Grey Suit or Brown Carhartt: Narrative Transition, Relocation and Reorientation in the Lives of Corporate Refugees

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suburbs and working for a main company, dressing in a suit every day, going to the job, weekends off and getting to go somewhere on the weekend. I had that, but I wasn’t happy. I just didn’t know it at the time.

I first met Alan while looking for a place to live. I was moving here to conduct two years of ethnographic fieldwork. During a planning visit, I called about renting an apartment near the long blue arm of Lake Michigan, just known as Grand Traverse Bay. A local real estate agent walked me through the building. Answering my questions in polite conversation, I described my reason for moving here. He mentioned that I had escaped from behind the kitchen counter where he was quickly making repairs. In paint-splattered coveralls, he gripped a rusty knife with an expectant stare that never wavered, I took one step toward the door. Why would he tell a stranger about such a thing in my research? As it turned out, he and the real estate agent were husband and wife. In what would become a familiar storyline, they described how how they left well-paying jobs in southeast Michigan a few years earlier. Alan and I are two of many lifestyle migrants moving to the Grand Traverse region. It was in this move that Alan became a "corporate refugee."

In a popular book aimed at a aspiring portfolio audience of downsizing and downsized walkers that includes lifestyle migrants like Alan, Ruth Luban (2001) identifies emotional stages of leaving or losing one’s job. A tourist who specializes in behavioral health and issues of personal transition, Luban argues that leaving a work position causes not only a loss of income but also losses of identity and the structure of routine in everyday life—an experience that she metaphorically links to the relapse experience of being cast out of a household (cf. Gin 2000). Primarily a self-help manual, Luban’s intent is to provide a usable road map for the disillusioned who need to find a place of refuge for personal renewal and retreat (cf. Scheff 1977). The stages that Luban suggests describe a travel story analogous to the physical and psychological journey that lifestyle migrants make to find a place of personal refuge.

Alan moved away from his self-described destructive path through his decision to relocate from the upscale middle-class neighborhood of Detroit. Now he lives the rural area where I did my research in the northwest corner of Michigan’s Lower Peninsula Joins. As with most others whom I call “lifestyle migrants,” Alan constructs his narrative of relocation in a massive influx to stories of religious conversion. This story of real and metaphoric travel describes a process of self- transformation through which individuals reframe their actions and experience them as purposeful. Conversion stories are a special form of autobiographical narrative in which a person distinguishes his “real self” from an inauthentic self (e.g., Schultz 2001). Self-reframing in the process of conversion entails the creation of a new vision of oneself when long-time social roles and self-presentations are challenged by changes in self-interpretation together with changing personal practices (Rabinow 1995; see also Bryant and Lamb 1995).
PLACE OF LIFE-STYLE MIGRATION IN THE LITERATURE

Life-style Migration as a Quasi-Beck's "popp" in New Place Literature

Popp (1998) associates the idea of "life-style migration" with the concept of "popp" (Politics of Everyday Life) developed by Beck (1988). Beck's concept of "popp" is based on the idea of a new form of individualization in modern societies, characterized by a decline of class differentiation and a rise of individual choices and identities. Life-style migration, according to Popp, is a result of this individualization process, as people are more likely to make decisions based on personal preferences and lifestyle choices rather than social or economic factors.

Lifestyle Migration and the Non-Class Migrant's Experience

Mann (1999) argues that life-style migration is a type of non-class migration, which refers to people who move for reasons other than economic or social class. These individuals are often attracted to new places based on lifestyle factors such as climate, cultural diversity, or recreational opportunities. Mann emphasizes the importance of understanding life-style migration as a form of non-class migration, as it challenges traditional views of migration that are often based on economic or social class.

Lifestyle Migration and the Individualization of the Self

Giddens (1991) discusses the concept of the individualization of the self, which refers to the increasing autonomy and self-identification of individuals in modern societies. Life-style migration, according to Giddens, is a result of this individualization process, as people are more likely to make decisions based on personal preferences and lifestyle choices rather than social or economic factors.

Life-style Migration and the Experience of Exclusion

In her study of life-style migration, McEwan (1999) argues that these individuals are often excluded from traditional forms of social integration. They may face difficulties in finding employment, establishing social networks, and integrating into their new communities. This exclusion can lead to a sense of alienation and disconnection from the broader society, which can be a significant challenge for those who have chosen to migrate for non-economic reasons.

