about intending to leave.

Attitude towards social amenities

This was measured by responses to the statement 'where I live has sufficient leisure and recreational facilities for me'. There was very little agreement with this: only 6% agreed, and 70% disagreed, the remainder being neutral. The responses did not really show a high predictory influence on migratory intentions, as the question did not clearly differentiate those respondents who were definite about leaving from those who were unsure. This is shown in

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Table 5: the migration intentions for the 'neutral' and 'disagree' responses to the question about leisure facilities are very similar.

Considering the amount of dissatisfaction with the communities' leisure and recreational facilities, the high level of community satisfaction shown may seem surprising. However, if we look at answers to open-ended questions asking pupils to state the best and worst thing about their area, we see that there may be a trade-off between the fact that there is 'nothing to do' (65% of respondents said this) and factors associated with this, for example that the area is 'peaceful'.

Table 5
Attitude toward areas' leisure facilities, by intentions to leave

response to 'Where I live has sufficient leisure and recreation facilities'

<i>intention to leave</i>	agree	neutral	disagree	all
yes, definitely	33	46	56	51
yes, probably	33	46	46	45
no	33	8	0	4
<i>sample size</i>	3	13	37	53

Figures shown are percentages in columns

The high levels of community satisfaction may be explained by the fact that the vast majority of respondents thought the best thing about where they lived was the environment (and the qualities associated with that, for example 'scenery, mountains, lochs', 'privacy and peace') and the community (and its associated qualities, for example 'everybody's friendly', 'you know everybody').

The other factor that was investigated - expectations of migration from significant others - turned out to be fairly significant.

One question asked if respondents felt they were subjected to expectations to leave the area, and another established where these expectations (if any)

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came from, with the sources listed as teachers, parents, community, friends and others. Respondents could circle as many as applied to them. There was a fairly even split between those who did feel an expectation to leave and those who did not: 53% felt expectations to leave. Of these 53%, the sources were ranked as: parents 89%; friends 56%; teachers 52%; and community 15%.

So although this factor was not as prevalent as I would have expected from personal experience, there was still a majority who did feel such expectations. And among those who did, it influenced how definite they were about migration intentions - those who felt expectations to leave were more likely to be definite about their intentions to leave.

Was there an effect of personal migration experience on migration intentions? Taylor recognises the role that individuals' perceptions of their present situation plays in influencing the decision to migrate or not, as well as the role of structural factors (age, family circumstances, etc) and stated motivations (quoted by Lumb (1980, p.17)). He says that the individual's total social situation must be taken into account in order to explain the selectivity of migration. Environment and experience play an important part: 'propensity to migrate may be a family rather than an individual characteristic. Such a suggestion does not imply any inherited propensity; instead it acknowledges the influence of accumulated experience - movement begets further movement' (quoted by Lumb (1980)). This would seem to be relevant to this study, as those whose fathers were originally from an area other than the local one were slightly more definite about migration intentions than those whose fathers were originally from the local area (table 6).

Table 6
Where respondent's father originally from, by respondent's intentions to leave the area

<i>where father originally from</i>	<i>intention to leave</i>			<i>sample size</i>
	yes, definitely	yes, probably	no	
local area	42	50	8	12
elsewhere in Highlands	56	44	0	9
other*	61	36	4	28

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all 55 41 4 49

*'Other' includes those from lowland Scotland, England, abroad and return migrants.

Figures shown are percentages in rows

CONCLUSION

The study disproved my hypothesis about the importance of 'attitude towards the local community's social amenities'; this was not more significant than 'beliefs about one's ability to fulfil occupational and income aspirations locally'. Rosemary Lumb's view of the 'bright lights' theory as simplistic would appear to be correct. She states that although older people frequently say that young people leave because there is 'no life' in small places, and young people too complain of lack of facilities, lack of amenities is not a cause of out-migration (Lumb 1980). Brox similarly argues that young people with jobs will create their own social life (quoted by Lumb (1980, p.149)).

Thus occupational concerns were more prominent in the minds of pupils than social ones. The expectation of migration from significant others was also a predictive factor in influencing the decision to leave or not. This was particularly true for predicting definiteness of intentions.

When compared with Hannan's, the results here were in all areas similar, with the ranking of predictive factors in influencing migration in this study being the same as quoted from Hannan at the beginning. The availability of job prospects and level of community satisfaction are the most predictive, and attitude towards social amenities was the least predictive. This study is too small to say which is the strongest predictive factor - availability of job prospects or level of community satisfaction.

Thus the factors which Hannan reported in 1969 in Ireland are still pertinent to the migratory decisions of young people in Scotland over 25 years later.

Two of the most significant findings of this study relate to the discussion of migration in general. Firstly, almost all the pupils in this study intend to leave Ullapool. Secondly, most of their parents did not actually come from Ullapool in the first place. This raises important questions about who makes up the flow of in and out migrants. Brox gives emphasis to the notion of

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'recruitment' - how communities manage or fail to retain their own young people or attract new families in sufficient numbers to retain their population (quoted by Lumb (1980, p.24). This is an important idea as it avoids the assumption that a community must retain its own young in order to achieve demographic stability.

The idea of 'recruitment' is relevant to this study, as although such high levels of intentions to migrate amongst the young may appear to suggest the depopulation of Ullapool, Ullapool in fact has a rising population which is in part due to in-migration. The finding here that most pupils' parents had moved to Ullapool from elsewhere suggests that this in-migration is not a recent phenomenon, and is relatively large-scale.

Migration from rural areas may only be problematic when de-population occurs to such an extent that it reaches a 'point of no return' (Moisley 1962, p.197) beyond which it is difficult to maintain essential services, and, from a social point of view, young people are discouraged from staying, creating a vicious downward spiral of de-population. In the case of Ullapool (and arguably the Highlands) this seems unlikely because of the scale of in-migration.

Another problem that may be caused by migration is a 'brain drain'. Often the migration stream has a significant proportion of young school leavers (Lumb 1980). This is certainly held up by this study, in which 90% of respondents intended going onto further education. This, combined with the fact that only 10% intended entering further education in the Highlands and Islands, compared to 71% entering within Scotland, points to inevitable migration from the area, and probably from the Highlands as a whole.

However this must be considered alongside the fact that many have no choice but to move outwith the Highlands and Islands for certain forms of higher education. Also, many of the occupations aspired to by respondents were those which to a large extent do not exist or exist only in small numbers in their home area, such as careers in engineering, in the RAF, in law, in the Navy, in social work, etc. Thus in this sense out-migration is necessary for those individuals if they wish to pursue such occupations.

While the results from this and Hannan's study are interesting in themselves, they also suggest related areas for further study. One of these is in-migration. There is relatively little empirical evidence about in-migration in the Highlands. Another is return migration. Some question the validity of

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examining the migration decisions of young people unless subsequent behaviour can also be monitored. Brox holds that much migration of young people is 'improvised' - casually undertaken and easily reversible (quoted by Lumb (1980, p.22)). Regardless of whether the out-migration of the young in the Highlands is 'improvised' or not, more important is the fact that it is an accepted, and as this study shows, to an extent an expected, part of life in the area, as Sewel's point that there is little conflict between values and eventual behaviour illustrates. However it would be interesting to see if those factors which influence the decision to leave the area (lack of desired jobs, few further education prospects) are also the factors that prevent people from returning.

Another area for further research would be to study not only out-migrants but also those who stay. We have already discussed the view that migrants are not an exceptional group, and as Sewel points out 'where out-migration is high, who remains and why can be more interesting questions than who goes' (quoted by Lumb (1980)).

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