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Youth Migration and Social Advancement: How Young People Manage Emerging Differences between Themselves and their Hometown

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The phenomenon of youth out-migration from rural areas has attracted renewed governmental attention in the context of recent rural economic adjustment and decline across advanced industrial nations. While this trend is well documented in demographic and economic research, youth researchers have sought to extend this analysis beyond descriptive patterns of migration to an understanding of how rural–urban migration is positioned within a complex of youth transitions, as well as an understanding of the subjective experiences of youth migration. This paper contributes to this literature in its focus on young people's experiences of geographical out-migration and social advancement. Based on in-depth interviews with young people from rural Tasmania, this paper draws attention to the emerging differences between young people and their peers, their family and their community on leaving their hometown, and the strategies employed by young people to manage these spatial and cultural differences.

Introduction

In the past two decades the out-migration of rural youth has received renewed attention within developed nations across Europe, North America, Canada and Australia (for example, Jones 1999a, 1999b; Ní Laoire 2000; Gauthier *et al.* 2003). In Australia, recent experiences of rural decline and population loss have occurred within the context of national economic reform and restructuring, which saw the deregulation of the national economy, the privatisation of public utilities, the

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reduction of import tariffs, and the introduction of competition policy throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Productivity Commission 1999). While this reform appears to have facilitated national economic growth in the long term, social commentators have noted that such growth has been accompanied by a simultaneous growth in inequality between urban and rural Australia (Looker & Dwyer 1998; Wyn *et al.* 1998; Pritchard & McManus 2000; Lockie & Bourke 2001). Since the national recession of early 1990s, young people have continued to leave their rural hometowns in increasing numbers. Between 1991 and 2001, demographers reported an increase in the proportion of young people leaving rural and regional Australia (Bureau of Rural Sciences 1999, p. 23; Alston 2004). Although the dominant pattern for mobile regional youth was from the countryside to the capital cities, young people were also moving from smaller rural settlements to larger regional centres, and away from industrial, regional settlements towards Australia's regional tourist destinations such as North Queensland and the Northern Territory.

While demographic and economic researchers have sought to identify the major patterns of geographical migration and the economic consequences of these trends for regional communities, youth researchers have developed youth-centred analyses of this phenomenon and increasingly focused attention on the cultural aspects of youth migration (Jones 1995, 1999a, 1999b; Wierenga 1999; Ní Laoire 2000; Marshall & Foster 2002; Molgat 2002; Jones 2004; White & Wyn 2004, pp. 58–78). A dominant strand within this research has been the development of a biographical understanding of youth migration (Halfacree & Boyle 1993); an approach that builds on existing research into youth transitions. The most comprehensive application of this approach in a rural context is found in Gill Jones's (1995, 1999a, 1999b; Jones & Wallace 1992) extended project on young people from the Scottish borders region, in which Jones seeks to move 'from stereotypes to biographies' of young people. In Jones work, rural out-migration is re-conceptualised within a complex of life choices and youth transitions; that is, from school to higher education, training and work, from the family home to the group share house, and from being a dependent adolescent to an independent adult. Within her work considerable attention is granted to identifying which types of young people are more or less orientated towards mobility and immobility, and those most 'at risk' within the processes of migration (to the city) and transition (to adulthood).

The biographical approach to youth migration has yielded considerable insights, particularly in terms of understanding the complex and multi-layered nature of individual migration decisions among young people and changes in migration pathways over time. This approach has sought to resolve tensions between structural explanations of migration and the role of agency in negotiating migration pathways, namely by attending to the life projects and socio-spatial identities of young people. However, the continued focus within recent research on explaining differences in migration behaviours has had the effect of directing analytical attention away from the everyday experiences of young people on leaving home and the practical ways in which young people negotiate and reconcile emerging differences between themselves

and their hometown. In contrast, the analysis below attends to what Ahmed *et al.* (2004, p. 1) have described as 'the work of migration and the work of inhabitance'. This emphasis on what people *do* and the *work* of migration draws explicitly on an interactive and performative understanding of social identity (Butler 1990; Hall & du Gay 1996); an approach that has gained currency in research on international migration and the experiences of diasporic communities where cultural differences between the home and the host community are most pronounced (Bottomley 1992; Fortier 2000; Baldassar 2001; Ahmed *et al.* 2004).

