**“I was open to anywhere, it’s just this was easier:” Social Structure, Location Preferences,
and the Geographic Concentration of Elite College Graduates**

Robert Manduca

Over the past 40 years college graduates in the United States have become increasingly concentrated in a small number of cities. This paper uses qualitative interviews to explore the processes bringing recent graduates of elite universities to one such city, metropolitan Boston. Most respondents reported that their move to Boston was not driven by a clear preference for living there. Rather, they saw themselves as simultaneously choosing a job and a location in one bundled decision, with the job generally determining where they ended up. To reduce the cognitive complexity of the joint job-and-location search, graduates used heuristics to eliminate most options with minimal consideration. Those that remained were disproportionately in cities where the graduates or their universities had preexisting connections. The social nature of the post-college job search thus served to geographically concentrate these graduates beyond what their own preferences or the geography of job opportunities would require.

Over the past 40 years the United States has become geographically polarized by education level. Starting around 1980, cities with highly educated residents began to attract college graduates at higher and higher rates, while other places—rural areas in particular—experienced a “brain drain” as their best students left after graduating from high school, rarely to return (Berry and Glaeser 2005; Carr and Kefalas 2009; Moretti 2012).

This educational polarization has been accompanied by geographic polarization along a variety of metrics. The income gap between rich and poor parts of the country has widened, as have gaps in life expectancy (Chetty et al. 2016), ideology (Bishop 2008; Johnston, Manley, and Jones 2016), and even hope (Graham and Pinto 2019). The combination of educational sorting alongside deindustrialization and stagnant or even declining wages for workers without college degrees has contributed to growing discontent in places “left behind” by economics and policy, fostering the rise of political extremism and disfunction (Hochschild 2018; Silva 2019; Wuthnow 2019).

This paper undertakes a detailed exploration of one component of educational polarization: the spatial concentration of recent graduates of elite universities. While they form only a small minority of the population, elite college graduates loom large in public and scholarly discourse on educational polarization (e.g. Regan and Tarleton 2016). They are some of the most sought after and least constrained migrants in the country, and yet they overwhelmingly end up living in just a handful of major metro areas. This geographic concentration occurs despite extensive, and largely successful, efforts by these universities to recruit incoming students from all parts of the country.

There is a long running debate in research on domestic migration about whether job opportunities or lifestyle amenities are more important in determining who lives where (e.g. Kemeny and Storper 2012; Partridge 2010). In this research, the decision processes that lead to people’s mobility outcomes are often treated as a black box. Researchers draw on aggregate migration patterns to make inferences about the features of individuals and places that shape migration patterns. But the details of the decision process itself have rarely been examined.

In this paper, I use qualitative interviews with 44 recent graduates and current seniors at elite colleges to open the black box of the migration decision. Focusing on graduates who moved to metropolitan Boston, I ask how these graduates—who likely could have gone anywhere—wound up in a major human capital hub on the US East Coast. This approach allows a window

into the details of the decision itself: which options were considered, what tradeoffs were weighed, and how different possibilities were ruled out. Process tracing of this kind has been used to great effect in studies of neighborhood residential mobility (e.g. DeLuca and Jang-Trettien 2020; Lareau and Goyette 2014). Here I apply it to the context of post-college migration.

Young, employable, and with limited responsibilities, my respondents faced few of the constraints that limit migration in the broader population (Bartik 2019). Nonetheless, I find that my respondents did not move to Boston because they preferred living there over other possible destinations. In fact, many respondents reported being indifferent about where they moved after graduation, and those that mentioned having location preferences typically reported general, categorical preferences rather than specific ones. They might know they wanted a certain climate zone, or a city with public transit, but that was about it. Conspicuously lacking were the kinds of specific and stable preferences that have been assumed in much prior research on the determinants of domestic migration.

In the absence of strong preferences for a specific location, my respondents found their destinations largely determined by the way in which they looked for jobs. They saw themselves as making a bundled decision, in which they chose a job and a destination simultaneously. But the set of possible options for life after graduation was almost infinite, far beyond the capabilities of any one person to evaluate.

Like decision-makers choosing everything from pasta at a grocery store to the school their children will attend, my respondents used cognitively simple decision rules to eliminate most options without serious consideration (Bruch, Feinberg, and Lee 2016; Howard and Sheth 1969). Some respondents performed “geographic triage,” explicitly ruling out potential employment opportunities based on where they were located. This—rather than the choice of final destination—was the point where location amenities factored most directly into the migration decision, as respondents using this strategy limited themselves to locations offering a particular lifestyle or climate. Other respondents constrained their searches to sources of job leads they believed would have high probabilities of success, such as their university career services offices or their own previous experiences.

The need for these strategies arose because the search was too cognitively overwhelming without them. But they had the additional effect of limiting respondents’ geographic horizons,

even when that was not an explicit intention. Among my respondents, the *strategic* choice of how to look for jobs had major, and sometimes unforeseen, impacts on the *substantive* outcome of where they moved. For instance, respondents who chose to prioritize leads from their university career services offices generally found themselves looking in nearby cities, even when they would have been willing—or even eager—to move across the country. The search methods themselves, above and beyond my respondents’ own desires and the geography of employment opportunities, served to concentrate these graduates in the human capital-dense Boston metro area, contributing to educational polarization.

Previous Research

Educational polarization in the United States

Since the 1980s, US metro areas have become increasingly polarized by education level. College graduates increasingly live in one set of regions, while people without college degrees live in another (Berry and Glaeser 2005; Moretti 2012; see also VanHeuvelen and Copas 2019). The consequences of educational polarization have been particularly strongly felt in small towns and midsize cities, which have seen many of their most academically successful students leave after graduating from high school (Carr and Kefalas 2009; Domina 2006; Sherman and Sage 2011).

Influenced by research showing the economic payoffs of having a highly educated population (Corcoran and Faggian 2017; Florida 2002), local policymakers around the country have pursued economic development strategies centered on attracting highly educated residents (e.g. Toledo Chamber of Commerce 2019; TYPROS 2020; Work in the Triangle 2020; Regan and Tarleton 2016). These include marketing campaigns geared specifically towards recruiting young college graduates (Brodey 2015; Campus Philly 2020; Detroit Regional Chamber 2018; Wiltz 2015), and even programs that offer to pay the student loans of recent graduates who move to a particular city or state (O’Shaughnessy 2012; Sugerman 2018). Yet these strategies have not fundamentally altered the distribution of college graduates, as—at least prior to the Coronavirus pandemic—college educated migrants continued to disproportionately move to cities that were already highly educated (Frey 2018).

Educational polarization has been accompanied by geographic polarization along political, cultural, and ideological lines (Bishop 2008). Combined with economic dislocations and stagnant wages in many parts of the country, educational sorting has contributed to feelings of anger at being “left behind” (Hochschild 2018; Silva 2019; Wuthnow 2019), which have been reflected in a turn to extremist politics (Rodríguez-Pose 2018; Spicer 2018). Understanding the forces behind educational polarization is thus important politically and socially as well as economically.

Previous studies of internal migration: Revealed preferences and the jobs vs. amenities debate

The questions of why people move to some places rather than others has a long history in the social sciences. Ever since Ravenstein’s 1885 work exploring the “laws of migration,” geographers, sociologists, and economists have been interested in why people move between cities and what determines where they go (Ravenstein 1885; Greenwood 1975, 1997). A key and long-running debate in this literature—especially as it intersects with regional economic development—asks whether lifestyle amenities or job opportunities are more important in driving migration decisions and therefore urban growth. Early research on this topic emphasized job prospects as the main determinant of migration patterns (Blanco 1963; Lansing and Mueller 1967). But starting in the 1970s, an alternative viewpoint began to argue that lifestyle amenities such as a pleasant climate (Graves 1980; Graves and Linneman 1979) or cultural attractions (Clark et al. 2002; Florida 2002) are the driving factors in determining where people move. Numerous studies from the 1970s to the 2010s have taken each side of this “jobs vs amenities” debate, arguing for the primacy of jobs (Diamond 2016; Greenwood and Hunt 1989; Kemeny and Storper 2012; Mazek and Chang 1972) or amenities (Glaeser, Kolko, and Saiz 2001; Knapp and Graves 1989; Muth 1971; Partridge 2010) respectively.

In addition to jobs and lifestyle amenities, sociological research has highlighted the importance of personal ties in domestic migration. Both blue collar and technical workers are willing to forego tens of thousands of dollars in annual income to live close to their hometowns, friends, and relatives (Dahl and Sorenson 2010a, 2010b). Interviewing college graduates in Maine, Nelson (2019) found that while jobs were an important driver of residential location, proximity to family and “sense of place,” encompassing location characteristics such as natural beauty or friendly residents but not a specific city or town, were also impactful. Domestic

migrants also may take an absolute cut in pay to move to a destination where they will be relatively higher in the income distribution (Flippen 2013).

Much of the previous research on migration has modeled the decision process as one in which rational individuals with full information consider all possible destinations and choose the optimal one. Under these assumptions, it becomes possible to make inferences about the relative appeal of different places based on observed migration and population patterns alone (Albouy 2008). However, recent research has documented that migration is relatively insensitive to large economic shocks (Bartik 2018) and that most moves are over short distances (Conzelmann et al. 2022; Sprung-Keyser, Hendren, and Porter 2022), raising questions about the extent to which migrants seriously consider all possible destinations. Given this, the domestic migration literature is ripe for a direct examination of the migration process itself. Such an investigation would join a growing sociological literature probing the processes behind major life decisions.