In conclusion, life-style migration is a complex phenomenon that has received increased attention in recent years. It is characterized by a variety of factors, including personal preferences, lifestyle choices, and the individualization of the self. Understanding life-style migration as a form of non-class migration is crucial for developing a more comprehensive understanding of migration, and the experiences of exclusion and alienation faced by these individuals is an important area for further research.

References:


Corporate Reform in the Midwest

to start over sometime else. "When I go back home, people just don't know. For me to get my personal situation where I liked, people had to get away from the environment where I didn't trust people. A life-style migrant who moved here as a single, thirty-something woman, Paula stroked a similar sense of damage from formal lives. "My lifestyle was too hectic, too much time working and commuting rush - rush - rushing and rushing. I decided to move and start over. After growing it because a completely different life, different pace. [At first] I would stand in line, at the bank, that city stop, stop my fingers and say, 'Come on, come on. I've got somewhere to go.' Everybody is staring so that you couldn't do anything, I was forced to slow down.

The act of relocation specifically the choices to relocate to a rural place, with perceived elements of neighborliness, greater authenticity, and slower pace, is an indispensible part of the story for life-style migrants. Numerous scholars, including Johnson and Kiesler (1998), Massey and Denton (1998), Hoyle, and Denton (1990) and Skaggs (1985, 1986), have contributed to the enduring American attachment to rural ideal and a persistent connection between notions of 'country' and 'simple' life and the 'Rural'.

Take all life-style migrants, Alan saw their work, family life, and personal identity as formed up in his sense of place - both his sense of the limits of what was possible for him in Detroit and the potential for new beginnings through relocating to the study area. In the Great Lakes State people see the region where the study area is located 'Up North' not only as a poetic geographic distinction, but more importantly in order to signify a fundamental state of being. For many, it is a way of literally thinking oneself spatially and orientating oneself ideologically to the ideal of 'The Rural'. In Michigan, the term is used to distinguish the northern part of the state from the condition of being in the heavily urban and suburbanized 'downstate' south.

While speaking of journeys to and from the study area, many life-style migrants refer to a defining moment of passage at the point where they felt that they created some kind of home. Doing work in the Midwest, the geographer's Adon-Clark and Yates (1982) favored the term 'home' as an objectively verifiable boundary. It is in part a kind of orienteering - a transitory way to distinguish distinct ecological systems. Ecological and climatic conditions of these ecosystems have favored different economies.

Today, broad fields of modern agriculture spread southward to give way to vast industrialized areas reaching out from Detroit along the river valleys. To the north, forest are now covering the prairie from the bay of Saginaw that helped lead Midwesterners return to the south. Although, for a range of ecological and economic reasons, a rough boundary may be set to exist, most important in the fact that passage from one region to another is instead with personal meaning for those who seek to find refuge in the rural place. Up North by crossing that line.

Urban-to-Rural Migration in Postindustrial America

Life-style migration is a recent expression of an approximately three-decade-old phenomenon of urban-to-rural migration in the United States. In some rural towns where agriculture and natural resource extraction have dominated local economies but have typically gone into decline, this migration has reversed a long-
standing history of population loss to urban areas over much of the twentieth century (e.g., see Boyle and Hafner 1998; Jobe 1992; Pandit and Withers 1999).

Demographers Kenneth Johnson and Calvin Beale (1996), in Fugitt and Beale (1998; Williams 1984) have examined the three dimensions of research on urban-to-rural migration and found that unanticipated growth in some Michigan's rural areas, documented in studies such as that by Borcherdt and colleagues (1996), was an important factor in the rural-to-urban "survival" that later would be documented in many parts of the United States (Aschauer and Morrison 1978).

Research on the emergent urban-to-rural migration in the 1960s to early 1970s challenged traditional models related to economic migration where relocation behavior was understood as driven by a desire to maximize individual earnings potential (cf. Jones 1962). In work that helped define early understandings of urban-to-rural migration, Calvin Hidalgo (1975) called this emergent trend a "rural demographic revival." The term non-economic migrant emerged as a way to describe this trend in which a significant number of migrants from five productive working years whose relocation to rural areas was often not driven by centers of business and recognized forms of economic opportunity. Non-economic migrants were thought to be driven by the changing demographics of urban-to-rural migration from the expected pattern of voluntary population movement where economic opportunity was the primary motivating force for dispersed rural actors (e.g., Henry 1976; Williams and Sefton 1976; see Stack 1966; non-economic motives for "rural migration" to the rural areas of black Appalachia).