In extending this performative approach to the rural–urban migration experience, the following analysis focuses on how young people reconcile shifts in their social identity or self-definitions after leaving home, and in turn how they manage emerging differences between themselves and their families and peers after leaving home. While research on diasporic communities highlights the tensions migrants face in negotiating life between two distinct ethnic cultures, the presented analysis draws attention to the tensions young people face in negotiating spatial and cultural distance between themselves and their rural, working-class homes. Within youth migration literature, the issue of class has been granted some attention, with class being predominantly defined in terms of parents' occupational location and then analysed with a view to determining migration behaviour and identifying those young people who are most at risk within the process of leaving home (Jones 1995, 1999b; Jamieson 2000). In contrast, the following analysis relies on a broader cultural definition of class as presented within local media and by the young people themselves. As White and Wyn (2004, p. 4) note: 'one of the key aspects of class is that it is a lived experience', and further that class analysis is 'intrinsically concerned with how young people actively negotiate work, leisure, school and community'. The advantage of this negotiated understanding of class identity is that it provides a basis for exploring the various ways in which young people's identification with their industrial, working-class community and their particular cultural tastes and preferences are challenged and reconfigured on leaving home.

Research Site

The qualitative data presented in this paper were collected as part of a three-year study of regional economic restructuring and youth migration on the North West Coast of Tasmania (Gabriel 2004). Although economic productivity on the NW Coast of Tasmania expanded during the post-war years, the region bore much of the fall-out of national economic reform in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s. This resulted in substantial contraction in the local labour market and the eventual closure of major processing and manufacturing operations on the Coast. Since the mid-1980s, the region has regularly recorded the highest unemployment rates in Tasmania (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1999a). In the 1990s, people on the Coast were more likely to experience long-term unemployment relative to other Australians, with people in the early stages of their working lives being particularly affected (Walter

1999). The economic downturn on the Coast was also accompanied by regional de-population. Compared with other Australian states, Tasmania recorded the lowest population growth rates across the nation throughout the 1990s (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1999b, p. 94), the majority of this out-migration being attributed to people aged between 18 and 29 years (Jackson & Kippen 2001, p. 27).

The analysis is based on 18 semi-structured interviews with young people (18–29 years old), which were conducted between January 2001 and February 2002. I relied on four personal contacts from different settlements along the NW Coast to introduce me to young people in the area, and I then relied on the young people I interviewed to introduce me to other potential interviewees. While most of the interviewees were in various stages of transition, having moved in and out of the Coast on a temporary basis, four of the interviewees had left home and did not intend to return to the Coast in the future. The young people I interviewed were from families who had experienced some financial difficulties, but none of these young people were severely disadvantaged in terms of their location in the housing or labour market (i.e., homeless or long-term unemployed).

The interviews were approximately one hour in length. The focus of the discussion was on the young people's experiences of managing their relationships with their friends and families after leaving home, and their experiences of visiting and returning to the Coast. The interviews were taped and transcribed, and the transcriptions were then subject to thematic analysis. As the interviews were confidential, I have used pseudonyms throughout the text when quoting from the interviewee transcripts.

The Dilemma of Leaving Home and Moving On

In popular and scientific accounts of youth out-migration, the problem of out-migration is repeatedly framed as a problem for the home community (i.e., the rural village) with subsequent governmental responses directed towards regional economic development and retaining young people. This was true of the Coast in the 1990s, in which dominant narratives regarding youth out-migration within local media were centred on the containment of youth migration (*The Advocate* 6 September 1997, p. 10) and the containment of a particular type of young person—the best and brightest (*The Advocate* 25 January 1997, p. 4). Somewhat paradoxically, however, during this period of escalating youth unemployment, young people were also marked out as part of the problem of declining investment in rural areas. In a place in which semi-skilled and unskilled manual work was once plentiful, the Coast had among the lowest school retention rates in the country when the Australian economy went into recession in 1991. Accordingly, national political leaders called on young people to reconsider their pathway from high school to work and instead pursue higher education and upgrade their skills (Prime Minister of Australia 1994; *The Advocate* 21 August 1994, p. 7). In short, young people on the Coast found themselves caught between two competing injunctions throughout the 1990s: that

young people should develop their skills and their knowledge in order to 'get ahead' (which in this period of high youth unemployment meant leaving the Coast), and that they should 'stay at home' in order to contribute to the future development of the Coast.