Judgement and decision-making in social contexts

Sociologists have long been interested in the aggregate outcomes of individual decisions such as who to marry or which neighborhood to live in (Blau and Schwartz 1984; Coleman 1986; Schelling 1971). Recently, there has been a renewed focus on the process of decision-making itself (e.g. Bruch et al. 2016; DeLuca and Jang-Trettien 2020; Dietz and Whitley 2018; Vaisey and Valentino 2018), building on the established tradition of decision-making research in the Carnegie school of organizational sociology (Cyert and March 1963; Gavetti, Levinthal, and Ocasio 2007; Simon 1976). These researchers, studying domains from residential mobility to dating, ask how people making major life decisions come up with possible options, evaluate them, and ultimately end up picking one over another.

In their studies of life decisions, sociologists have drawn on decades of scholarship on judgment and decision-making (JDM). Marketers and psychologists have studied the process by which people make decisions across a wide variety of contexts, and have consistently found that decision-makers systematically deviate from neoclassical choice models in a few key ways. In reality, humans do not have the cognitive capacity to conduct an exhaustive decision process that fully evaluates every possible option, as neoclassical models assume (Malhotra 1982). Instead, they often use heuristics, simple rules to reduce the cognitive difficulty of the decision (Payne 1976). In choices that involve deliberation, decision-makers typically proceed in stages: they first

use heuristics to eliminate the vast majority of options at a stroke, then conduct a more nuanced analysis of the remaining “consideration set” (Howard & Sheth, 1969; Roberts & Lattin, 1991; Swait, 1984). Sometimes, rather than optimizing, decision-makers will stop when they get to an acceptable option—what Herbert Simon termed “satisficing” (Simon 1976).

When most options are ruled out without full consideration, features of the decision environment—for example, the number of available alternatives, the time pressure under which the decision is made, or the option that is presented as the default—can have a substantial impact on the outcome (Samuelson and Zeckhauser 1988; Simonson and Tversky 1992; Sunstein and Thaler 2008). The contribution of sociological research has been to demonstrate that in real-world decisions, the decision environment itself is a reflection of social context (Bruch and Feinberg 2017). For example, families searching for a home do so in different ways depending on the urgency with which they need to move: movers under time pressure, who are disproportionately low income, will often choose the first house that meets basic requirements, while higher-income movers with more time will wait to purchase a “forever home” (Harvey et al. 2020).

One major way in which social context shapes decision processes is in determining the relative ease of choosing different options. In domains from job search to house hunting to international migration, individuals frequently learn about key opportunities through their social networks (Carrillo et al. 2016; DeLuca, Rosenblatt, and Wood 2012; Garip and Asad 2016; Granovetter 1973). In hiring decisions and other mutual matching processes, network contacts might also vouch for an applicant, improving the odds of being selected (Fernandez, Castilla, and Moore 2000; Fernandez and Weinberg 1997; but see Smith 2005 on the limits to this process). In these decisions, who decision-makers know is extremely influential in determining what choices they make.

More fundamentally, social context also influences the beliefs, preferences, and endowments that decision-makers bring to the decision process (Vaisey and Valentino 2018). This is particularly important in major life decisions, where choices must be made before the decision-maker has direct personal experience with the various options. Preferences about a favorite meal at a restaurant might be formed by tasting different dishes over repeated visits. But that is not possible in decisions such as where to go to college, what career to pursue, or which house to buy. In these cases, people often rely on conversations with members of their social

networks—friends, family, mentors—to shape their preferences and learn what outcome they should desire. Thus high-income residential movers use their networks to determine which neighborhoods and schools to move to (Holme 2002; Krysan and Crowder 2017; Lareau 2014), while high school seniors learn what colleges they should consider from their families and high school environments (Holland 2019; Radford 2013).

Social structure and the college-to-work transition

Post-college migration is a particularly promising point at which to examine the ways in which social position might impact a major life decision. A robust literature on the educational trajectories of college students and the school-to-work transition has documented how structural conditions shape many aspects of the college experience, both by influencing students' preferences about their time at university and by determining what career paths are available to them. During college, students learn what majors, extracurricular activities, and career paths are desirable through conversations with older classmates and implicit or explicit guidance from institutional actors like career services offices and university administrations (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013; Beasley 2012; Binder, Davis, and Bloom 2015; Ho 2009). Preferences over these fundamental aspects of college and post-college life are thus heavily shaped by students' structural position.

As they approach graduation, students also find career opportunities opened up or closed off to them not just by their grades and aspirations, but by factors such as their major (Moss-Pech 2021), university prestige (Davis and Binder 2019; Rivera 2011), cultural capital (Rivera 2012, 2015), and ascribed characteristics like race and gender (Damaske 2009; Gaddis 2015; Quadlin 2018). Many careers, it turns out, are primarily accessible via very specific pathways targeted at a small subset of the students who might be interested in them. The same appears to be true for location: most universities send their graduates to a relatively small set of metro areas, generally ones in geographic proximity to the university (Conzelmann et al. 2022).

This paper explores how the structural position of elite students shapes their decision of where to live after college. By tracing the process by which graduates discovered leads, eliminated options, and ultimately settled on a destination, it opens the black box of the migration decision and investigates whether organizational and cognitive factors, in addition to lifestyle amenities and job opportunities, contribute to the educational polarization facing the

United States today. In doing so, it contributes a new qualitative site to the literature on socially situated decision-making.

In the following section I introduce my sample: elite graduates who moved to the Boston metropolitan area after college. I then describe my findings, focusing on the process by which these graduates ended up moving to Boston and how it was shaped both by their priorities and by the structure of the post-college job search. I conclude with a discussion of the implications and limitations of this study.

Methods and Data

Case selection: Why elite college graduates in Boston?

In this paper I seek to understand the decision-making processes by which graduates of elite colleges ended up moving to the Boston metro area upon graduation. This choice of population has both substantive and theoretical motivations. Substantively, recent graduates of elite colleges have high symbolic profiles and outsized economic impact. While they form only a small minority of all college graduates, recent graduates of elite colleges loom large in public, scholarly, and policy discourse (e.g. Binder et al. 2015; Rivera 2015). Cities around the country attempt to recruit these graduates as residents through special marketing and incentive programs, even going so far as to pay off their student loans to the tune of thousands of dollars apiece (Regan and Tarleton 2016).

The population of elite college graduates also presents a theoretically useful test case for the decision models used in many quantitative migration studies. Such models assume that the decision to move to or stay in a particular city indicates a preference for living in that city over other possible destinations (Albouy 2008). In many real life migration decisions, however, potential migrants are constrained by family responsibilities or limited finances, and have only a small set of options to realistically choose from (Bartik 2019). In these cases, treating migration decisions as revealing a true preference for one city over another is misleading. Young, elite college graduates present something of a theoretical “best case” for the revealed preference approach: they are required to move upon graduation—at least off campus—they are extremely employable, and many of them have relatively few financial or family responsibilities. If anyone is truly free to move based solely on lifestyle or job opportunities, it is graduates like the ones I interviewed.

Despite being sought after by cities across the country, recent graduates of elite colleges overwhelmingly end up living in just a handful of places. In the data constructed by Conzelmann et al. (2022) from LinkedIn records, an average of 49% of Ivy League graduates (of all ages) live in three metropolitan areas: New York City, Boston, and San Francisco. 61% of Stanford graduates and 57% of MIT grads live in these same three metros. Among recent graduates, the distribution appears even more lopsided: roughly 70% of the MIT class of 2019 moved to California, Massachusetts, or New York upon graduation (MIT Career Advising and Professional Development 2020), while roughly 70% of Stanford grads stayed in California (Stanford Career Education 2017).

The question this paper aims to answer is how so many of these graduates—who could likely find employment anywhere—end up disproportionately living in so few places. Is it because these cities are the only ones with appealing job opportunities, as some research has suggested (Diamond 2016; Storper and Scott 2009)? Is it because they offer the lifestyle amenities that these graduates crave (Clark et al. 2002; Florida 2002)? Or are other processes at work?

To address the specific question of what processes concentrate graduates of elite colleges into a small number of metros, I chose one of these metros—Greater Boston—and conducted qualitative interviews with recent college graduates who had moved there upon graduation. Boston is one of the prime beneficiaries of educational polarization. In the 2014-2018 American Community Survey, 44% of residents over 18 in the Boston Metropolitan Statistical Area held bachelor's degrees, compared to 29% nationally (Manson et al. 2017). Among young adults ages 25-34, comparable in age to my sample, the imbalance is even greater: 58% of Boston residents had a BA, compared to 35% nationally. By interviewing graduates who moved to Boston, I hope to shed light on the specific mechanisms that brought them to this human capital hub.

I complement the Boston sample with a subsample of respondents who moved to places that were extremely *uncommon* among graduates of their universities, defined as states that received fewer than 1% of recent graduates. This variation allows me to see whether the mechanisms that took a few graduates to unusual places were similar or different from those that took many of their peers to Boston.

