

The Social Selectivity of Migration Flows Affecting Britain's Larger Conurbations: An Analysis of the 1991 Census Regional Migration Tables

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Abstract

Little is known about the social composition of migration affecting British cities, despite the currently high political salience of this issue. This is principally because of the very limited availability of reliable city-scale data on such migrant characteristics as occupation and income. This paper uses the Regional Migration Tables from the 1991 Census to document the migration of labour force members to and from Britain's larger conurbations, distinguishing six main Social Groups defined on the basis of occupation. It is found that all eight areas were net losers of economically active people, that all six Social Groups were generally contributing to these net losses and that, in every case except London, there was a strong positive relationship between social status and the rate of net out-migration to the rest of Britain. This latter case suggests the need for further work, which would benefit from the more detailed migration datasets that are promised from the 2001 Census.

Key words: Metropolitan migration, social selectivity, Great Britain, labour force, Population Census.

Introduction

It is well known that migration is a selective process, involving certain types of people more than others and varying by such attributes as age, ethnicity, housing tenure, economic position, qualifications and occupation (see, for instance, Jones, 1990: Chapter 8; Owen and Green, 1992; Boyle *et al.*, 1998). This means that places which are large net losers or gainers by migration are likely to see their population profiles change significantly. The net exodus from larger cities is the most important single element in migration between places in Britain, and there is concern that this process may be removing disproportionate numbers of their more wealthy and enterprising residents (Champion, 1996, 2000). This process is seen – by policy-makers and academics alike – as reinforcing trends towards the spatial concentration of less well-off social groups in these large cities and as reducing their attractiveness as living places for those in the more prestigious and better-paid jobs (see, for instance, Urban Task Force, 1999; DETR, 2000; Robson *et al.*, 2000), while also having an undesirable impact on the countryside (see Murdoch, 1998, for a review).

Despite the prevalence of this view of what is going on in Britain, even a cursory review of the international literature suggests that there is room for speculation about other possibilities. While the North American literature is

replete with examples of central-city losses of higher-income white households and a widening social divide between cities and suburbs (*e.g.* Downs, 1994; Kasarda *et al.*, 1997), there is already a large body of research on urban gentrification (see Smith & Herod, 1992; Ley, 1996; Hamnett, 2000). Studies on the USA are also providing evidence that lower-skill groups are being squeezed out of some of the more dynamic metropolitan regions (*e.g.* Lichter *et al.*, 1994; Frey, 1995). Now also well documented in Australia is the net loss of welfare recipients from some of its major cities and the latter's net gains of professional workers (Hugo & Bell, 1998). Thirdly, Continental European cities are generally reckoned to have done better at retaining middle-class residents than those in the New World (see, for example, papers in Summers *et al.*, 1993; Paddison, 2001; and Geyer, 2002).

In relation to the situation in the UK, some spatial aspects of the links between migration and social change are better understood than others. Certainly, judging by anecdotal and survey evidence on neighbourhood change, it would seem that major shifts have been occurring within cities. Particular attention has been given to the trend of social polarisation between declining inner city areas and the newer suburbs (Boddy *et al.*, 1995; Dorling & Woodward, 1996). Secondly, there have been a number of studies on the gentrification of city neighbourhoods that has been associated particularly with the movement of young professionals into more central locations within cities (*e.g.* Bondi, 1991; Butler, 1997; Carpenter & Lees, 1995). Thirdly, there has been a great deal of interest in the movement of middle-class people into the countryside, much of it set within the wider debate on counterurbanisation (*e.g.* Jones *et al.*, 1984; Cloke *et al.*, 1991; see also Champion *et al.*, 1998, and Murdoch, 1998). In terms of longer-distance flows, there have been valuable insights into the social composition of inter-regional migration and its impact on regional population profiles, most notably in Fielding's (1992, 1998) development and testing of the 'escalator region' concept and in research on the gender dimension of regional migration (Fielding & Halford, 1993; Boyle & Halfacree, 1995).

By contrast, much less is known in statistical terms about the role of migration in producing social change at the scale of the city and urban region, and especially the overall volumes of movement by socioeconomic characteristics and the net balance between inflows and outflows. For instance, to what extent have Britain's larger cities been net losers of economically active people through migration to the rest of Britain? Have all social classes contributed more or less equally to such losses, or has there been a clear difference in migration patterns and rates between groups of higher and lower status? How far has the net loss of economically active people been a one-way exodus as opposed to being the balance between much larger numbers of out-migrants and in-migrants? How consistent have the levels and composition of migration been over time? It is these sorts of questions that the present paper seeks to answer.