In interviews with young people, they spoke about the personal conflict involved in deciding to leave the Coast and the consequences of this decision. In contrast to local media narratives, young people rejected the view of themselves as the 'best and brightest' who were destined to leave the Coast. Instead, their decision reflected the new economic realities of the region and their desire to broaden their horizons and pursue their dreams. For these young people, differences between those who had stayed and those who had left had evolved over an extended period of time and as a consequence of their diverse experiences of living away from home. When reflecting on their experiences of leaving home, young people expressed concern not only in relation to the spatial distance between themselves and their hometown, but also the cultural gaps that were opening up between young people and their friends and families. For better or worse, they had begun to construct a view of who they were and how they wanted to live that was at odds with their hometown culture and way of life.

Emerging Differences between Young People and their Hometown

Having grown-up in a depressed industrial region, young people's decision to leave the Coast often marked the beginning of their upward mobility. While the interviewees did not relate their experiences of leaving the Coast in terms of a neat narrative of upward social mobility, they spoke of their own experiences of accessing tertiary education and more secure career paths beyond the Coast. This experience of class transition in the sense of growing material differences and location in the labour market, however, did not preoccupy young people when reflecting on their relationships back home. Instead, young people spoke at length about the emerging differences in their cultural tastes and preferences, their personal and political outlook, and their lifestyle choices. This confluence of concerns intersected with class identity in so far as young people revealed their growing awareness of subtle hierarchies between their hometown and more affluent urban centres, and their anxieties about their own social repositioning. The following analysis outlines some of the emerging differences between young people and their families, their peers and their hometown culture, which at times had become a source of misunderstanding or conflict.

In regards to familial relationships, moving away from home offered the opportunity for young people to renegotiate their relationships with their parents from a child–parent relationship to one that was considered more equal. By living independently, young people began to appreciate the support and assistance their parents had provided them at home. Equally, parents began to appreciate their children's capacity to face and resolve financial and personal problem independently.

Some of the interviewees, however, expressed concern that they might be in danger of becoming the type of person that their parents had long derided: a person who was educated but who lacked practical skills and know-how; a person who did not value family life; a person who was self-obsessed; and a person who thought they were better than ordinary folk.

> In hindsight it was a period of adjustment, because I had to go back to my family and try not to be one of these people that I was taught to dislike when I was growing up ... you know, snobby people ... and so when I went home it was difficult. I had to make sure that I wasn't one of those people and so it was a very, jolted-type of conversation. (Kate, 23 years old)

While differences in the life experiences of the interviewees and their parents were highly varied, attending university was one common source of misunderstanding.

> Neither of them actually went to university so they were pretty clueless there. My dad has a lot of trouble understanding like he says 'Okay well you go to uni like full on for three days, well then what do you do for the rest of the week? You've got four days like you should have plenty of time,' but he doesn't sort of understand that you go to uni, but you have to spend the other three days reading all the work and catching up and stuff. . . . And like dad says 'What are you spending money on?' and I say 'Well I photocopy it, eat it and drive it'. (Laura, 20 years old)

Those who had travelled overseas had a similar experience in that their families and many of their friends had not left their island state.

> I don't think they've ever understood the travel thing. Like I love travelling, but you know they worry. My dad wouldn't set a foot out of Australia. Yeah, they worried about me. They were glad to have me back. (Fiona, 28 years old)

Among the interviewees, there was some variation in the strength of their relationships with their high school friends before leaving the Coast. However, for those who reflected fondly on these friendships, the observation that the interests they had shared with their peers had narrowed over time was a source of regret. Granted the complexity of friendships and relationships among the group of young people, a common theme emerged from the interviews regarding the growing gulf between young people who had never left the Coast and those who had. On returning to the Coast, either to visit or to move back home temporarily, young people noticed that their peers were following a more traditional (i.e., circa 1950s) path from school, to marriage, to mortgage and parenthood than themselves. In contrast, they saw themselves as following similar life-paths to their urban peers in that they were more likely to be moving into share houses, backpacking overseas, and moving in and out of relationships.

> All my friends are getting married and things like that. Very homely sort of thing, which is cool ... but I don't feel like I fit in as much as I used to. And it's

probably ... it's not because I'm bigger or better than them, it's just I've lived a completely different life for the last couple of years. (Joe, 26 years old)

Such observations are supported by quantitative research that maps changes in young people's transitions out of home over the past three decades (Dwyer & Wyn 1998).