The features of my population that make it a useful theoretical case—most notably, the fact that these graduates are highly sought after and relatively unconstrained—imply that the specifics of their decision processes and experiences may differ from those of other migrants. My goal in this paper is not to produce a universal theory of migration or educational polarization. Rather, it is to understand one facet of polarization—the overwhelming concentration of recent graduates of elite universities in Boston—and to use this conceptually clean case to identify mechanisms, such as the way in which strategic choices made to reduce decision complexity can have unforeseen impacts on the substantive outcome of decisions, that may apply in other contexts.

Sample recruitment and interview process

This paper draws on 44 in-depth interviews conducted in 2015 and 2016 with recent graduates ($n = 36$) and current seniors ($n = 8$) from elite private colleges, defined as private universities ($n = 18$) and private liberal arts colleges ($n = 18$) rated as “most selective” by US News and World Report (US News and World Report 2021), with admissions rates in 2020 under 30%.

The majority ($n = 31$) of my interviews were with graduates who ended up in Boston. I split this sample between those who went to universities in New England, for whom Boston is the nearest major city ($n = 18$, of which $n = 11$ were in the Boston metro area), and those who went to universities in other parts of the country ($n = 13$). However, minimal differences emerged between the New England and broader samples, so I combine them in my analysis. I also interviewed current seniors at universities in New England to see if people in the heat of the decision described it in the same way as those a few years out ($n = 8$). I found that they largely did, mentioning a similar range of job search strategies to those recalled by graduates a few years older, though the seniors typically did not yet know which strategy would ultimately bear fruit.

I complemented my sample of respondents in Boston with a small subsample ($n = 5$) of graduates who ended up in states where fewer than 1% of employed graduates move after graduation. This subsample allowed me to probe the scope conditions of the mechanisms I identify and see the extent to which the processes that took graduates to atypical destinations were similar to those that guided their classmates to Boston and places like it.

I constructed my sample through a combination of theoretical and convenience sampling. The majority of respondents were found by obtaining access to alumni directories for two private universities and two private liberal arts colleges ranked in the top 10 research universities and liberal arts colleges respectively by US News and World Report in 2015 (all four remain in the top 10 as of 2022). I searched these directories for alumni who had graduated in the previous 5 years, were currently employed (as opposed to being in graduate school), and lived in the target location. Depending on how many graduates met my criteria I then emailed either the full set of graduates or a random subset. Overall, 32% of my emails eventually resulted in an interview. I supplemented this approach with theoretical sampling from my own personal networks, asking friends and acquaintances if they knew anyone who met the needs of my sample. Finally, at the end of each interview I asked my respondents if they knew anyone else in a similar situation who might be willing to talk to me. In total, 23 of my graduate respondents were sourced from alumni directories, 6 from my personal networks, and 7 through snowball sampling. While not all respondents sourced from my personal networks and snowball sampling were from the four colleges I targeted originally, all were from private colleges with admissions rates under 30%. Current seniors were accessed through announcements to dorm email listservs ($n = 5$) and my personal networks ($n = 3$).

My respondents in atypical destinations were contacted through alumni directories ($n = 4$) and my personal networks ($n = 1$). When using alumni directories I chose states at random from those where fewer than 1% of employed graduates reported moving in university surveys of graduating seniors. I then emailed all alumni less than 5 years from graduation listed as employed and living in those states. It was very difficult to find respondents this way—by design, these states tended to have very few alumni fitting my criteria, and many of the alumni that I emailed responded by saying that while they had grown up in the state listed, they now lived in Boston, Los Angeles, or another major city.

My respondents worked in a wide variety of industries, with consulting, finance, engineering, and biotechnology particularly well represented. The average respondent was 2.2 years from graduation, although some respondents were as many as six years out. 24 of my respondents identified as female and 20 as male. 33 of my respondents were white, 2 black, 4 Latino, and 5 Asian. White graduates were thus overrepresented in my sample even for the schools that I selected, though I cannot determine whether they were overrepresented among

alumni living in Boston. Previous research has documented that white job applicants—including graduates of elite universities—are more likely to get interviews than equally qualified minority applicants (Gaddis 2015; Pager 2003), and that because of this discrimination Black applicants in particular cast a wider net than white workers (Pager and Pedulla 2015). It is possible that my disproportionately white respondents might have narrowed their searches more than minority graduates of the same universities.

My interviews lasted between 25 to 90 minutes. I began each interview by asking the respondent to describe their current job as a means of building rapport, and then asked them to walk me through the process by which they ended up moving where they did. As they did that, I probed them about their priorities for life after graduation, which cities they had considered moving to, and how they searched for and found job opportunities. I specifically asked them to describe each type of resource they used to look for jobs, and if there was a reason why they used it. I also asked how they learned about, applied for, and decided to accept the job they ultimately took, and the extent to which location was a criterion in their decision. If they obtained multiple job offers I asked them how they chose which one to take. These retrospective interviews were suited to the unpredictable nature of the job search. Many graduates search for jobs in several ways simultaneously, checking online job boards at the same time as they offhandedly describe their dilemma to friends or acquaintances, and perhaps reaching out to past employers after a few months if nothing is working out. Until a job offer materializes, it is often unclear which approach will ultimately bear fruit. This makes it difficult to determine which of a current senior's strategies will actually be the key until after the fact.

I analyzed my data using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. I first coded inductively to generate themes and categories from the data, and then refined those themes iteratively in further rounds of data analysis. In my coding I focused especially on the methods respondents reported using to search for jobs, the priorities they stated as driving their job search and location decision, and any preferences they mentioned about the location. An early distinction emerged between respondents who mentioned geography as a consideration at all and those who only discussed it as a consequence of the job they took. In further iterations, several distinct variations on each of these approaches emerged.

In the following sections I present my findings. I begin by describing the ambivalence many of my respondents displayed about where to begin the next stage of their lives. I then show

how they typically chose their job and location in one simultaneous bundle, with the job choice often determining the where they moved. Because the joint job-and-location search was so cognitively challenging, my respondents employed complexity reduction strategies to make it tractable. These strategies had the effect—sometimes explicit, other times implicit—of narrowing the geographic scope of respondents’ job searches, sometimes in direct contradiction of their stated location preferences. Finally, shifting my focus to the subsample of respondents who ended up in atypical destinations, I show how the processes that brought them to places like Alaska, Louisiana, and Montana had important commonalities with the processes that brought their peers to Boston. When quoting respondents I indicate their profession and their destination if it was somewhere other than Boston. Pseudonyms are matched to gender.

Limited Location Preferences and the Importance of Job Opportunities in Determining Destinations

Where to move after college is a major life decision. Graduates are deciding on the setting that will be the backdrop for their transition to adulthood: the places and institutions in which their life stories will play out. Where they move also determines the friendship groups they will have and, for many, the person whom they will marry. It’s almost certain that the choice they make when graduating will heavily shape how their lives unfold, even for graduates who don’t stay in the place where they move initially. And yet many of my respondents expressed indifference about where they ended up. It wasn’t uncommon to hear sentiments like those of Beatrice, an event planner, who said, “I was open to anywhere, it’s just this was easier.”

This is not to say that my respondents didn’t care about geography at all: some did. But their preferences rarely took the form of a rank-ordered list over which they optimized. Instead, when respondents reported preferences about location, they were categorical: respondents cared about the *type* of place they would move to, or certain attributes that it would have, more than the specific location.

A common sentiment among respondents was that they wanted to live in a city, but did not care which one. Joseph, a teacher, was typical in this regard. As he stated, “I wanted to be in a city. That was also very important to me, just because I grew up on a farm in the middle of nowhere and comparing that lifestyle to city it was like ‘Oh, a city is so nice, everything's just

like right there, you know, and so close by.’” Kristina, a biology researcher, had slightly more stringent requirements: “I only looked in cities. I knew I wanted to be in a city.... City, not in the South, preferably in the Midwest or Northeast.” A full 25% of my respondents stated explicitly that moving to *a* city after graduation had been important, but *which* city was not. In this they mirror the rural graduates studied by Nelson (2019), who had stronger feelings about the “sense of place” in a potential destination—characteristics like having a beautiful landscape or a small town feel—than about the specific location.

These categorical preferences narrowed the set of destinations that my respondents considered. But because they were general rather than specific, they left the ultimate destination undetermined: Kristina’s preferences alone weren’t enough to specify whether she moved to Minneapolis, Boston, or New York. Her ultimate destination was determined by a separate decision she was making concurrently: which job to take.

Bundled decisions and the primacy of the job search

When setting up their new lives, graduates are making several decisions at the same time: where to live, certainly, but also what job to take and even what friend group to have. However, they only get to make one choice, and different aspects of the decision dominate for different people (see Dellaert et al. 2018 on how decision-makers balance multiple objectives across a range of contexts). For respondents like Joseph and Kristina, the specific city they moved to, among the many that fit with their categorical location preferences, was almost always determined by where they found the first or best job. For other respondents, location was entirely secondary to career. This was true for Catherine, a transportation consultant. As she put it, “That’s the only reason I’m here...I was like ‘Oh, I got a job! Ok, I guess I’m gonna move to Boston.’” According to Timothy, a teacher, “Everything for me so far has been about the jobs.” David, a current senior who had accepted a tech job in Seattle just prior to our interview, put this sentiment especially bluntly: “When I applied to jobs, they were like ‘Where would you want to work?’ And I was like, ‘I am willing to work anywhere, including the moon.’”

All but three of my respondents decided where to move at the same time as they accepted a job offer. The job was the way in which graduates who didn’t care about where they lived, or cared only about the type of destination rather than the specific place, nonetheless ended up landing in one particular city.