The rest of the paper is arranged in three sections. First, we set out the methodology of this study, in particular looking in more detail at the shortcomings of mainstream data sources before describing the relative advantages of the dataset used for this study and, admittedly, also its weaker points. The second section then presents the results of analysing the 1991 Census data on the social

composition of migration between Britain's largest urban concentrations and the rest of the country, looking first at gross outward movement from these conurbations, then their inflows and finally their net migration balance. The concluding section summarises the results and assesses the level of confidence that can be placed in them, before looking forward to the possibilities of more detailed analysis promised by the 2001 Census.

Data source and approach

To answer these questions, it is necessary to have data on the origins and destinations of migrants, coded to a geographical unit that can be used to represent urban regions around Britain, and on the migrants' social status, together with data on the whole relevant population that can be used to calculate rates of migration. In practice, this type of data is not easy to come by in Britain, at least not in sufficiently large samples to be confident about the results. One source, however, offers some possibilities in this regard; namely, the Regional Migration Tables of the Population Census of Great Britain (not Northern Ireland), produced for the first time from the 1981 Census and again from the 1991 Census. The nature of this source, however, strongly influences the approach that the present study can take. This section expands on each of these points.

In terms of data limitations, it is important to emphasise the value of having information on incomes or a direct surrogate like occupation. In Britain in the past, the socio-economic aspects of urban-scale migration have normally been studied by means of less direct indicators like economic position (*e.g.* employed, unemployed, retired), housing tenure (*e.g.* owner occupied, renting) and car availability, all of which suffer from problems of crudeness or poor specificity. Attempts at using the more direct indicators, however, come up against three problems. Firstly, some migration data sources (*e.g.* National Health Service Central Register and the Special Migration Statistics of the 1981 and 1991 Censuses) do not provide any information on the income or occupational characteristics of migrants. Secondly, some sources are based on relatively small samples and cannot give reliable results at sub-regional level for a phenomenon that affects only a small minority of the population each year, *e.g.* General Household Survey and British Household Panel Study. (Only 4% of people move between local authorities in an average year, even fewer between urban regions.) Thirdly, some sources record the social characteristics of residents who have changed address, but do not distinguish people moving into an area from local movers and provide no information at all on people leaving it, *e.g.* Census Local Base Statistics and Small Area Statistics.

By contrast, the Population Census's Regional Migration Tables (RMT) can be used to examine the social composition of migration flows within Great Britain (OPCS, 1991; Dale & Marsh, 1993). This is a much neglected data set. It received only a single mention in the two-volume study which a decade ago provided a benchmark review of migration in the UK (Champion & Fielding, 1992; Stillwell *et al.*, 1992). In particular, there has been only one previous study based on its occupational tables, namely the gender-based analysis of service-class migration in 1980-81 by Boyle & Halfacree (1995). Unlike the area-

based tables produced from the 1981 and 1991 Censuses but like their Special Migration Statistics (SMS), the RMT has the supreme advantage of providing data on out-migration from areas as well as on migrant residents, enabling the comparison of migration both from and to places and making possible the calculation of the net effects of migration. Moreover, unlike the SMS from these two Censuses, the RMT provides data on the socio-economic group (SEG) of migrants. It therefore has the potential to shed light on the role of migration in helping to alter the social structure of British cities.

Admittedly, the RMT also suffers from certain shortcomings, which restrict the options for examining the changing social geography of migration flows. The most frustrating restriction for present purposes is that, while considerable spatial breakdown is provided for migration flows within regions, a full matrix of migration exchanges with the rest of Great Britain can be produced only for standard regions (which, for Census purposes, include Inner and Outer London), the six English metropolitan counties in England and the Scottish Regions. Also frustrating is that the migration data collected by the Census refers only to changes of address in the 12 months leading up to Census night and thereby says nothing about the migration taking place during the other nine years of an intercensal decade. A further weakness is that no information is available on migrants before their move, with the result that it is impossible to give a true measure of the net effect of migration on places for personal characteristics that can change over time, such as occupation.

In addition, limitations also need to be recognised in terms of the coverage of migrants. First of all, the SEG data in the Census is based on a 10% sample and – in the 1991 Census at least – includes only those who were at least 16 years old, economically active, not on a Government scheme and with a job within the last ten years. Secondly, the Census migration data omits those who were missed by the Census and also those who had changed address over the past year but failed to indicate this on their Census form. Nationally, according to the initial quality checks after the 1981 and 1991 Censuses, this was estimated to have caused net under-enumeration of migrants by some 10%. This figure, however, needs to be seen as a minimum because it does not allow fully for the 'missing million' phenomenon.¹ Thirdly, in the analysis of migration flows between specified places, we are forced to ignore migrants who did not specify their previous address clearly enough for it to be coded, these instead being classified as 'origin not stated'. Nationally in 1991, this amounted to 6.1% of enumerated migrants. In total, therefore, an estimated one in six of actual migrants is excluded from the present study. Clearly, while the RMT are valuable because of their uniqueness, their shortcomings mean that conclusions drawn from their analysis must be treated with some caution.

