

DISTRIBUTION AND MIGRATION OF RURAL  
NEBRASKA HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES:  
CLASS OF 1963

An Abstract of a Thesis  
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by  
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## ABSTRACT

Questionnaire-generated data from 128 1963 graduates from a dozen rural Nebraska high schools are used to describe and interpret their migration behavior during the ensuing 22 years.

To a substantial degree the migration behavior of the study population duplicates the conventional wisdom as it appears in the literature on rural-to-urban migration. Academic ability as measured by grades was positively related to the incidence of migration. Similarly, the populations of destinations were selective of migrants who had shown greater academic competence; as the grades rose, so did the population of the counties where the respondents now live.

If only females had been considered with respect to their migration patterns, the relationships described above would have been much stronger. The gender-related hypothesis that "females tend to be more migratory than males over intermediate distances" was supported by the data.

The significant difference between the findings of this study and the conventional wisdom was that the migration experience of the males was quite different from that of the females. There was no detectable relationship between the pre-college academic performance of the males and the incidence of migration, although those who migrated farthest did include a disproportionate number of graduates with higher grades.

The males also failed to duplicate the pattern of females in their selections of destinations; larger places were not selective of academically successful males.

I have uncovered no statistically verifiable explanation for these discrepancies; but it is possible that the greater-than-expected frequency and distance of migration among males with lower high school grades stemmed from military service (less escapable through enrollment in colleges) during the Vietnam War.

The data support the positive relationships between occupation and income on the one hand and the incidence of migration on the other; the proportions of migrants holding positions as professionals or administrators and earning more than \$34,999 a year was nearly three times as great for the farmer and nearly two times as great for the latter.

Both migrants and nonmigrants were motivated most strongly by occupational opportunity, although for the nonmigrant, by a narrow margin, thus confirming the conclusions of most previous research that migrants were more motivated by career opportunities than any other. The inclusion of an explicit query concerning the importance of family and community ties in residential choice permitted direct comparison with economic motivation and yielded the information that nonmigrants perceived these ties to be roughly coequal with career choices as motivations.