Within the bundled job-and-location decision, there was an asymmetry between the roles played by lifestyle amenities and job opportunities. Amenities—for those respondents who reported considering them—influenced the migration decision by narrowing the set of possible destinations, while jobs were almost always the way that the ultimate destination was chosen. This asymmetry stands in contrast to the oppositional framing typically used in the “jobs vs. amenities” debate, which treats the two factors as competing explanations.

The critical role that receiving a job offer played in determining where my respondents moved suggests that the reason so many graduates move to Boston may have as much to do with the processes by which graduates search for jobs as with its characteristics as an urban environment. As I show next, my respondents saw the job search as cognitively overwhelming and used a variety of strategies to reject most options with minimal consideration. Geography entered into these strategies, but not always explicitly and rarely as the deciding factor.

How Elite College Graduates Decide Where to Work and Live: Location Choice as a Byproduct of Job Search Simplification Strategies

My respondents could not possibly apply to every single job they might be qualified for: there were just too many. As Rebecca, a non-profit researcher, described, “I realized that there were so many different places that I could potentially go, that it was really important to me to narrow down the list.” Like decision-makers in contexts from grocery shopping to online dating, my respondents sought to reduce the cognitive complexity of their decision by using simple heuristics to eliminate the vast majority of options (Bruch et al. 2016; Howard and Sheth 1969).

Two such strategies were common among my respondents, each with a few variants. One strategy was to do “geographic triage,” picking a handful of possible destinations early on and focusing their efforts only on those places. Another was to preferentially apply to job leads believed to offer a high likelihood of success, typically those sourced from university or personal networks. Each of these strategies had the effect of sharply reducing the set of locations my respondents considered moving to, often in ways that were only marginally connected to—and sometimes directly contradicted—my respondents’ stated location preferences. Most respondents used one or both of these methods to narrow the set of job leads to pursue. They then applied to this narrower set of leads, and typically accepted the first job offer they received.

Complexity reduction strategy 1: Geographic triage

The most common way that geography entered the decision processes of my respondents was as a way of ruling out large numbers of potential opportunities without serious consideration. Respondents like Kristina and Joseph, described above, acted on their categorical location preferences to perform this “geographic triage,” eliminating anywhere that didn’t have the right climate or lifestyle without further contemplation. Other respondents used geography to limit the complexity of their decisions even when they did not report having strong location preferences. Susan, a teacher, limited her search to Massachusetts even though, as she put it, “I don’t love Boston.” But geography offered her a straightforward way of making her search more manageable. As she stated, “It’s overwhelming. You can be a teacher anywhere, you know, and I felt like I needed to narrow the search in some kind of arbitrary—not arbitrary, but it was like ok, I’m just gonna look in Massachusetts.” Tiffany, a copywriter, used a similar method:

[T]he problem was that because copywriting is an ubiquitous type of job, there was really cool stuff all over America. But I needed...like one constraint. And I just decided that Boston would be a good constraint...So I originally started bigger, but then I narrowed it down because there were too many options really. I would've been writing 150 applications—okay no I'm not gonna do that.”

Respondents like Susan and Tiffany used geography to constrain their searches, but more because they needed a way to make the process more tractable than because they wanted to live in a particular type of place.

A third way that respondents performed geographic triage, sometimes without even realizing it, was to eliminate potential destinations that they were not already familiar with. For some, this was a deliberate decision: George, a consultant, debated moving to San Francisco but decided not to because it was unfamiliar: “It was mostly just that it was a big unknown to me....I had only visited San Francisco once, I think, and didn’t really know the city. And yeah, it was a pretty big transition. And so I figured—what I told myself at the time was ‘one big transition at a time.’” Luis, a current senior, similarly contemplated looking for jobs in Seattle but decided

against it: “I think I looked at Seattle once, but I’ve never been there, and I don’t know why I would go to Seattle without ever having experienced it.”

Other respondents ruled out unfamiliar places implicitly. Without having been to a place, these respondents couldn’t picture living there, and didn’t apply to jobs there—not because they had considered and rejected those places, but because the option didn’t even occur to them. Maria, an economics researcher, felt like there were no constraints on where she could move. As she described, “it [felt] like I had this blank canvas where I could go anywhere.” Still, she didn’t ever think seriously about moving to the West Coast: “I’ve never been to the West Coast, I’ve basically been to Arizona and nowhere past that. So I’m sure part of it is it’s hard for me to imagine what the living would be like so it wasn’t in my frame of reference.” Some respondents would later regret not looking more closely at unfamiliar places. Neil, a consultant, reflected on his job search a year later:

At that time I’d never been to San Francisco. After this road trip that I took with my friend I’m honestly thinking about taking a job out there if I get an offer. It’s beautiful. That’s something else. It’s a different life, a different pace, different kind of person, so many different industries in which I would be interested in working...I guess I was naïve. If I had the opportunity to do it again I would definitely look out there.

Respondents like Maria and Neil subconsciously limited their searches to places with which they had some level of familiarity, almost without recognizing that they were doing so. That served to keep them in places they or their networks were connected to, even when they wouldn’t have stated that as a criteria for their decision. In Neil’s case he later believed this was a mistake.

Among respondents who performed geographic triage, those who ruled out possible destinations based on categorical location preferences or an explicit desire for somewhere familiar were directly incorporating their preferences into the migration decision. But those who used location purely as a means of triage and those who implicitly ruled out unfamiliar places were doing so only marginally, if that. Yet the latter two groups still moved forward with a narrower set of possible destinations than they were initially considering. In this way their strategic approach to the simplifying the decision process also shaped where they ended up.

Complexity reduction strategy 2: Lead quality

The second method my respondents used to limit the cognitive complexity of their job search was to focus on sources of job leads that they believed to have especially high likelihoods of generating interviews and offers. Two sources stood out in particular: university career services offices and my respondents' own past experiences and personal networks. Each of these sources had a distinctive geographic footprint, which led graduates using the lead quality strategy to disproportionately explore opportunities in places where they or their universities already had connections.

University career services offices: databases and recruiting events

Many of my respondents believed that job leads sourced through their universities were of especially high quality. The most common source was online job databases run by career services offices. These databases, classic examples of information storage through organizational ties (Small 2009), were believed to have higher success rates than public databases like Monster.com or Idealist.org. As Neil, the consultant, noted, "[I]t's much better than going onto Indeed.com and finding a job there. Because first of all, you're within a much smaller pool, and secondly in a pool that's highly regarded." Alice, a medical researcher, felt similarly: "I did have a lot of success applying for research positions mostly through [the university database]...I spent a lot of time on [publicly available] hospital job boards, but realized quickly that that isn't a successful way to get a job because they mostly don't read a lot of those resumes."

In other cases, respondents found jobs through on-campus recruiting events coordinated by career services offices. Such events, which figure prominently in previous literature on the job searches of elite graduates (Binder et al. 2015; Rivera 2015), typically happened early in the academic year, a major plus for the uncertainty-averse. William, a current senior who had accepted a marketing job for a tech company in Washington DC, used the on campus interview process run by his university in large part because it happened early in the school year: "I wanted to get a job through the campus recruitment center because then I would know this really is possible and that would relieve my stress this senior spring, which it totally has."

Overall, 31% of my respondents found their jobs through university job databases and 8% through on campus recruiting programs. These university sources were not neutral with

respect to geography, even conditional on the national distribution of entry-level jobs for college graduates. Rather, because they tended to source leads from alumni and companies with a history of hiring at their university, the job leads were concentrated in certain cities—primarily those already housing large concentrations of alumni. As Beatrice, the event planner, put it, “[College] kind of has its spheres...DC they have a lot, Boston, New York have a lot, and then San Francisco.”

In some cases, the power of university connections was enough to override my respondents’ preferences about where they wanted to live. This was the case for Ethan, an economics researcher. As he said, “I would have loved to have been on the West Coast, but it was mainly on the East Coast [that I looked] just because that’s where the jobs that came through the [College] network came from.” Economic research jobs of the type Ethan eventually found exist on the West Coast, but his college’s connections did not include them. In his bundled decision, his desire to live on the West Coast was outweighed by the easier job search he would have in the East.

Personal networks and past experiences

The second major source of perceived high-quality job leads among my respondents was their own pasts: experiences they had prior to beginning their job search, and their personal networks. 22% of my respondents found their final job because of a previous work experience, and 6% from their personal networks. Some of these respondents received offers at the end of a formal summer internship program—what Moss-Pech (2021) terms a “career conveyor belt.” Ayla, a financial analyst, received her job offer this way: “I worked really hard during the internship and then had conversation with my manager about next steps...I didn’t apply anywhere else.” Others sought jobs from past employers informally. Vance, a medical researcher, ended up working for a colleague of his previous boss:

“[W]hen it came time to apply for jobs, you know, [previous boss] was like, ‘Yeah, why don’t you come work here?’so she just passed on my resume and then some point later this guy said, ‘Why don’t you come for an interview?’ So I came for an interview and a couple of months later I had a job offer.”

Importantly, in many cases these respondents had first sought out their experiences without any thought of future employment prospects. Wendy, a curatorial intern, got her job through a boss from one of her summer internships. But she had not taken the internship with an eye towards a job offer; she had taken it so that she could spend a summer living near her grandmother. Andrew, a medical researcher, first took an internship at a hospital in high school, choosing it because it had a lab working on a topic he was interested at the time. He came back for two summers during college. When he started thinking about looking for jobs, he remembered, “I just kind of realized there’s probably a job there, and it’s kind of the path of least resistance, and it’s gonna be a job that I’m gonna enjoy, so I was like I might as well just do it.” He did not apply anywhere else.