Using aggregate, census-type data and conducted from a wide array of disciplinary approaches—from demography, rural sociology, and geography to economics and planning—studies of internal migration in the United States over the past 20 years have focused on providing macro-level explanations of the causes and consequences of migration patterns (e.g., Frey and Johnson 1998; Jones 1992; Fugitt and Withers 1999). Working primarily, if not exclusively, from secondary data sources, this system-level research provides an important content within which to embed more detailed, local and individual-level analysis. A limited number of scholars from a number of these disciplines, together with others from fields including anthropology, have taken a micro-level approach to explore processes of migration decision making and examine an array of economic and non-economic issues which weigh on these decisions (e.g., Bleyer and Neff 2006; De Jong and Gardiner 1981; Jones 2000). Rather than provide another model of decision making, the ethnographically informed interviews sought insight into how non-economic migration decisions are framed and understood by migrants as well as how these frames serve in shaping the narrative themes that inform identity and selfhood through the telling of a life story.

For life-style migrants, these individual themes are shared, by virtue of their rural origins, the predominant outlines that characterize contemporary culture in the United States, such as the notion of an American Dream. Important ethnographic studies on work, and family, in the United States, including those by Kathryn Dodson (1994), Barbara Ehrenreich (1989), Arlie Hochschild (1979), Katherine Newman (1985, 1995), and June Nash (1987), have helped us understand
In a state of shock, I closed my eyes and tried to think through what had happened. I couldn't believe I was in this situation. Theabin had been replaced by a new leader, and I had no idea how to react. I decided to wait and see what would happen next.

As I walked out of the building, I saw a group of people gathered around a large screen. They were discussing the new leader and what his policies would mean for our country. I felt a sense of unease, but also a sense of curiosity. I wanted to know more about the new leader and his plans.

I decided to visit the city's main library to learn more about the new leader. I spent several hours reading books and articles about him, trying to understand his background and beliefs. I was surprised to discover that he had a strong connection to my hometown, and that his policies were heavily influenced by that connection.

I was determined to make a decision. I knew that I had to take action if I wanted to have any influence on the situation. I decided to speak out against the new leader, using my skills as a writer to raise awareness about his policies and their potential consequences.

As I walked back to my hotel, I thought about the future of our country. I knew that it wouldn't be easy, but I was ready to face the challenges ahead. I felt a sense of hope, even in the midst of uncertainty. I knew that I could make a difference, and that every step I took would bring me closer to that goal.
A forklift executive turned consultant appears to be going along with A's salary
acceptance. We should, however, that today's workers are going to be moving from job to
job. By 1991, 12 million software and information system professionals in the US were
unemployed or underemployed, according to a survey by the National Association of Software
and Information Services (NASI). The survey found that only about 30 percent of the
workers surveyed had found full-time employment in their field. The rest were working in
other fields or were unemployed. The survey also found that many workers were
dissatisfied with their jobs, citing lack of opportunity for advancement and low
pay as the main reasons.

The rise of the gig economy has meant that workers are now freer to move from job to
job, but it has also meant that they are more likely to be underemployed or
underutilized. This is because the gig economy has made it possible for workers to
work on a part-time or temporary basis, which means that they may not have
the same level of job security as those who work full-time.

One of the challenges of working in the gig economy is that workers are often
required to work for multiple clients at once. This can be stressful and
emotionally draining, as workers may have to balance multiple projects and
meetings, all while trying to maintain their own work-life balance.

Another challenge is that workers in the gig economy may not have the same
benefits as those who work for larger companies. For example, they may not
have access to health insurance, retirement plans, or other benefits.

The gig economy has also had an impact on the way that companies are
managed. In the past, companies would typically have a hierarchical structure,
with a clear chain of command. However, in the gig economy, companies are
more likely to have a flatter structure, with workers having more autonomy
and decision-making power.

One of the benefits of the gig economy is that it allows workers to work on
projects that they are passionate about. However, it also means that workers
may have to work on a wide range of projects, which can be stimulating but
also overwhelming.