As regards the information on social status, the RMT provides SEG details on the basis of an 18-fold classification of the SEGs. This is too detailed for our present purposes, both in terms of the aim of establishing the broad patterns and in relation to the volumes of flows affecting individual cities. Moreover, the use of fewer categories reduces the likelihood of people changing category during the year of their move. Here, therefore, the 18 separate SEG headings are aggregated into seven categories. As shown in Table 1, we recognise six main SEG

Table 1. Socio-economic groups in the Census Regional Migration Tables.

Socio-economic groups		
1	Employers and managers in large establishments	
2	Employers and managers in small establishments	
3	Professional workers – self-employed	
4	Professional workers – employees	
5.1	Ancillary workers and artists	
5.2	Foremen and supervisors – non-manual	
6	Junior non-manual workers	
7	Personal service workers	
8	Foremen and supervisors – manual	
9	Skilled manual workers	
10	Semi-skilled manual workers	
11	Unskilled manual workers	
12	Own account workers (other than professional)	
13	Farmers – employers and managers	
14	Farmers – own account	
15	Agricultural workers	
16	Members of armed forces	
17	Inadequately described and not stated occupations	
SEG groupings ('Social Groups')		Social Class equivalent
3,4	Professional	I
1,2	Managerial	II
5.1	Technical	II
5.2, 6	Other non-manual	IIIN
8, 9, 12	Skilled manual	IIIM
7, 10, 11	Other manual	IV, V
13-17	Other	–

groupings, comprising four non-manual groupings and two manual. A seventh, residual grouping contains the three farming-related SEGs (which account for hardly any migration to and from metropolitan areas) plus armed forces personnel and the inadequately described. As also shown in Table 1, the six main SEG groupings parallel quite closely the Social Class divisions of the population (see Appendix for more details about the derivation of these groupings and the degree of correspondence with Social Class), but so as to emphasise that some differences exist, we refer to our groupings as Social *Groups*. Most of the tables of results, below, will also show the aggregate data for the three more skilled non-manual groupings, referred to as Professional, Managerial and Technical (PMT).

In terms of spatial focus, as suggested above, we are forced to limit the study to a relatively small number of areas that approximate to what are traditionally recognised as Britain's larger conurbations. The most relevant sub-regional areas in the RMT are Greater London and England's six metropolitan counties (Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands

and West Yorkshire). In addition, we use Strathclyde Region as a proxy for the Central Clydeside Conurbation. Unfortunately, however, it is not possible to include any large urban centres in the shire (non-metropolitan) counties of England and Wales because the RMT does not provide full data on their out-migration. Even with the eight 'conurbations' analysed here, it is recognised that they are not consistently defined. At one end of the scale, Greater London is much underbounded, because the administrative area used here (now managed by the Greater London Authority) fails to embrace the full extent of the capital's continuously built-up area, let alone its wider functional region. At the other extreme, Glasgow, even if defined on the basis of the traditional Central Clydeside Conurbation, makes up only around two-thirds of Strathclyde's total population. This is another reason why the results should be evaluated carefully, though the main problem caused by differential bounding – the effect on cross-boundary rates of movement – is side-stepped by comparing conurbations on the ranking of the rates for Social Groups rather than on the rates themselves.

In terms of approach, therefore, the central question investigated in this paper is the extent to which migration has the effect of removing disproportionately large numbers of the more skilled and better-off elements of these conurbation's labour forces. The main emphasis is on whether the rates of net loss are higher for professional, managerial and technical workers than for less skilled non-manual groups and manual workers. This analysis includes examining the degree of regularity in the relationship between occupational status and migration rates across the six main Social Groups identified. Throughout, the focus is on differences between the Social Groups at each of the eight conurbations individually.

Migration patterns, 1990-91

Gross out-migration

The results of analysing the 1991 RMT data on gross out-migration from the eight conurbations to the rest of Great Britain are shown in Table 2. The top panel shows the rate of outflow for the 12 months leading up to the Census by Social Group. This rate is expressed as a percentage of the relevant number of residents recorded at the 1991 Census, *i.e.* at the end of the migration year, as there was no equivalent data for the start or midpoint of that year. By way of an example, the '2.95' for GL signifies that in the year 1990-91 the number of migrants from Greater London to the rest of Great Britain that were economically active and classified by SEG represented 2.95% of the number of people that the 1991 Census recorded as living in London, economically active and classified by SEG.