Other respondents found their jobs through their personal networks, including friends and family members. Steven, a transportation researcher, found his job through a friend’s mother. As he described it:

I was mentioning my difficulty finding a position to a friend of mine. And he says ‘oh you’re interested in transportation. My girlfriend’s mom works in HR for the offsite contractor at [Organization].’...So I tried contacting her and within a couple weeks I had a position.

As might be expected, graduates’ networks tended to be concentrated in places where they had themselves spent time. And as with university databases, the geography of networks could overcome preferences about location. This was the case for Tara, a pharmaceutical researcher. She stated: “I would love to move; I actually don’t like Boston. But I just don’t know anybody anywhere else so it’s harder to find jobs elsewhere.” Tara would like to leave Boston, and pharmaceutical jobs like hers do exist in other parts of the country, but her network has kept her from moving.

For many respondents, the easiest or best path to a job after college built on the internships and experiences they had during their education. This made them more likely to move to cities they had previous connections to, entirely independent of their feelings about the cities themselves. For these respondents, as for those who used geographic triage, strategic choices about the job search process ultimately shaped the location outcome.

Final selection: Satisficing based on offer arrival

After narrowing their set of job leads based on geography and/or perceived lead quality, my respondents often accepted the first job that made them an offer. In this, the graduates were clearly satisficing (Simon 1976), cutting off their search when they got a job that was good enough rather than holding out for the best possible offer. They differed from decision-makers in contexts like dating, where final choices are often selected using cognitively demanding compensatory decision rules (Bruch and Feinberg 2017; Bruch et al. 2016). This was likely due to the uncertain and time-dependent nature of the job search, where offers must be decided on within a few weeks without knowing whether future offers will materialize.

Several of my respondents realized that in stopping their searches after their first offer, they were foregoing the possibility of hearing back about other opportunities. Heather, a chemical engineer who moved to Louisiana, described her choice this way: “[Company] was my first and only offer. I’m sure that I could have gotten others if I stuck with it but part of me—I don’t want to say settled, but I was just ready to know what I was doing.” Geoffrey, an aerospace engineer, similarly withdrew his outstanding applications after receiving his first offer: “I got the job and after that I stopped the search completely. I had applied to lots of jobs, but I was like ‘I don’t want to leave Boston at this point, I don’t want to leave my girlfriend, this sounds like a great job, done.’” Ian, an economic consultant, later felt ambivalent about accepting the first offer he received: “[I]n retrospect it probably wasn’t so good to take the first job that I got, because maybe I could have gotten a bunch of other things...[but] I probably would have had to say no and then go into the unknown again. And that’s hard to do.” Only two of my respondents reported turning down a job offer without having another one in hand.

The geographic implications of the job search process

Faced with a bewildering array of possible locations and jobs, and generally lacking a clear first choice destination, my respondents took steps to limit the complexity of their job search. It was in the strategies that they used to make their job searches more cognitively tractable that they exercised the most agency, since all but two respondents accepted one of the first job offers they received. Each strategy to limit the scope of the job search had the effect of narrowing the geography they considered. Sometimes this was an explicit invocation of clear, if

general, location preferences: respondents consciously choose to focus their searches on specific cities or types of places. In these cases, location preferences and amenities clearly influenced the search, though typically only by eliminating some possible destinations rather than by determining the final choice. For other respondents, the geographic narrowing was implicit, whether through their subconscious avoidance of unfamiliar locations or the geographic footprint of their personal or university connections. In both instances, the effect was that they never seriously considered job opportunities in many parts of the country, whether they realized that at the time or not.

An Alternative: Strong and Specific Location Preferences

The large majority of my respondents reported that they would have been happy to move to places other than Boston. Because their location preferences were not specific, their ultimate destinations were dictated by the spatial footprints of the strategies they used to look for jobs and reduce the complexity of the job search. However, two respondents did report having location preferences that were both specific and strong. These respondents employed specialized job search strategies that did not make use of either their preexisting networks or their university connections. One respondent, Laura, knew exactly what she wanted after graduation. For her, the job search was just a matter of getting it:

I grew up in the Boston area...and so when I was graduating college I knew that I wanted to be a lab technician somewhere, and I knew that, you know, when I was graduating college I didn't want to just go off to some big city by myself really, and so I very specifically looked in the Boston area for job positions. And so I just emailed probably like 70 or 80 professors at MIT with my resume...And so this person responded and was like 'yeah I have a position' and interviewed me and it was a great fit, so I ended up here.

Laura, who went to college outside of New England, did not make use of university or personal networks when she applied for jobs: she just cold-emailed professors off the MIT website. Because her goal was quite specific—she knew she wanted to work as a *lab technician* in *Boston*—she could find the job leads herself. The other respondent, education researcher Tamara, moved back home to Indiana to live near her sister. She also avoided university

networks to find her job: as she described, “what ended up happening was I went to Idealist.com, and I looked up, just jobs in education, education jobs in Indianapolis.”

As these respondents demonstrate, the university connections and previous experiences of my respondents were not deterministic of their destinations—just influential. When respondents had preferences that were both strong and specific, they could realize them independently of their university resources (although they undoubtedly still benefited from their status as graduates of elite universities). The impact of social context in the job searches of my respondents was not in *overpowering* individual agency, but in *channeling* it. In the few cases where respondents knew exactly what they wanted, they could pursue that without being influenced by the geographical tendencies of their institution. But relatively few respondents reported this level of specificity. Instead, they had either a general set of requirements, or they simply wanted to find a job ASAP. Their university connections and previous experiences took those general goals and channeled them towards a specific set of destinations that were the path of least resistance. In this their experience was similar to that of younger college students who are “funneled” into specific careers (Binder et al. 2015) or college pathways (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013).

How Graduates Ended Up in Atypical Destinations

The goal of this paper is to understand the decision processes that led new graduates of elite universities to settle in the Boston area after graduation. As I have shown, in addition to their own preferences about location and the wide variety of job opportunities that exist in Boston, my respondents were channeled there by the way in which they conducted their job searches, and especially by the geographical footprint of their previous experiences and university networks. A natural question is whether the processes that brought my respondents to Boston differ from those that led some of their classmates to very different places. When graduates move to out of the way places, are they brought there by the same types of forces that take so many of their peers to Boston and other coastal metros? Or is something else going on—for instance, do they simply have family connections (like Tamara) or idiosyncratic preferences for living off the beaten path?

To explore the processes that brought graduates to atypical destinations, and the scope conditions of the mechanisms displayed among my Boston sample, I sought out several

respondents who moved to states that attracted fewer than 1% of recent alumni from their universities. I was able to connect with five such respondents, four through alumni databases and one through my personal networks.

While the small sample size limits my ability to draw definitive conclusions from these respondents, two patterns emerge that parallel certain trends in the Boston sample, suggesting that a similar decision process may have been at work. The first is the importance of past familiarity in enabling a move. While several Boston respondents reported that they explicitly or implicitly ruled out parts of the country that they were unfamiliar with, three of the five respondents in atypical destinations moved to places where they had spent time previously, and mentioned that familiarity as an important factor in the decision.

One of these was Tamara, mentioned above, who moved back home to Indiana. The other two took pains to note during their interviews that they moved to places where they had already spent time in college. Jennifer, an environmental engineer who ended up in Anchorage, had spent a summer in Alaska during college. As she noted, “I had already been to Alaska and knew I liked it up here...I didn’t just pick up and move to Alaska; I had been here before.” Similarly, Penny, a petroleum engineer, was ready to leave the East Coast, where she had lived her entire life. She ended up picking New Orleans because she was familiar with it from a summer internship: “I wanted to go literally anywhere else in the world [besides the East Coast].... I had been to New Orleans and knew it was fun, but it was far away and I didn’t know anyone moving here so it would be a fresh start.” Neither Jennifer nor Penny had specific preferences about where they ended up, but for both of them past familiarity was important in enabling their moves.

A second parallel between these respondents and those who ended up in Boston was the prioritization of employment. Respondents in this group who did not have previous familiarity with their destination made their move entirely for the job. As Jane, an Americorps public health worker who moved to Montana, described, “It was really about what the job was... I said to myself, ‘Oh, Montana.’ I’d never thought about Montana until that moment.” Heather, the chemical engineer mentioned above, similarly moved to Louisiana entirely because she received a job offer there.

Because elite college graduates overwhelmingly move to specific coastal metros after college, it can be tempting to conclude that these graduates are predestined to end up in places

like Boston, New York, or San Francisco. But my conversations with graduates who moved to atypical destinations suggest that the same attitudes and processes that take many graduates to Boston can lead others far off the beaten path. The reason that so many graduates move to Boston and places like it, then, may be less an aversion to other destinations and more because the spatial distributions of contacts, familiarity, and opportunities—the key forces drawing graduates to jobs no matter the location—are so concentrated in certain metropolitan areas. Changing the balance of these contextual forces, whether by broadening the geography of university databases or by helping students develop familiarity with a range of US regions before graduation, might offer one way to reduce educational polarization.