In general, the interviewees felt that in living away from the Coast they were able to lead a more carefree and youthful lifestyle than their peers, whose social lives tended to be enmeshed within their extended family's lives. On returning home, young people discovered that their mates' commitments to their fiancés and their mortgages often gained precedence over catching up with old friends.

> Yeah it's hard though now to keep in contact with your friends because everyone's got girlfriends and there are strings attached. And basically once upon a time you just go there, go here, and who cares, you know, you just tell your parents and you're gone. And now you've got to ask and say 'Are you sure it's OK for me to drop by?' and that sort of thing. (Chris, 21 years old)

Such different priorities meant that the interviewees had begun to view the reunion with old friends as an obligation rather than a pleasure.

Young people also noted emerging differences in their perceptions of the cultural and natural landscape of the Coast. Where they had once taken the beach and the bush for granted, they now had an appreciation of the natural beauty of the area and the opportunities to hike, pedal and paddle within the region. In contrast, their views of the culture of the Coast were more critical. The Coast had become more insular and more conservative in their eyes in contrast to other places. They felt that above all there was a fear of external ideas and knowledge.

> I sort of made a comparison between building bridges here and over there, and they shy away from it. A bit to say well this is how we do it here and that's the way it stays and like I was only prattling away and making conversation, but they sort of took it as well we don't want to change our ways and one thing and another. But it wasn't meant like that, but that's just that the way they took it. (Robert, 23 years old)

Others noted that this distrust of new ideas found expression in people's preoccupation with how other people in the community dress and behave, and in the rigid adherence to traditional, Christian values.

Managing Spatial and Cultural Distance

In view of the emerging differences between young people and the life-world of their hometown, young people sought to manage situations in which these differences were called to attention and to diffuse tensions between themselves and their families and friends. While in some instances such differences aroused humour, other times they became a site of conflict between friends, among families and within the workplace. Often these differences generated feelings of guilt and shame among those

who had left the Coast as minor cultural misunderstandings were symptomatic of their intentions to 'move on' from the Coast and the Coastal way of life. The following analysis focuses on the strategies employed by the interviewees to manage these situations. While the analysis draws attention to four defining strategies, it is indicative rather than exhaustive, with young people employing different strategies at different points of time and adapting such strategies in regards to their own circumstances.

Developing Multiple Selves, Multiple Lives

In response to the emerging gulf between their present and former lives, the most common strategy employed by the young people was simply to adjust themselves, their behaviour, their attitudes and their conversation to the particular context in which they found themselves. They understood that beyond travel anecdotes and examination results, their experiences outside the region were of limited interest to their families and friends.

> And you know sometimes people just close off. Like when they find out you've gone away like they don't want to talk about it. (Fiona, 28 years old)

Instead, young people focused their conversation on the priorities of their families and friends when they spent time on the Coast, noting that at times such conversation was fairly stilted.

> They're not overly interested in anything I do . . . and you find you run out of stuff to talk about. (Nicole, 22 years old)

Those who had acquired new political attitudes and new cosmopolitan habits such as drinking espresso coffee since moving away from home also felt that it was easier to leave these attitudes and practices behind on returning to the Coast.

These young people worked at retaining a clear distinction between their Coastal home and their new life. Although Emma is very close to her mother and enjoys spending time on the Coast, she expresses some discomfort at the prospect of her family visiting her on the mainland.

> Yeah, it's a bit awkward though when mum comes over because you sort of get used to everyone you're used to seeing here, and mum's from back home. Or if I have a friend from back home come here it feels like sort of two worlds, you know, two separate worlds, and it's a bit weird. (Emma, 19 years old)

While Emma is comfortable with her multi-vocal self, she finds it difficult to interact with a mixed audience of family and friends who hold different expectations about who she is.

Affirming Shared Local Values and Practices

While many of the young people were relieved to escape the confines of a fairly 'conservative', 'working' culture, they observed that during their travels they at times felt a stronger affinity with those on the Coast than the new circles in which they had begun to move. Kate's experiences are illustrative. She reflected that unlike most in her family she wanted to go to university. Although she imagined that she would have much in common with her fellow students, instead she felt isolated from those she viewed as self-assured, middle-class and unaware of the realities of working life, welfare and poverty. Such experiences made her more aware of what she held in common with those at home: similar life experiences and shared political values. Consequently, she has forged new friendships with those who share similar life experiences in her new neighbourhood.