For the reasons mentioned in the previous section, however, our principal interest is on the relativities between the six main Social Groups for each area. These are summarised in the lower panel of Table 2, with the highest rate ranked '1' and the lowest '6'. Using again the example of London, the pattern is very clear-cut. The rate of out-migration was highest for the Professional group, for which the rate of migration is equivalent to a loss of almost 5% of London's population in this group. The group with the lowest rate is Other Manual, with out-migration equivalent to just under 2% of the estimated population at risk. In

Table 2. Gross out-migration from eight conurbations, 1990-91, by Social Group.

Social Group	Greater London		Greater Manchester		Merseyside		South Yorkshire		Tyne & Wear		West Midlands		West Yorkshire		Strathclyde	
	Greater London	Greater Manchester	Greater Manchester	Merseyside	Merseyside	South Yorkshire	South Yorkshire	South Yorkshire	South Yorkshire	South Yorkshire	West Midlands	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	West Yorkshire	West Yorkshire	Strathclyde
Volume (10% sample)																
All Groups	9101	1975	1141	1103	964	2320	1382	1426								
Professional	892	255	123	109	125	244	199	184								
Managerial	2016	420	182	177	164	488	348	238								
Technical	1711	377	228	232	175	419	931	247								
<i>PMT sub-total</i>	4619	1052	533	518	464	1143	878	669								
Other non-manual	2017	406	223	207	203	465	293	258								
Skilled manual	1099	193	123	125	101	348	142	131								
Other manual	1068	247	204	179	154	303	196	245								
Other	298	77	58	74	42	61	73	123								
Rate (%)																
All Groups	2.95	1.77	2.04	2.02	2.11	2.08	1.74	1.50								
Professional	4.72	5.56	6.13	5.58	7.09	5.51	5.82	4.51								
Managerial	3.75	2.74	2.79	2.71	3.33	3.44	2.70	2.11								
Technical	3.84	2.93	3.14	3.90	3.33	3.73	3.21	1.94								
<i>PMT sub-total</i>	3.93	3.21	3.38	3.59	3.88	3.86	3.30	2.38								
Other non-manual	2.62	1.66	1.67	1.88	1.92	1.95	1.02	1.23								
Skilled manual	2.03	0.74	1.03	0.91	0.95	1.26	0.81	0.65								
Other manual	1.98	0.93	1.47	1.24	1.29	1.07	0.89	1.05								
Other	4.92	4.78	5.88	7.32	6.89	3.33	5.06	5.02								
Ranking of six Social Groups in each area																
Professional	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1								
Managerial	3	3	3	3	=2	3	3	2								
Technical	2	2	2	2	=2	2	2	3								
Other non-manual	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4								
Skilled manual	5	6	6	6	6	5	6	6								
Other manual	6	5	5	5	5	6	5	5								

Note: see Table 1 for key to Social Groups. Ranking: 1 for highest rate.
 Source: migration data from 1991 Census Regional Migration Tables, Part 2, 10% sample, Tables 1 and 2; base population data from 1991 Census County Reports Table 92. Crown copyright.

between, the rankings indicate an almost perfect correlation between out-migration rate and social status. The only exception is that the rate for Managerial (full title 'Employers and managerial', see Table 1) was a little below that for Technical ('Associate professional and technical').

Looking across the eight conurbation areas (Table 2, lower panel), it is found that London's pattern for 1990-91 is replicated quite consistently. In every case, the Professional group heads the rankings, and the three PMT groups always have higher rates than the three lower-paid Social Groups, all ranked 4-6. Within the PMT range, London's pattern of 1-3-2 is found in all cases except for Strathclyde and Tyne and Wear. Even so, the difference in actual rate between the Technical and Managerial groups is small compared with the gap between these two and the Professional group (see upper panel). Among the lower three Social Groups, Other Non-manual comes in fourth place for all seven other areas, as in London, but the West Midlands is the only conurbation that parallels London in having Other Manual with the higher out-migration rate of the two other groups. Elsewhere, it is the Skilled Manual group that is found to be leaving at the higher rate.

In sum, therefore, in 1990-91 these large cities recorded much higher rates of out-migration for the professional and managerial elements of their labour force than for the three groups of lower-paid workers. Moreover, a pretty strong relationship has been found between out-migration rate and social status. Where there are deviations from a perfect (1-2-3-4-5-6) 'social gradient' of out-migration propensities, possibly this may be due to a simple factor such as age differences between the groups, given the well-known fact that young adults tend to change address much more often than people of older working age and to be more oriented towards the larger cities. For instance, the average age of Skilled Manual workers is likely to be older than that of Other Manual, if only because it generally takes time for individuals to rise from the latter to the former. Similarly, people working in Associate Professional and Technical jobs are likely, on average, to be at an earlier stage of their working lives than those classified as Professional and Managerial. This explanation, however, cannot be tested here because the RMT provides no crosstabulation of migrants by SEG and age together. Nevertheless, this part of the analysis clearly confirms that it is the more skilled residents of Britain's larger cities that are more likely to be moving out of them to the rest of the country.