Discussion

Despite having the ability to go almost anywhere, elite college graduates disproportionately end up in a small handful of prosperous metro areas after graduation. This paper has used interviews with recent graduates who moved to Boston to explore the processes that draw graduates to these human capital hubs. I have shown that the decision to move to Boston was not typically driven by an unambiguous preference for living there: very few of my respondents reported having location preferences both strong and specific enough to determine on their own where the respondents moved. Instead, the choice of where to live emerged in parallel with the choice of what job to take. Because the post-college job search was so cognitively overwhelming, my respondents used various strategies to eliminate most opportunities without full consideration. Those strategies, needed to make the job search tractable, had the byproduct of channeling my respondents towards certain geographies—either consciously, as when they decided to limit their searches to a handful of cities, or implicitly, when they focused their efforts on high quality sources of job leads.

My findings have implications for research and policy related to educational polarization, domestic migration, and decision-making in social contexts. I discuss each briefly here, as well as describing some limitations of this study and suggestions for future research.

Educational polarization may be exacerbated by the socially structured job search

Previous studies of educational polarization in the United States have emphasized changes in labor demand (Diamond 2016; Moretti 2012; Storper and Scott 2009), limitations on

housing supply (Ganong and Shoag 2013; Gyourko, Mayer, and Sinai 2013), and lifestyle desirability (Florida 2002; Glaeser et al. 2001) as reasons why workers in the United States have geographically sorted themselves by education over the past 40 years. Here, focusing on young workers graduating from elite universities, I have identified another mechanism that drew them to a highly educated city: the way in which they looked for jobs.

My respondents described migration decisions that were heavily shaped by the methods they used to find employment. Most respondents reported that they took steps to reduce the complexity of the combined job and location decision to make it cognitively tractable. The methods they used to reduce complexity were not geographically neutral: sometimes they incorporated geography explicitly to rule out potential destinations, other times implicitly by targeting their efforts in the places where their university connections or own previous experiences gave them a perceived leg up. The result in most cases was that they ended up looking in a smaller number of cities than either their location preferences or the spatial distribution of their industries required.

This is hardly the sole or even primary mechanism responsible for educational polarization. Most notably, the geographic distribution of jobs was fixed before my respondents began their searches. But the social nature of the job search means that graduates of individual colleges may be more geographically concentrated than either the distribution of jobs or their own location preferences require. Going beyond the handful of universities in my sample, Conzelmann et al. (2022) show that most colleges send the lion's share of their students to a relatively small number of destinations—if anything, graduates of selective universities are less geographically concentrated than average.

My findings suggest that some students who end up moving to places like Boston would be willing to consider a broader range of destinations—if promising job opportunities exist, if the graduates can learn about them, and especially if they have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the destinations at some point before college graduation. From a policy perspective, this suggests that it may be possible to reduce educational polarization—or at least disperse the graduates of individual colleges—by broadening the geography of the job leads they have access to. University career services offices might consider database reciprocity programs with peer schools in other parts of the country, which would allow individual graduates access to a wider geography of opportunities.

Another way to reduce educational polarization might be to expose students to a broader slice of the United States while they are still in college. Yale alumni in Louisville, KY, organize “Bulldogs in the Bluegrass,” a program that provides current Yale students with paid summer internships, housing, and programming designed to expose them to life in Louisville, with the explicit goal of encouraging them to return after graduation. Since its inception, more than 40 participants have moved to Louisville (Bulldogs in the Bluegrass 2021). “Summer on the Cuyahoga” is a similarly structured program that brings students from a range of universities to Cleveland for a summer during college, and more than 160 of the 1000 participants have ended up in Northeast Ohio after graduating (Summer on the Cuyahoga 2021). Universities seeking to broaden their alumni footprint, cities hoping to attract graduates, and policymakers eager to reduce educational polarization might consider similar programs to build connections between current college students and the places they might move after graduation.

Domestic migration: the need for cognitively plausible decision models

Historically, much research on the determinants of domestic migration has modeled the decision as one in which potential migrants consider all possible destinations and choose the single best one. Recent research documenting the high costs of moving and short distances of most moves has raised questions about this decision model (Bartik 2018; Conzelmann et al. 2022; Sprung-Keyser et al. 2022). In this paper I have begun the process of developing an alternative model of migration decision-making. Deliberately focusing on a population that could be considered a “best case” for the traditional decision model—young, eminently employable, largely without dependents—I have shown that they deviated substantially from its assumptions, eliminating most possible destinations with only minimal consideration and having their ultimate location determined in large part by cognitive and organizational factors shaping how they conducted their bundled searches for jobs and locations. The decision processes I have described might inform the creation of “cognitively plausible” quantitative models of migration, analogous to those that have been applied to other major life decisions (Bruch et al. 2016; Bruch and Swait 2019).

Investigating the migration decision process has also provided insight into the asymmetric roles that jobs and amenities play in determining where people move. A lengthy literature has sought to determine whether jobs or amenities are more influential in shaping

migration patterns (e.g. Kemeny and Storper 2012; Mazek and Chang 1972; Muth 1971; Partridge 2010). Among my respondents, I have shown, both jobs and amenities factored into the migration decision, but in different ways and at different points in the decision process. Amenities were typically used to rule out certain types of cities or regions of the country from consideration, while respondents generally chose their specific city based on where they found a job. Rather than portraying jobs and amenities as competing explanations, future migration research should consider them as forces that interact with one another to shape a complex decision.

Decision-making in social contexts

The decision processes described by my respondents echo findings from previous studies of other major life decisions. JDM scholars have convincingly established that even in important decisions the ultimate choice can be influenced by seemingly minor features of the decision environment (Samuelson and Zeckhauser 1988; Simonson and Tversky 1992; Sunstein and Thaler 2008). Sociologists have elaborated on this by noting that in social life, the decision environment is typically socially constructed or the product of one's position in social structure (Bruch and Feinberg 2017). My respondents who moved to take jobs found through networks, university career services offices, or previous experiences are perfect examples of this phenomenon. The ease of finding a job was a key factor in determining which sources of job leads they pursued. And it was determined by who they knew, what experiences they had, and where they were coming from.

My study of the decision of where to move after graduating from college joins a recent wave of scholarship that has taken similar approaches to study other major life decisions, such as which neighborhood to move to (DeLuca and Jang-Trettien 2020; Krysan and Crowder 2017) and which school to attend (Fong 2019; Holme 2002; Lareau and Goyette 2014). It also conforms with research on how college students with vague or weakly held preferences find themselves “channeled” or “funneled” towards particular outcomes based on their institutional environments (Armstrong and Hamilton 2013; Binder et al. 2015). In the post-college migration decision, this funneling emerged as a result of the strategic choices my respondents made about how to approach the job search. Respondents who used the “geographic triage” method of complexity reduction did affirmatively shape the set of locations where they might end up. Those

who used the “lead quality” method still found their set of possible destinations reduced, but by the structural position of their universities and networks rather than their individual preferences.

Limitations and future research

The research presented here is by no means exhaustive, and it suggests many avenues for future scholarship. A natural place to start would be to look for systematic patterns in the heterogeneity of search strategies that I document. Some of my respondents stated that they were willing to move anywhere for a job, “including the moon” in the case of David. Others limited themselves to a small number of cities off the bat. Future work should look for systematic variation in these strategies, whether on the basis of demographics, intended career path, college major, or previous life experience.

There are some suggestive possibilities: several of the respondents who moved the furthest, including David and Heather, also reported feeling particularly concerned about securing a job, sometimes due to experience with unemployment in the past. This highlights another limitation of my sample: my respondents were interviewed in 2015 and 2016, and most had graduated between 2012 and 2014. They were thus finding jobs in the period of recovery after the 2008 financial crisis, within memory of the crisis but not during a period of high unemployment. It is quite possible that in a tighter labor market, respondents flush with job offers would place more emphasis on amenities and lifestyle, while during a recession the imperative of finding any job, no matter where it was, would be even more strongly felt.

Future studies might also look for differences in job search strategies across racial or ethnic groups. It is well documented that Black applicants face employment discrimination, even after graduating from prestigious universities (Gaddis 2015; Pager 2003), and that this shapes their job search strategies (Pager and Pedulla 2015). Additionally, while I did not observe differences in search strategy by gender, it is possible that these exist. Among married heterosexual couples, the husband’s career often determines migration decisions (Bielby and Bielby 1992).

In addition, I have deliberately focused my attention on graduates who moved to metropolitan Boston. Boston occupies a unique economic position in the United States as an education and technology hub and a prime beneficiary of educational polarization. Future research might probe the extent to which the processes I have described are also shaping the

migration of graduates to other human capital hotspots like San Francisco, New York, and Washington DC. Research should also explore the processes that bring elite graduates to atypical locations in greater depth—particularly given the interest among both local and national policymakers in encouraging a more even geographic spread of graduates (Atkinson, Muro, and Whiton 2019; Regan and Tarleton 2016).

Future research might also consider the ways in which the job searches and migration decisions of graduates of selective colleges may differ from recent college graduates as a whole or labor migrants in general. Coming from selective colleges with well-resourced career services offices, it is possible that the job leads my respondents could get through organizational ties were much more promising than those available to other migrants. Recent findings suggest that graduates of less selective universities may be even more geographically concentrated than those of the selective universities I have focused on (Conzelmann et al. 2022). Future research could explore whether this is due to different preferences, different search strategies, or different access to resources.

