

## **Collocation or Tied Migration? Choice of Destination Location Among Dual-Earner Families**

Kimberlee A. Shauman, *University of California, Davis*

### **Research statement**

The topic of migration among dual-earner families is of growing importance to the experience of individuals and families in the U.S. as two-income families have become demographically predominant and as lateral employment transitions have become a primary mechanism for career development and earnings growth. Consequently, the “collocation problem” is assumed to have become a more prevalent aspect of family life in the U.S. Dual-earner couples face the challenge of finding two jobs that are within a commutable distance from their home and that match their skills, employment preferences and career aspirations of both partners. Also, since the acuteness of the collocation problem is assumed to intensify with the career commitment of the marriage partners, the increasing representation of dual-career couples indicates that collocation may be quite common in the U.S., especially in families headed by highly educated marriage partners (Costa and Kahn 2000).

Yet, the findings of research on the gender inequality in the determinants and outcomes of family migration is inconsistent with the assumption that collocation has become a prevalent strategy among dual-earner families. Wives’ characteristics do not predict family migration, and family migration has a negative impact on married women's labor force participation and earnings (Bielby and Bielby 1992; Bird and Bird 1985; Boyle et al. 2001; Cooke 2003; Gemici 2008; Juerges 2006; Lichter 1980; Lichter 1982; Long 1974; Shauman and Noonan 2007; Shihadeh 1991). This research indicates that families do not tend to consider the careers of both partners when deciding when and where to relocate. Furthermore, the few existing studies of location choice have found that while dual-earner couples are more likely to relocate to large metropolitan areas, the location choice is associated only with the husband’s human capital (Compton & Pollak, 2007).

Because the family migration research has not explicitly examined the choice of location, and the locational-choice research has neglected to examine the influence of locational attributes other than size, the prevalence of collocation among dual-earner couples and the conditions that promote it as a joint career-development strategy are unknown. In this paper I add to the migration and family decision literatures by addressing two primary research questions. First, do dual-earner families move to labor markets that seem advantageous for the careers of both partners, i.e., do they collocate, or do they move to locations that appear to maximize career opportunity for one partner, i.e., is tied migration the norm? Second, what individual- or family-level characteristics are associated with collocation?

## Hypotheses

I test three hypotheses with this analysis. The *Opportunity Hypothesis* states that choice of location among dual-earner families will be positively influenced by locational indicators of employment and pay opportunity. The *Collocation Hypothesis* states that the estimated effects of indicators of employment opportunity on location choice will be the same for husbands and wives. The *Family Context Hypothesis* states that the collocation will be negatively influenced by the presence of children.

## Research design

For this analysis I use individual- and family-level data from the 1981 through 2003 waves of the *Panel Study of Income Dynamics* (PSID), along with the PSID geocode data that identify the location of the sample families at each wave of data collection. The outcome variable for this study is the location choice associated with a job-related long-distance family migration. The indicator of long-distance migration combines self-reported reasons for migration with comparisons of year-specific geographic identifiers of the residential location of each family. Location is operationalized as Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) for families moving to metropolitan areas, and as county for families moving to non-metropolitan areas.

Location-specific characteristics measured with data from the U.S. Decennial Census data from 1980, 1990, and 2000, the Current Population Surveys from 1980-2005, the ACCRA Cost of Living Index, and the Local Area Unemployment Statistics program of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The locational characteristics include measures of employment and earnings opportunities, such as occupation-specific representation, earnings, unemployment rates and short-history trends in unemployment, along with life-style indicators, such as the local average cost of living and housing costs. Occupation-specific measures for each location are constructed separately for husbands and wives and are linked to the individual-level data via detailed occupation codes.

The correlates of location choice among dual-earner married couples are estimated using a conditional logit model. The conditional logit framework is the most realistic statistical approximation of the migration decision because it allows for the explicit estimation of the association between the characteristics of a set of discrete location options and the choice of location. I estimate the influence of location-specific life-style measures as well as those measuring occupational opportunities on the location choice of dual-earner couples to identify the prevalence of collocation versus tied migration and to test hypotheses about the extent to which location choice is jointly determined by the occupational opportunities available to both husband and wife.

## Contributions

This paper adds to the family migration literature in three ways. First, by focusing on the choice of destination among dual-earner families, this analysis examines an under-studied aspect of family migration and decision making. Second, by incorporating occupation-specific characteristics of locations into choice models of migration destination, this analysis tests the degree to which location choice is associated with the occupation-specific employment opportunities. Third, utilizing parallel occupation data for partners in married couples to operationalize location-specific employment opportunities allows a novel examination of gender inequality in family migration.

## References

- Bielby, William T. and Denise D. Bielby. 1992. "I Will Follow Him: Family Ties, Gender-Role Beliefs, and Reluctance to Relocate for a Better Job." *American Journal of Sociology* 97:1241-1267.
- Bird, Gerald A. and Gloria W. Bird. 1985. "Determinants of Mobility in Two-Earner Families: Does the Wife's Income Count?" *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 47:753-758.
- Boyle, Paul J., Thomas J. Cooke, Keith H. Halfacree, and Darren Smith. 2001. "A Cross-National Comparison of the Impact of Family Migration on Women's Employment Status." *Demography* 38:201-213.
- Cooke, Thomas J. 2003. "Family Migration and the Relative Earnings of Husbands and Wives." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93:338-349.
- Costa, Dora L. and Matthew E. Kahn. 2000. "Power Couples: Changes in the Locational Choice of the College Educated, 1940-1990." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 115:1287-1315.
- Gemici, Ahu. 2008. "Family Migration and Labor Market Outcomes." Unpublished manuscript available at [http://www.econ.upenn.edu/~agemici/FamilyMig\\_vJune2008.pdf](http://www.econ.upenn.edu/~agemici/FamilyMig_vJune2008.pdf).
- Juerges, Hendrik. 2006. "Gender ideology, division of housework, and the geographic mobility of families." *Review of Economics of the Household* 4:299-323.
- Lichter, Daniel T. 1980. "Household Migration and the Labor Market Position of Married Women." *Social Science Research* 9:83-97.
- . 1982. "The Migration of Dual-Worker Families: Does the Wife's Job Matter." *Social Science Quarterly* 63:48-57.
- Long, Larry H. 1974. "Women's Labor Force Participation and the Residential Mobility of Families." *Social Forces* 52:342-348.
- Shauman, Kimberlee A. and Mary C. Noonan. 2007. "Family Migration and Labor Force Outcomes: Sex Differences in Occupational Context." *Social Forces* 85:1735-1764.
- Shihadeh, Edward S. 1991. "The Prevalence of Husband-Centered Migration: Employment Consequences for Married Mothers." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53:432-444.