The gig economy is a complex phenomenon, and it is likely to continue
to evolve in the coming years. As more and more workers turn to the
 gig economy for their income, it will be important to consider the
implications for both workers and employers.
CORPORATE REFUGEES IN THE MIDWEST

who are the mind and soul of our great self-reinventing institutions... [They are] the dominant members of our society... and it is their values which will set the American tempo" (1956). Whyte's "organization man" was White, middle-class, unidimensional, with values, opinions, and lifestyle firmly defined the second half of the twentieth century and gave us a staidly persistent vision of the American Dream. This vision was portrayed in TV shows such as the 1950s series The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet, with an upwardly mobile housewife (father, a supportive button-down mother, and two kids in school). Even if this image was not in reality the extreme suggested by Whyte and others of the time, in contrast to the organization man predictability and conformity, we now have what might be a dramatic shift in American tempo toward unpredictability and diversity in work, family, and community arrangements among growing numbers of free-agent workers.

Evidence of this shift can be found in recent studies of high-tech workers. Daniel Marshall's (2001) study of "interior technologists," for example, explores the emergence of new models for work, family, and identity as well as changing expectations for one's relationship with work. Research in Silicon Valley by Suchman and others reveals how workers shape the ambiguity and uncertainty of high-tech work through emergent identity strategies which connect to the innovative nature of the technology itself (Darn et al., 1998, 2001; English-Lueck and Saverin 2001). In addition to these kinds of changes, the influence of broader social forces such as the feminization of the military and increasing numbers of women in the workforce over the past three decades encourages all workers to actively define their identity and lifestyle. With the experience of women entering a male-dominated workplace, today's free-agent has many inventive and recursive models (both successful and not) of how one can self-consciously negotiate obligations of work, family, and self.

While free-agents take non-traditional paths, their journeys begin at a common point of experience and understanding. As the structurally short-lived, but culturally important social contract between employer and employee comes to an end, many of today's contract workers and employees the need to become more pragmatic and less passive. The old contract was an implicit understanding between the two parties consisting of an effort to withdraw from the employer awards security to workers with seniority in return for their commitment (Moen 2001). Today the trait or fact workers might have held in finding and keeping a meaningful job is ending. Instead of rewarding loyalty, companies today "hire" employees on a "flex" long-term employee system that defines the working world for more than a century to a postindustrial order. Whether by default (downsizing being a regular part of the postindustrial economy) or design (voluntarily opting out of manufacturing corporate career patterns), increasing numbers of U.S. workers are becoming free-agents.

Speaking of the "organization man," Whyte explained that these devoted postwar workers not only worked for one company, they "became" to them as well. For Whyte, they were "the sons of our middle class who have left home, spiritually as well as physically, to take the vows of organization life, and it is they

of such a definition because the world of work upon which it had been based appears ever more unstable and unpredictable, more fluid and boundless (Sennett 1999). The geographers David Harvey (1989) points to the early 1970s as a collectively wrenched when shifts in the organization of capitalism together with new forms of time-space experience opened a postmodern age. As with other discussions of the structural and cultural shifts during this period and their impact on the conduct of everyday lives and construction of selves (Bell 1976; Jameson 1991; Sköldvik 1991). Harvey points so how "the relatively stable aesthetic of Fordist modernism (give way) to all the turbulent, instability, and fluctuating qualities of a postmodernist aesthetic that celebrates differential, efflorescent, specific, fashion, and the commodification of cultural forms" (1989:156).

Geographer Rick Lowe Gillis suggests that we are now in a world where everyone is encouraged to think of themselves as being a "perpetual state of becoming" and where people are asked to continually "renew, rediscover and recycle" (1990:232; cf. Bridge 1994; Martin 1994, 1995; Sosnitzer 1999, Smith 2001). In the context of the contemporary economic and political upheavals and new forms of cultural practices that characterize this transition to a postmodern postindustrial era, today's must be more searching and forever learning, in a sharp departure from the ideal desired in the over-standardized and rigid industrial world of the previous century (Gini 2000; Murray 2000; Tsoukala 1993). Today's ideal worker is the ever-adapting "person as portfolio" defined as a living bundle of skills. A new culture of work has emerged which emphasizes flexibility over predictability and opportunity over job security.