The educational polarization of the United States, with its accompanying social and economic dislocation, is a serious challenge facing the country today. This paper has examined the processes underlying one aspect of educational polarization—the concentration of recent graduates of elite colleges in metropolitan Boston. For this group of elite graduates, I have shown, the decision to move to Boston did not result simply from a preference for living there or because of the spatial distribution of jobs. It also emerged from the way in which they carried out their job search. Reducing educational polarization, then, may require considering social structure as well as economic geography.

References

- Albouy, David. 2008. *Are Big Cities Bad Places to Live? Estimating Quality of Life across Metropolitan Areas. Working Paper*. 14472. National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Armstrong, Elizabeth A., and Laura T. Hamilton. 2013. *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Atkinson, Robert D., Mark Muro, and Jacob Whiton. 2019. *The Case for Growth Centers*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution.
- Bartik, Alexander W. 2018. "Moving Costs and Worker Adjustment to Changes in Labor Demand: Evidence from Longitudinal Census Data." 85.
- Bartik, Timothy J. 2019. *Should Place-Based Jobs Policies Be Used to Help Distressed Communities?* W.E. Upjohn Institute. doi: 10.17848/wp19-308.
- Beasley, Maya A. 2012. *Opting out: Losing the Potential of America's Young Black Elite*. University of Chicago Press.
- Berry, Christopher R., and Edward L. Glaeser. 2005. "The Divergence of Human Capital Levels across Cities." *Papers in Regional Science* 84(3):407–44.
- Binder, Amy J., Daniel B. Davis, and Nick Bloom. 2015. "Career Funneling How Elite Students Learn to Define and Desire "Prestigious" Jobs." *Sociology of Education* 89(1):20–39.
- Bishop, Bill. 2008. *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of like-Minded America Is Tearing Us Apart*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Blanco, Cicely. 1963. "THE DETERMINANTS OF INTERSTATE POPULATION MOVEMENTS†." *Journal of Regional Science* 5(1):77–84. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9787.1963.tb00911.x.
- Blau, Peter M., and Joseph E. Schwartz. 1984. *Crosscutting Social Circles*. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Brodey, Sam. 2015. "Forget Brooklyn. Could Columbus Be the next Hot Millennial Enclave?" *Mother Jones*, June 1.
- Bruch, Elizabeth E., and Fred Feinberg. 2017. "Decision-Making Processes in Social Contexts." *Annual Review of Sociology* 43(1):207–27. doi: 10.1146/annurev-soc-060116-053622.
- Bruch, Elizabeth E., Fred Feinberg, and Kee Yeun Lee. 2016. "Extracting Multistage Screening Rules from Online Dating Activity Data." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 201522494. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1522494113.
- Bruch, Elizabeth, and Joffre Swait. 2019. "Choice Set Formation in Residential Mobility and Its Implications for Segregation Dynamics." *Demography*. doi: 10.1007/s13524-019-00810-5.

- Bulldogs in the Bluegrass. 2021. "About Us." Retrieved (<https://bulldogsinthebluegrass.com/about-us/>).
- Campus Philly. 2020. "About." *Campus Philly*. Retrieved September 29, 2020 (<https://campusphilly.org/about/>).
- Carr, Patrick J., and Maria J. Kefalas. 2009. *Hollowing out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and What It Means for America*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Carrillo, Laura, Mary Pattillo, Erin Hardy, and Dolores Acevedo-Garcia. 2016. "Housing Decisions Among Low-Income Hispanic Households in Chicago." *Cityscape* 18(2):109.
- Chetty, Raj, Michael Stepner, Sarah Abraham, Shelby Lin, Benjamin Scuderi, Nicholas Turner, Augustin Bergeron, and David M. Cutler. 2016. "The Association between Income and Life Expectancy in the United States, 2001-2014." *JAMA* 315(16):1750–66. doi: 10.1001/jama.2016.4226.
- Clark, Terry Nichols, Richard Lloyd, Kenneth K. Wong, and Pushpam Jain. 2002. "Amenities Drive Urban Growth." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 24(5):493–515. doi: 10.1111/1467-9906.00134.
- Coleman, James S. 1986. "Social Theory, Social Research, and a Theory of Action." *American Journal of Sociology* 1309–35.
- Conzelmann, Johnathan, Steven W. Hemelt, Brad Hershbein, Shawn Martin, Andrew Simon, and Kevin Stange. 2022. "Grads on the Go: Measuring College-Specific Labor Markets for Graduates."
- Corcoran, Jonathan, and Alessandra Faggian. 2017. *Graduate Migration and Regional Development*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Cyert, Richard M., and James G. March. 1963. "A Behavioral Theory of the Firm." *Englewood Cliffs, NJ* 2(4):169–87.
- Dahl, Michael S., and Olav Sorenson. 2010a. "The Migration of Technical Workers." *Journal of Urban Economics* 67(1):33–45.
- Dahl, Michael S., and Olav Sorenson. 2010b. "The Social Attachment to Place." *Social Forces* 89(2):633–58.
- Damaske, Sarah. 2009. "Brown Suits Need Not Apply: The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Class in Institutional Network Building." *Sociological Forum* 24(2):402–24. doi: 10.1111/j.1573-7861.2009.01105.x.
- Davis, Daniel, and Amy Binder. 2019. "Industry, Firm, Job Title: The Layered Nature of Early-Career Advantage for Graduates of Elite Private Universities." *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 5:237802311985971. doi: 10.1177/2378023119859711.

- Dellaert, Benedict G. C., Joffre Swait, Wiktor L. Vic Adamowicz, Theo A. Arentze, Elizabeth E. Bruch, Elisabetta Cherchi, Caspar Chorus, Bas Donkers, Fred M. Feinberg, A. A. J. Marley, and Linda Court Salisbury. 2018. "Individuals' Decisions in the Presence of Multiple Goals." *Customer Needs and Solutions* 5(1–2):51–64. doi: 10.1007/s40547-017-0071-1.
- DeLuca, Stefanie, and Christine Jang-Trettien. 2020. "'Not Just a Lateral Move': Residential Decisions and the Reproduction of Urban Inequality." *City & Community* cico.12515. doi: 10.1111/cico.12515.
- DeLuca, Stefanie, Peter Rosenblatt, and Holly Wood. 2012. "Why Poor People Move (and Where They Go): Residential Mobility, Selection and Stratification."
- Detroit Regional Chamber. 2018. "Detroit Regional Chamber Launches 'Let's Detroit' Talent Attraction and Retention Tool." *Chamber Today*. Retrieved September 29, 2020 (<https://www.detroitchamber.com/detroit-regional-chamber-launches-lets-detroit-talent-attraction-and-retention-tool/>).
- Diamond, Rebecca. 2016. "The Determinants and Welfare Implications of U.S. Workers' Diverging Location Choices by Skill: 1980-2000." *American Economic Review* 106(3):479–524.
- Dietz, Thomas, and Cameron T. Whitley. 2018. "Inequality, Decisions, and Altruism." *Sociology of Development* 4(3):282–303. doi: 10.1525/sod.2018.4.3.282.
- Domina, Thurston. 2006. "What Clean Break?: Education and Nonmetropolitan Migration Patterns, 1989–2004." *Rural Sociology* 71(3):373–98.
- Fernandez, Roberto M., Emilio J. Castilla, and Paul Moore. 2000. "Social Capital at Work: Networks and Employment at a Phone Center." *American Journal of Sociology* 105(5):1288–1356.
- Fernandez, Roberto M., and Nancy Weinberg. 1997. "Sifting and Sorting: Personal Contacts and Hiring in a Retail Bank." *American Sociological Review* 62(6):883. doi: 10.2307/2657345.
- Flippen, Chenoa. 2013. "Relative Deprivation and Internal Migration in the United States: A Comparison of Black and White Men." *American Journal of Sociology* 118(5):1161–98. doi: 10.1086/668691.
- Florida, Richard. 2002. *The Rise of the Creative Class*. New York: Basic Books.
- Fong, Kelley. 2019. "Subject to Evaluation: How Parents Assess and Mobilize Information from Social Networks in School Choice." *Sociological Forum* 34(1):158–80. doi: 10.1111/socf.12483.

- Frey, William H. 2018. "Where Do the Most Educated Millennials Live?" *The Avenue*. Retrieved (<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/02/06/where-do-the-most-educated-millennials-live/>).
- Gaddis, S. Michael. 2015. "Discrimination in the Credential Society: An Audit Study of Race and College Selectivity in the Labor Market." *Social Forces* 93(4):1451–79. doi: 10.1093/sf/sou111.
- Garip, Filiz, and Asad L. Asad. 2016. "Network Effects in Mexico–US Migration: Disentangling the Underlying Social Mechanisms." *American Behavioral Scientist* 60(10):1168–93.
- Gavetti, Giovanni, Daniel Levinthal, and William Ocasio. 2007. "Perspective—Neo-Carnegie: The Carnegie School's Past, Present, and Reconstructing for the Future." *Organization Science* 18(3):523–36.
- Glaeser, Edward L., Jed Kolko, and Albert Saiz. 2001. "Consumer City." *Journal of Economic Geography* 1(1):27–50.
- Graham, Carol, and Sergio Pinto. 2019. "Unequal Hopes and Lives in the USA: Optimism, Race, Place, and Premature Mortality." *Journal of Population Economics* 32(2):665–733.
- Granovetter, M. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78(6):1360–80.
- Graves, Philip E. 1980. "Migration and Climate." *Journal of Regional Science* 20(2):227–37. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9787.1980.tb00641.x.
- Graves, Philip E., and Peter D. Linneman. 1979. "Household Migration: Theoretical and Empirical Results." *Journal of Urban Economics* 6(3):383–404.
- Greenwood, Michael J. 1975. "Research on Internal Migration in the United States: A Survey." *Journal of Economic Literature* 13(2):397–433.
- Greenwood, Michael J. 1997. "Internal Migration in Developed Countries." *Handbook of Population and Family Economics*.
- Greenwood, Michael J., and Gary L. Hunt. 1989. "Jobs versus Amenities in the Analysis of Metropolitan Migration." *Journal of Urban Economics* 25:1–16.
- Harvey, Hope, Kelley Fong, Kathryn Edin, and Stefanie DeLuca. 2020. "Forever Homes and Temporary Stops: Housing Search Logics and Residential Selection." *Social Forces* 98(4):1498–1523.
- Ho, Karen. 2009. *Liquidated*. Duke University Press.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2018. *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. The New Press.