Gross in-migration

The finding that better-off people are disproportionately involved in out-migrant flows from these eight conurbations, while supported by much anecdotal evidence and the results of surveys of rural in-migrants, is only part of the picture. As noted by Ravenstein well over a century ago in his 'laws of migration', a movement of people in one direction is almost invariably accompanied by a movement in the opposite direction – 'current' and 'countercurrent' in his terms, with the former denoting the larger of the two (Ravenstein, 1885; see Jones, 1990: 189). Metropolitan Britain is no exception to this 'law', though given the great attention accorded to the urban exodus, it may come as a surprise to see how large the reverse flow actually is for most of these cities.

The data on gross in-migration to the eight conurbation areas, analysed on the same basis as for out-migration above, is presented in Table 3. Again, as an example to aid interpretation of this information, the '2.28' for GL means that 2.28% of the London's residents who were in the labour force and classified by SEG in the 1991 Census had been living in some other part of Great Britain. It would be a mistake to gross this figure up for a whole decade and suggest that in 1991 over one in five of London's labour force had moved to London over the previous ten years. This is because this would not allow for retirements and deaths among these migrants, let alone their re-migration out of London within that longer time-span. These same factors will also have affected the picture shown in Table 3, reducing the volumes below their actual, but to a more limited extent given that these events are much less likely to occur within 12 months of people's arrival in London. Nevertheless, this signifies a substantial movement of economically active people into London, amounting to over 70,000 when grossed up from the 10% sample.

Moreover, as for out-migration, participation in in-migration varies considerably between the six Social Groups. In fact, the pattern of rankings for each conurbation, shown in the lower panel of Table 3, is almost identical to that for out-migration in Table 2, except that it is even more consistent across the eight areas. Strathclyde is the only area that departs from the 1-3-2-4-6-5 ordering across the status/income scale, and that only because the Technical and Managerial groups share the same rate there. Moreover, the similarity with out-migration patterns extends to the distribution of rates, shown in the upper panel. The in-migration rate for the Professional group is much higher than any other group, while the rates for the Technical and Managerial groups are quite closely matched except in the cases of London and, to a lesser extent, the West Midlands conurbation. Finally, the rates for Other Non-manual tend to fall midway between these two groups and the rates for the two manual groups.

On this basis of this evidence, therefore, the substantial migration exchanges recorded by these cities is not producing as great a change in their labour-force and social composition as might be conceived. It is not the case, as is sometimes portrayed for declining regions at one end of the scale and for neighbourhoods suffering social exclusion at the other, that in-migrants are predominantly people with few skills and low incomes. Rather than the 'double whammy' of better-off out-migrants being replaced by worse-off in-migrants, in the present case the 'law' of countercurrents would appear to apply as much to the separate Social Groups as to the overall migration flows. In the jargon used by Lee (1966) in his reformulation and extension of Ravenstein's ideas, migrants both to and from these conurbations are 'positively selected'.

Net migration balance

Comparison of the upper panels of Tables 2 and 3 reveals that in virtually every case the inflow rate is lower than the outflow rate or, in other words, except in two instances, every Social Group is a net loser of migrants across the eight conurbations. Table 4 gives the details of the absolute volume of net migration (based on the 10% sample of the census table on migration by occupation) and the rates expressed as a percentage of the relevant population base in 1991. It also

Table 3. Gross in-migration from eight conurbations, 1990-91, by Social Group.