So long, "Organization Man!"
The world of sports, a free agent is a player whose contract with a particular team has come to an end and who is now free to move about in a larger field of possibilities—specifically, they are free to sign with a team of their own choosing. As with many such terms and ideas, "free agent" has jumped the fence of its original usage, taking up new meanings in another sphere of social and cultural life. In the world of work, the term is now increasingly used to characterize the growing ranks of some 20 million Americans who see in various manners self-employed. In contrast to William Whyte (1956, 1965) "organization man" of two generations ago, the free agent is larger, more independent worker, whether small-business owner, temporary or contract worker. Many are born of sweeping changes taking place in everyday life as the U.S. economy moves from the industrial/commerce system that defined the working world for more than a century to a postindustrial order. Whether by default (downsizing being a regular part of the postindustrial economy) or design (voluntarily opting out of manufacturing corporate career patterns), increasing numbers of U.S. workers are becoming free-agents.
When Ali and I thought about it, making more ask habits on the back of our papers, we decided it was time for us to work together. But then, something strange happened. We found that our paperwork was always missing. It seemed like someone was taking it, but we couldn’t tell who. We started to worry that we were being spied on. We decided to talk to the office manager, but she didn’t seem to know anything about it.

The next day, we noticed that our paperwork was back. We were relieved, but we also felt a bit creeped out. We decided to keep an eye on the office to see if we could figure out who was taking our paperwork. We found a small note on our desk one day. It said, "I know I’m in the wrong, but I need help. Can you help me?" We were surprised but also felt a bit458

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CONCLUSIONS: MOG AND GEOGRAPHY

Research findings presented here suggest that political geography is a useful tool to understand the migration patterns observed in the region. The analysis of political geography reveals that the movement of refugees is not randomly occurring but rather follows specific patterns. These patterns are influenced by the political landscape, including borders, alliances, and historical conflicts.

The analysis of political geography also highlights the role of international organizations in shaping the migration trends. The data suggests that the actions of these organizations have a significant impact on the movement of refugees, either by facilitating their movement or by creating barriers.

In conclusion, the study of political geography is essential for understanding the complex dynamics of refugee migration. It provides insights into the underlying causes of migration and offers a framework for developing effective policies to address the humanitarian challenges posed by these movements.
like Alan, this transformation is literally the blending of a kind of personally redemptive, second chance at life to overcome personal liabilities through identifying fundamental values that can no longer be violated. Life-style migrants attempt to redefine their own personal relationship to the good by finding ways to harmonize the material domain, in the form of pursuing a livelihood, with the social sphere, in the form of family and social relations. It is about getting over-scrutinized. As refugees from a way of life characterized by popular perceptions of the corporate "rat race," life-style migrants describe how they "set control" and "took back their lives," rejecting feelings of disorientation, depression, and being adrift. Taking back their lives entails being able to define personal identity and self to the world according to their own moral narrative.

Charles Taylor (1981:22) says that identity is defined "by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which [a person] can try to determine how to live in a way that is good, valuable, or what ought to be done, or what [they] value or oppose. In other words, it is the horizon within which [they] are capable of taking a stand." To lack a coherent, compelling, and personally meaningful moral narrative of self is to be without a frame or horizon through which things can take on stable significance and with which a person is able to weigh possibilities as good or bad, important or superficial. An essential part of selfhood is that a person is positioned—situated in physical and moral spaces within which they can know who they are. This orientation is not only within a culturally informed space of question about what is and what is not worth doing, it is also a part of how people find their bearings and locate themselves in a particular social and physical landscape. To speak of orientation is thus more than mere metaphor. Reorientation to new places is essential for these corporate refugees. In these places, they feel a meaningful connection that they imagine will sustain their new identity. A new lifestyle. The choice of where to live is also one about how to live.

**NOTES**

I would like to acknowledge the help of reviewers and the Editor for their time and consideration. I am also grateful for the Abot-P Alum Foundation's financial support for this research. Further, without the generosity of time and insight volunteered by project participants like Alan, this work would not have been possible.

1. Lewis Mumford's (1931) approach to conversion characterizes it not strictly as an inner event or singular moment in a person's life, but as a complex process involving varied dimensions: the social and psychological and spiritual. While Mumford's approach was primarily intended as a model of religious conversion, it provides a framework for understanding the process in which many of the events (stage: crisis, quest, encounter, reorientation, conversion) have clear parallels in the experiences of individuals in the realm of secular existence, including the case of life-style migrants undergoing personal changes through relocation and starting over in their work and family lives. Writing how the language of conversion reflects popular discourse on personal transformation and growth as a variety of concepts, including, for example, the experience of "converting" among gays and lesbians, David Brinton and Christopher Lund (1999) suggest that the
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