- Holland, Megan M. 2019. *Divergent Paths to College: Race, Class, and Inequality in High Schools*. Rutgers University Press.
- Holme, Jennifer Jellison. 2002. "Buying Homes, Buying Schools: School Choice and the Social Construction of School Quality." *Harvard Educational Review* 72(2):177–206.
- Howard, John A., and Jagdish N. Sheth. 1969. *The Theory of Buyer Behavior*. Vol. 14. Wiley New York.
- Johnston, Ron, David Manley, and Kelvyn Jones. 2016. "Spatial Polarization of Presidential Voting in the United States, 1992–2012: The 'Big Sort' Revisited." *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 106(5):1047–62. doi: 10.1080/24694452.2016.1191991.
- Kemeny, Thomas, and Michael Storper. 2012. "The Sources of Urban Development: Wages, Housing, and Amenity Gaps Across American Cities." *Journal of Regional Science* 52(1):85–108. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9787.2011.00754.x.
- Knapp, Thomas Andrew, and Philip E. Graves. 1989. "On the Role of Amenities in Models of Migration and Regional Development." *Journal of Regional Science* 29(1):71–87.
- Krysan, Maria, and Kyle Crowder. 2017. *Cycle of Segregation: Social Processes and Residential Stratification*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Lansing, John B., and Eva Mueller. 1967. *The Geographic Mobility of Labor*. Survey Research Center, University of Michigan.
- Lareau, Annette. 2014. "Schools, Housing, and the Reproduction of Inequality." P. 169 in *Choosing Homes, Choosing Schools*, edited by A. Lareau and K. Goyette.
- Lareau, Annette, and Kimberly Goyette. 2014. *Choosing Homes, Choosing Schools: Residential Segregation and the Search for a Good School*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Malhotra, Naresh K. 1982. "Information Load and Consumer Decision Making." *Journal of Consumer Research* 8(4):419–30.
- Manson, Steven, Jonathan Schroeder, David Van Riper, and Steven Ruggles. 2017. "IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 12.0."
- Mazek, Warren F., and John Chang. 1972. "The Chicken or Egg Fowl-up in Migration: Comment." *Southern Economic Journal* 133–39.
- MIT Career Advising and Professional Development. 2020. *Student Outcomes and Salaries - 2019*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Moretti, Enrico. 2012. *The New Geography of Jobs*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

- Moss-Pech, Corey. 2021. "The Career Conveyor Belt: How Internships Lead to Unequal Labor Market Outcomes among College Graduates." *Qualitative Sociology* 44(1):77–102. doi: 10.1007/s11133-020-09471-y.
- Muth, Richard F. 1971. "Migration: Chicken or Egg?" *Southern Economic Journal* 295–306.
- Nelson, Ingrid A. 2019. "Social Capital and Residential Decision Making Among Rural and Nonrural College Graduates." *Sociological Forum* 34(4):926–49. doi: 10.1111/socf.12555.
- O'Shaughnessy, Lynn. 2012. "Niagara Falls to Help Pay off Student Loans." *CBS News*, July 16.
- Pager, Devah. 2003. "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology* 108(5):937–75. doi: 10.1086/374403.
- Pager, Devah, and David S. Pedulla. 2015. "Race, Self-Selection, and the Job Search Process." *American Journal of Sociology* 120(4):1005–54. doi: 10.1086/681072.
- Partridge, Mark D. 2010. "The Duelling Models: NEG vs Amenity Migration in Explaining US Engines of Growth." *Papers in Regional Science* 89(3):513–36. doi: 10.1111/j.1435-5957.2010.00315.x.
- Payne, John W. 1976. "Heuristic Search Processes in Decision Making." *ACR North American Advances*.
- Quadlin, Natasha. 2018. "The Mark of a Woman's Record: Gender and Academic Performance in Hiring." *American Sociological Review* 83(2):331–60.
- Radford, Alexandria Walton. 2013. "Top Student, Top School?" in *Top Student, Top School?* University of Chicago Press.
- Ravenstein, EG. 1885. "The Laws of Migration." *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* 48(2):167–235.
- Regan, Ryan, and Matthew Tarleton. 2016. "Competing for Tomorrow's Workforce." *Chamber Executive*, 8.
- Rivera, Lauren A. 2011. "Ivies, Extracurriculars, and Exclusion: Elite Employers' Use of Educational Credentials." *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 29(1):71–90. doi: 10.1016/j.rssm.2010.12.001.
- Rivera, Lauren A. 2012. "Hiring as Cultural Matching the Case of Elite Professional Service Firms." *American Sociological Review* 77(6):999–1022.
- Rivera, Lauren A. 2015. *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Rodríguez-Pose, Andrés. 2018. "The Revenge of the Places That Don't Matter (and What to Do about It)." *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 11(1):189–209. doi: 10.1093/cjres/rsx024.
- Samuelson, William, and Richard Zeckhauser. 1988. "Status Quo Bias in Decision Making." *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty* 1(1):7–59.
- Schelling, Thomas C. 1971. "Dynamic Models of Segregation." *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 1(2):143–86.
- Sherman, Jennifer, and Rayna Sage. 2011. "Sending off All Your Good Treasures: Rural Schools, Brain-Drain, and Community Survival in the Wake of Economic Collapse." *Journal of Research in Rural Education (Online)* 26(11):1.
- Silva, Jennifer M. 2019. *We're Still Here: Pain and Politics in the Heart of America*. Oxford University Press.
- Simon, Herbert A. 1976. *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making Processes in Administrative Organization*. (3rd Ed). Vol. 1. New York, NY, US: Free Press.
- Simonson, Itamar, and Amos Tversky. 1992. "Choice in Context: Tradeoff Contrast and Extremeness Aversion." *Journal of Marketing Research* 29(3):281.
- Smith, Sandra Susan. 2005. "'Don't Put My Name on It': Social Capital Activation and Job-Finding Assistance among the Black Urban Poor." *American Journal of Sociology* 111(1):1–57. doi: 10.1086/428814.
- Spicer, Jason S. 2018. "Electoral Systems, Regional Resentment and the Surprising Success of Anglo-American Populism." *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 11(1):115–41. doi: 10.1093/cjres/rsx029.
- Sprung-Keyser, Ben, Nathaniel Hendren, and Sonya Porter. 2022. *The Radius of Economic Opportunity: Evidence from Migration and Local Labor Markets*.
- Stanford Career Education. 2017. *Stanford Destinations*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University.
- Storper, Michael, and Allen J. Scott. 2009. "Rethinking Human Capital, Creativity and Urban Growth." *Journal of Economic Geography* 9(2):147–67. doi: 10.1093/jeg/lbn052.
- Sugerman, Samantha. 2018. "Maine's New Recruitment Tool Targeting out-of-State College Graduates." *NBC News Center Maine*, October 29.
- Summer on the Cuyahoga. 2021. "Summer on the Cuyahoga." Retrieved (<http://www.summeronthecuyahoga.com/leadership-board-of-directors/eric-mcgarvey/>).
- Sunstein, Cass, and Richard Thaler. 2008. *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth and Happiness*.

- Toledo Chamber of Commerce. 2019. *Toledo Talent Alignment Strategy*.
- TYPROS. 2020. "Why TYPROS Exists." *Tulsa's Young Professionals*. Retrieved September 29, 2020 (<https://www.typros.org/who-we-are>).
- US News and World Report. 2021. "2021 Best Colleges." Retrieved September 8, 2021 (<https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges>).
- Vaisey, Stephen, and Lauren Valentino. 2018. "Culture and Choice: Toward Integrating Cultural Sociology with the Judgment and Decision-Making Sciences." *Poetics* 68:131–43. doi: 10.1016/j.poetic.2018.03.002.
- VanHeuvelen and Copas. 2019. "The Geography of Polarization, 1950 to 2015." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 5(4):77. doi: 10.7758/rsf.2019.5.4.03.
- Wiltz, Teresa. 2015. "Hello, Columbus: Cities Woo Millennials." *Government Technology*, April 3.
- Work in the Triangle. 2020. "About Us." Retrieved September 29, 2020 (<https://www.workinthetriangle.com/about-us>).
- Wuthnow, Robert. 2019. *The Left Behind: Decline and Rage in Small-Town America*. Princeton University Press.