Social Group	Greater London		Greater Manchester		Merseyside		South Yorkshire		Tyne & Wear		West Midlands		West Yorkshire		Strathclyde
	Greater London	Greater Manchester	Greater Manchester	Merseyside	Merseyside	South Yorkshire	South Yorkshire	Tyne & Wear	Tyne & Wear	West Midlands	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	West Yorkshire		
Volume (10% sample)															
All Groups	7042	1678	846	900	806	1685	1920	1216							
Professional	807	182	105	101	108	186	165	119							
Managerial	1389	326	153	160	129	295	291	206							
Technical	1534	325	175	154	143	330	254	233							
<i>PMT sub-total</i>	3739	833	433	415	380	811	710	558							
Other non-manual	1740	372	158	169	167	356	257	224							
Skilled manual	527	183	96	119	102	230	137	125							
Other manual	833	268	132	139	130	257	192	213							
Other	203	22	27	58	27	31	24	96							
Rate (%)															
All Groups	2.28	1.51	1.51	1.65	1.76	1.51	1.44	1.28							
Professional	4.27	3.97	5.23	5.17	6.13	4.20	4.82	2.92							
Managerial	2.59	2.12	2.35	2.45	2.62	2.12	2.26	1.83							
Technical	3.44	2.53	2.41	2.59	2.72	2.94	2.46	1.83							
<i>PMT sub-total</i>	3.18	2.54	2.74	2.87	3.18	2.74	2.67	1.99							
Other non-manual	2.26	1.53	1.18	1.54	1.58	1.49	1.00	1.07							
Skilled manual	0.97	0.70	0.80	0.87	0.96	0.83	0.63	0.62							
Other manual	1.55	1.01	0.94	0.96	1.09	0.91	0.87	0.91							
Other	3.35	1.37	2.74	5.74	4.43	1.69	1.66	3.92							
Ranking of six Social Groups in each area															
Professional	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1							
Managerial	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2							
Technical	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2							
Other non-manual	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4							
Skilled manual	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6							
Other manual	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5							

Note: see Table 1 for key to Social Groups. Ranking: 1 for highest rate.

Source: see Table 2. Crown copyright.

Table 4. Net migration for eight conurbations, 1990-91, by Social Group.

Social Group	Greater London	Greater Manchester	Merseyside	South Yorkshire	Tyne & Wear	West Midlands	West Yorkshire	Strathclyde
Volume (10% sample)								
All Groups	-2059	-297	-295	-203	-158	-635	-292	-210
Professional	-85	-73	-18	-8	-17	-58	-34	-65
Managerial	-618	-94	-29	-17	-35	-185	-57	-32
Technical	-177	-52	-53	-78	-32	-89	-77	-14
<i>PMT sub-total</i>	-880	-219	-100	-103	-84	-332	-168	-111
Other non-manual	-277	-34	-65	-38	-36	-109	-36	-34
Skilled manual	-572	-10	-27	-6	1	-118	-5	-6
Other manual	-235	21	-72	-40	-24	-46	-4	-32
Other	-95	-55	-31	-16	-15	-30	-49	-27
Rate (%)								
All Groups	-0.66	-0.26	-0.53	-0.37	-0.35	-0.57	-0.29	-0.22
Professional	-0.45	-1.59	-0.89	-0.41	-0.96	-1.31	-1.00	-1.59
Managerial	-1.14	-0.61	-0.45	-0.26	-0.71	-1.33	-0.44	-0.28
Technical	-0.40	-0.40	-0.73	-1.31	-0.61	-0.79	-0.75	-0.11
<i>PMT sub-total</i>	-0.75	-0.67	-0.63	-0.71	-0.70	-1.12	-0.63	-0.40
Other non-manual	-0.36	-0.14	-0.49	-0.35	-0.34	-0.46	-0.19	-0.16
Skilled manual	-1.05	-0.04	-0.23	-0.04	+0.01	-0.43	-0.18	-0.03
Other manual	-0.44	+0.08	-0.53	-0.28	-0.20	-0.16	-0.02	-0.14
Other	-1.57	-3.41	-3.14	-1.58	-2.46	-1.64	-3.40	-1.10
Ranking of six Social Groups in each area								
Professional	3	1	1	2	1	2	1	1
Managerial	1	2	5	5	2	1	3	2
Technical	5	3	2	1	3	3	2	5
Other non-manual	6	4	4	3	4	4	4	3
Skilled manual	2	5	6	6	6	5	5	6
Other manual	4	6	3	4	5	6	6	4

Note: see Table 1 for key to Social Groups. Ranking: 1 for highest rate of net out-migration.

Source: see Table 2. Crown copyright.

shows, in the bottom panel, the ranking of the six main Social Groups on the basis of the rate of net loss for each of the conurbation areas.

In relation to the selective impact of these areas' migration exchanges, the most conspicuous feature is that, in all eight cases, the percentage hit taken by the PMT aggregate is higher than for the all-group total (Table 4). Taken together, therefore, the Professional, Managerial and Technical groups were contributing disproportionately to these areas' net loss of labour. Similarly, looking at the three other social groups, there is only one case where the rate of net loss is higher than the all-group average for each conurbation, this being the Skilled Manual group for London. On the basis of this evidence, a very clear picture emerges of migration with the rest of the country eroding the higher-paid and better-qualified elements of these cities' populations at a faster rate than their lower-income elements.