Others noted that although leaving the Coast had changed them and their relationships, they continued to share interests with friends back home, and it was this common ground that they emphasised when they returned to visit the Coast. While for some this entailed 'drinking', 'mucking around', and going on 'adventures' at night, for others there was a common sporting or social club that continued to provide some connection with their friends back home (Neil, 24 years old; Tim, 21 years old). In referring to himself as a 'Leo at large', Sean (19 years old) reaffirms his commitment to the local progress association back home. On leaving the Coast, he did not hand in his membership; instead, he actively sought out new opportunities for the association beyond the Coast's borders. When he returns home he notes that he is able to 'snap back into it' as the association and its activities provide a common point of interest, rather than his experiences elsewhere.

> Michelle: What do you have in common with friends back here?
> Sean: Arh they've changed, but at Leos I just snap back into it. We always just want to have fun and it's pretty easy to get back into it. No one wants to know what you've done at uni and I don't want to tell them so it's fine.

Exchanging gossip with friends and family over the telephone or on return visits was also recognised as an important means of staying in touch with life on the Coast.

Avoiding Differences by Dissolving Ties

For some young people, the more time they spent away from the Coast, the more they felt that they no longer belonged or identified with their hometown. These young people acknowledged that catching up with friends had begun to feel like a chore, and they resented criticisms from friends who had stayed on the Coast that they did not make efforts to keep in touch with them.

> I phoned them, but none of them phoned me back because I'm the one that has left I'm expected to be the one that does all the work keeping in contact. . . . You've got

to see them—like you've got to turn up and see them, and then you've got to catch up with them, and then you've got to see them before you go—so you've got to do three trips for everyone. I just couldn't be bothered last time I was home. (Emma, 19 years old)

In response, young people sought to manage emerging differences between themselves and friends through either dissolving ties with former friends or taking a break from these friendships in the short term. On return trips to the Coast, David noted that he preferred to spend time on his own, rather than make the compromises and concessions required to maintain old ties.

I just don't associate myself with them anymore cos sort of our paths have gone different ways. I think there are only about two people out of all the people I knew from high school who I even talk to or even have any contact with anymore. (David, 19 years old)

While some young people sought a temporary respite from their siblings and parents, none sought to abandon these relationships.

Reinventing Relationships

Another strategy employed by young people was to invest time and effort into reviving their waning relationships with friends and family, and to place their relationships on a new footing. Although the ritual of going home was sufficient to reaffirm familial ties, many sought to develop and reinvent their relationship with their parents:

Michelle: So how would you say your relationship with your parents changed after you left?
Robert: I would say it's strengthened it. I think we've always been able to talk, but I think it just changed because as you get older you become adults, you mature and so you behave like adults, like adult conversations, and it becomes a more mature relationship. (23 years old)

The opportunity to re-establish their relationship with their parents was particularly important for those who felt that there were substantial differences between the pathways they had chosen and their parents' lives. Kate observes that despite having access to the types of career opportunities that were denied to her father, she shares with him a passion for politics—an important foundation for their adult relationship.

My father's always been very, very political but never spoken about it . . . Before I went to university I suppose our relationship was based on the types of things that it's based on when you're young—things like you know 'Where are you going?', 'What are you doing?' or things like going out to lunch or going to the movies—but since I've been to university and I've focused my degree in politics, now that I come home I think that's the way we connect. (Kate, 23 years old)

Interviewees also mentioned that they had begun to see their siblings in a new light, with such relationships increasingly being based on shared life experiences, rather than sibling rivalry (Neil, 24 years old; Lisa, 25 years old; Nicole, 22 years old).

This strategy of reinvention also surfaced in discussions of their hometown. While some of the interviewees sought to distance themselves increasingly from the Coast, others were keen to redefine the identity of the Coast and they hoped for some generational renewal of the old Coastal formula (i.e., conservative, insular and industrial).