Table 4 also allows an assessment of the extent of correlation between net migration rate and social status, made easier by the rankings shown in the lower panel. In most cases, the relationship is pretty strong. One conurbation – Greater Manchester – exhibits a perfect correlation, whereby the rate steps progressively down from the Professional group's highest rate of loss to an actual net gain of Other Manual workers. For three others – Tyne and Wear, West Midlands and West Yorkshire – the pattern comes close to this, with only one adjacent pair in each case needing to be switched to achieve that situation. A little further from the perfect fit are Merseyside and South Yorkshire (notably with their low net losses of the Managerial group) and Strathclyde (with a similarly low loss of Technical workers), but the broad relationship still prevails.

By contrast, Greater London departs quite radically from the norm, not only in the ranking but also in the sheer scale of the differences (Table 4). The most glaring difference is its low rate of net out-migration for the Professional category, which along with the rate for Technical (*i.e.* associate professional and technical) is as low as for Other Manual and Other Non-manual. Also distinctive is London's very high rate of loss of Skilled Manual workers, second only to Managerial and much higher than for Other Non-manual (which, everywhere else, is higher than for the Skilled Manual).

London's out-of-line pattern obviously merits further attention, especially if it is not the result either of the particular timing of this Census migration year at the height of a national economic recession or of some bias in the undercount problems mentioned above. Suffice it to say here that parallel analyses of the 1981 Census RMT data (not reported here because of shortage of space) produced very similar results, with the ranking of Social Groups for London's net migration for 1980-81 being almost identical to those just described and again markedly different from those of the other seven conurbations. Given that the level of undercount in the 1981 Census was much lower than that believed to be the case in 1991, this suggests a considerable degree of robustness. On the other hand, the migration year 1980-81 was, like 1990-91, situated in a period of national economic recession, so there is a possibility that it is specific to a particular phase of the economic cycle. It may therefore be worth waiting until the results of the 2001 Census are available before taking this analysis further. If London's distinctiveness is also found for 2000-2001, a year of strong national

growth and in the context of the UK's first One Number Census where full allowance has been made for undercount before generating the output tables, then we can confidently conclude that London's migration patterns are indeed distinctive – a point that is implied by Fielding's 'escalator region' concept but which has not been explicitly proven so far, because that work did not undertake similar tests for any other UK region with a major metropolitan centre.

Concluding remarks

This paper has addressed an issue that is central to the future of British cities, as portrayed in the literature on re-urbanization and set out in the government's quest for an 'urban renaissance'. There are widespread concerns that the 'urban exodus' may be selectively denuding cities of people who are more skilled, more enterprising and economically better-off. Data limitations tend to make the social selectivity of migration difficult to study consistently across the country at sub-regional and urban scales. The analysis described in this paper has made use of a data source which does allow this, albeit only once every ten years and only for Britain's eight largest urban concentrations.

The results of analysing the migration of people who are economically active and classified by socio-economic group in the census appear to provide clear empirical evidence in support of these concerns. As well as confirming that gross outflows from these eight conurbations were skewed towards the higher occupational groups, the study has shown that all eight places were net losers of economically active people, that all the main social categories tended to contribute to this process and that there is, in general, a strong positive relationship between the social status and rate of net out-migration. On a more positive note, there is one major exception to this last point in the form of Greater London, with its much more positive migration balance of professional and technical personnel than expected. Moreover, it has been shown that in-migration to all these cities is substantial and, like the gross outflows, is also skewed towards the higher-skill groups.

Finally, given the cautionary sounds about the nature of the data made earlier, it is important to attempt an assessment of the degree of confidence that can be placed in these results. Attention has already been drawn to the fact that around one in five of all migrants have had to be omitted from the study owing to the net undercounting of migrants and the 'origin not stated' cases. Additional people will have been excluded because they left the labour force during the pre-census year and therefore failed to qualify as part of the population tabulated in this part of the Census. Potentially the biggest limitation is the absence of information on people's status before their move. Though the impact of people changing occupation during the year will have been reduced by aggregating to just six broadly-based groups, this means that the net migration rates shown in Table 4 should be treated with care.

Nevertheless, a strong case can be made in support of the findings. First is the fact that both the general picture and London's exceptional nature have been identified not only for 1990-91 but also for ten years earlier. Given that the two censuses differed greatly in their estimated level of underenumeration, this suggests that these findings are robust and that the factors underlying them are

deep-seated. There is, however, the need to check that they are not associated only with periods of national economic recession, as 1980-81 and 1990-91 both were. Secondly, these two sets of findings fit expectations from other sources. As mentioned above, there is extensive survey evidence pointing to the skewed social distribution of people moving into more rural areas from the cities. Additionally, London's distinctiveness in seeing much lower net loss of its professional workers than expected from the experience of other cities conforms with observations of the much greater strength of gentrification there than in the large provincial conurbations. The promise of more spatially disaggregated data on the occupational characteristics of migrants from the 2001 Census raises the prospect of not only updating the picture but also allowing a more detailed and rigorous examination of the relationships between migration and social change across the whole of urban Britain. These more detailed analyses should also include a breakdown of the types of areas that these conurbations are exchanging labour-force members with, including the various types of other cities and towns as well as the countryside, and an assessment of these areas' relative importance in accounting for the disproportionate net loss of more skilled people from the largest cities.