Discussion

The above analysis of young people's experiences of leaving their rural hometowns provides insight into both the consequences of rural economic restructuring for community and family life, and the ways in which young people manage the interrelated processes of geographical out-migration and social advancement. This concern with the cultural consequences of youth migration is consistent with contemporary research, which has sought to add some 'biographical flesh' to the study of migration (Jones 2004). However, while much of this recent research has focused on situating young people's migratory pathways in the context of recent changes in youth transitions (i.e., from adolescence to adulthood and from school to work), and explaining migratory behaviour, the earlier analysis shifts attention to the practical management of both 'migration' and 'inhabitance'. In doing so, the study draws on an interactive and performative understanding of social identity as articulated in the work of Goffman (1959/1971) and recast within recent work on subject formation and self-regulation of the body (Butler 1990; Hall & du Gay 1996). According to this view, the self is no longer viewed as a fixed and stable referent, but rather it is strategic and positional (i.e., enacted in particular localities). Here the notion of a contained and coherent self is displaced in favour of a multi-vocal and hybrid notion of identity. In relation to young people negotiating the transition from the rural home to new urban territories, the analysis highlighted the ways in which young people drew on partial identities in different contexts in order to, at times, downplay emerging differences between themselves and their families, and alternately to establish new points of connection. Within a performative framework, the self is also viewed as a necessarily open-ended and incomplete project. Consistent with this approach, the analysis traced the key strategies employed by young people from the Coast to manage emerging differences between themselves and their families; however, it was recognised that these young people were employing various strategies in different contexts and that such strategies may be adapted over time.

This shift in analytical focus represents an important extension of the biographical approach to the study of youth migration. One of the key problems in the application of a biographical approach within youth migration research is that a prescribed biographical schema is not able to capture the dynamic nature of the migration process, nor can it accommodate the growing diversity in young people's pathways

out of home. While the gaze of youth migration research encompasses a range of transitions experienced by young people (i.e., leaving school, leaving the family home, leaving the rural village) and the breadth of young people's life-projects, the shift from 'stereotypes' to 'biographical' types has entailed an extension rather than a disruption of the formula of typologising young people. For example, in her study of youth migration from the Scottish Borders region, Jones' distinguishes between 'tourists' and 'vagabonds' (i.e., those who retain a 'nostalgic affection' for their childhood home compared with those that 'have no sense of spatial identity') (Jones 1999a, p. 18) and between 'pathfollowers' and 'trailblazers' (i.e., those following an 'established pattern of migration and social class' compared with those 'who have no family precedent to guide them') (Jones 1999b, p. 156). While classifications are essential in operating in and making sense of the world, they are never value-neutral. Instead, as Durkheim and Mauss (1903/1963) observed in their early study of primitive classification, classifications are social in origin and as such inherently hierarchical. Consequently, the construction of typologies inevitably entails a distinction between 'heroes' and 'victims' in accordance with contemporary mores and policy priorities (e.g., the valorisation of the geographically and socially mobile, above those who stay at home). In relation to international migration, Ahmed . note that the task of the researcher is

> not to categorize 'home; as a condition distinct from 'migration', or to order them in terms of their relative value or cultural salience, but to ask how uprootings and regroundings are enacted—affectively, materially and symbolically—in relation to one another. (2004, p. 2)

A further issue raised by this analysis of young people leaving their rural hometowns relates to the enduring question of class. While the study initially sought to examine how relationships were managed over geographic distance, the interviews revealed that young people were also concerned about the process of social mobility; in particular, the cultural gaps that were opening up between themselves and their families after leaving the Coast. Accordingly, the analysis focused attention on the way in which young people's identification with their 'industrial, working class' community was challenged and reconfigured on leaving home, and the strategies that they used to reconcile these emerging differences. Despite young people having left the Coast in order to take up educational and employment opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to them, this sense of personal advancement and change was both a source of pride and shame. Although some were pleased that they had left the Coast behind and were keen to distinguish themselves from their peers who had stayed, others saw the emerging gulf between themselves and their families and friends as a source of embarrassment and they tried to deflect attention away from their life beyond the Coast. The ways in which geographic out-migration is imbricated with social advancement is an under-developed theme in recent youth migration research, which has instead largely sought to explain how class affects young people's migration pathways (Jones 1995, 1999b; Jamieson 2000). In contrast,

the present analysis draws attention to class as a 'lived experience' (White & Wyn 2004) and the way young people manage cultural difference and social inequality in everyday life.

Concluding Note

In summary, this study extends recent work on youth migration by shifting the focus away from explaining why certain types of young people are more mobile than others, towards a closer examination of how young people experience and manage the process of moving away and moving on from their rural hometown. In tracing the strategies employed by young people to manage familial and communal ties on leaving home, the study gives voice to the personal difficulties young people from rural, industrial communities face in responding to competing injunctions that they leave their hometown in order to develop themselves and to 'get ahead', but also that they maintain their connection to their home community.

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