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Note

1. Simpson & Middleton (1999) have examined the impact of the estimated 'missing million' undercount on migration in a counterurbanisation context and concluded that, while the basic pattern of net urban exodus is retained, the scale of net flows out of city districts in 1990-91 was considerably lower than indicated by the published migration data. On the other hand, the first results from the 2001 Census suggest that the overall level of undercount in the 1991 Census was significantly overestimated.

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Appendix: Correspondence of 'Social Groups' with Social Class

This study required migrants to be grouped on the basis of their social status, seen to equate broadly with wealth and economic power. The Regional Migration Tables in the 1981 and 1991 Censuses provide data on migrants classified by Socio-Economic Groups (SEGs), 18 in all (see Table 1, above). There is no single

Table A1. Correspondence of 'Social Groups' with Social Class.

Social Group	SEG	Social class					Armed forces	Other	Total	% in main class
		I	II	IIIN	IIIM	IV/V				
Professional	3,4	26,603						26,603	100.0	
Managerial	1,2	136	78,349	2,542	3,733	1,071		85,831	91.3	
Technical	5,1		72,756					72,756	100.0	
Other non-manual	5,2,6			139,774		3,163		142,937	97.8	
Skilled manual	8,9,12		5,833	5,425	112,217	6,274		129,772	86.5	
Other manual	7,10,11		573		12,639	130,528		143,740	90.8	
Other	13-17		4,451		225	4,686		3,396	n/a	
Total	1-17	26,739	161,962	147,741	128,814	145,722	3,396	621,679	n/a	
% in main group		99.5	93.3	94.6	87.1	89.6	n/a	n/a	n/a	

Note: Highlighted figures show the numbers in the Social Class that contributes most to each Social Group used in this paper, with the final column giving the percentage contribution of that Social Class to the Social Group. The unhighlighted figures in each of the Social Class columns are the numbers of those who have not been allocated to the indicative Group, with the bottom row showing the percentage of cases in each Class lying in their indicative Group. n/a= not applicable.

Source: Calculated from 1991 Census 2% Sample of Anonymised Records (ESRC/JISC purchase). Crown copyright.

way of grouping the SEGs. For the purposes of this study, it was decided to opt for a grouping of SEGs that replicated the traditional classification by Social Class as far as possible. Therefore, the 2% Sample of Anonymised Records was used to crosstabulate SEG and Social Class at the level of the individual person. Most SEGs were readily assigned to a Social Class, for instance with all members of SEG 5.1 falling into Social Class II and all members of SEG 5.2 falling in Class IIIN. Two SEGs, however, were problematic. SEG 12 (Own account) in 1991 had exactly half its members in Class IIIM and the remainder spread fairly evenly across all the others except Class I – this was allocated to Class IIIM. SEG 7 (Personal service workers) had nearly three-fifths of its members in Class IV and almost all the remainder in Class IIIM, so this was allocated to Class IV. On the basis of this information, the SEGs were aggregated into the six Social Classes, plus armed forces and inadequately described.

Three further adjustments were made. Inspection of data from the New Earnings Survey revealed a major difference in average gross weekly pay between managers and technical occupations, despite their both being in Social Class II, so SEGs 1 and 2 (employers and managers) were split off from SEG 5.1 (officially termed 'ancillary workers and artists' but principally comprising the SOC Major Group 3's 'associate professional and technical occupations'). Social Class V, almost entirely made up of SEG 11 (unskilled manual), was found to have relatively few migrants and was therefore merged with Social Class IV. Finally, the three farm-related SEGs (13, 14, 15), with virtually no migration into and out of the conurbation areas, were removed from the Social Class classification and put in a residual category with the armed forces and inadequately described.

The results are shown in Table A1. The categories are termed Social Groups (SG) because they are not the exact equivalent of Social Classes. The degree of correspondence between the two is shown by the percentages (in italics). For instance, the Professional SG is composed entirely of people in Social Class I, while at the same time accounting for 99.5% of people in Social Class I. Similarly, the Technical SG comprises only Social Class II members, though contributing under half of the latter. For present purposes, the important figures are those in the right-hand column, which show how 'pure' a SG is in 'class' terms. It can be seen that the Skilled Non-manual SG is nearly as 'pure' as the Professional and Technical SGs, while even the most poorly specified SG (Skilled Manual) has 86.5% of its members drawn from Class IIIM.