



**Queensland University of Technology**  
Brisbane Australia

This is the author's version of a work that was submitted/accepted for publication in the following source:

[Doherty, Catherine, Shield, Paul, Patton, Wendy, & Mu, Guanglun Michael](#) (2015)

The limits to public service : rural communities, professional families, and work mobility.

*Community, Work & Family*, 18(1), pp. 100-116.

This file was downloaded from: <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/80174/>

© Copyright 2014 Taylor & Francis

**Notice:** *Changes introduced as a result of publishing processes such as copy-editing and formatting may not be reflected in this document. For a definitive version of this work, please refer to the published source:*

<http://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2014.953446>



**The limits to public service: rural communities, professional families and work mobility.**

Journal:	<i>Community, Work &amp; Family</i>
Manuscript ID:	CCWF-2013-0035.R1
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	professionals, rural/remote communities, family, schooling , mobility, neoliberalism

SCHOLARONE™  
Manuscripts

1  
2  
3  
4  
5 **The limits to public service: rural communities, professional families and work**  
6 **mobility.**  
7

8  
9 **Abstract**  
10

11 Australia faces an ongoing challenge recruiting professionals to staff essential human  
12 services in rural and remote communities. This paper identifies the private limits to the  
13 implicit service contract between professions and such client populations. These become  
14 evident in how private solutions to competing priorities within professional families inform  
15 their selective mobility and thus create the public problem for such communities. The paper  
16 reports on a survey of doctors, nurses, teachers and police with responsibility for school-aged  
17 children in Queensland that plumbed the strength of neoliberal values in their educational  
18 strategy and their commitment to the public good in career decisions. The quantitative  
19 analysis suggested that neoliberal values are not necessarily opposed to a commitment to the  
20 public good. However, the qualitative analysis of responses to hypothetical career  
21 opportunities in rural and remote communities drew out the multiple intertwined spatial and  
22 temporal limits to such public service, highlighting the priority given to educational strategy  
23 in these families' deliberations. This private/public nexus poses a policy problem on multiple  
24 institutional fronts.  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43

44 **Key Words:** professionals, rural/remote communities, family, schooling, mobility,  
45 neoliberalism  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9 *Introducing the family problem between professionals and rural communities*

10  
11 Australia faces an ongoing challenge in recruiting and retaining professionals to staff  
12 essential human services in rural and remote communities (Haslam McKenzie, 2007; 2011).

13  
14 While there is a nationwide shortage of nurses, other occupational groups in short supply in  
15 remote areas include “health professionals, community service employees, emergency  
16 services employees, police officers and teachers” (Australian Government Productivity  
17 Commission, 2013, p. 88). Australia is not alone in this problem. There is a well documented  
18 global ‘brain drain’ of qualified professionals out of relatively disadvantaged communities  
19 towards more advantaged ones, from rural to urban (Voigt-Graf 2003; Wang and Gao 2013),  
20 and from global South to North in search of better opportunities for both self and family  
21 (Kline 2003; Marchal and Kegels 2003; Connell 2010). To understand this selective mobility  
22 of professionals, this paper builds from the mobilities paradigm (Sheller & Urry, 2006). Its  
23 sociological focus on mobility offers ‘a different way of thinking through the character of  
24 economic, social and political relationships’ (Urry, 2008, p. 479) to expose how the  
25 autonomous capacity of some to decide when and where they move can impinge on others.  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43

44 Reports on the rural professional workforce highlight family factors such as spouse  
45 employment and children’s educational opportunities as pivotal considerations:  
46  
47  
48

49 Usually, the employment options for the ‘trailing spouse’ in remote communities are  
50 very limited ... The higher quality education resources in the larger population centres  
51 are another major reason why families often prefer to live in these centres. (Haslam  
52 McKenzie, 2010, p. 366).  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3  
4  
5 Rural sociologists approach the same problem from the perspective of the community's  
6  
7 interests:

8  
9  
10 High levels of human capital in the form of educational qualifications ... are likely to  
11  
12 make little difference to community sustainability if those skills are not used to  
13  
14 achieve some common good, or if they cause those who possess them to move away  
15  
16 and seek new opportunities elsewhere. (Cocklin & Alston, 2003, p. 14)  
17  
18  
19

20  
21 We would highlight how both perspectives on this problematic work/family/community  
22  
23 nexus implicate educational markets in mobility decisions – school choice on one hand, and  
24  
25 the market for credentials on the other. We are particularly interested in whether two decades  
26  
27 of neoliberal policy driving marketisation of the education sector has exacerbated the  
28  
29 selective mobility of professional families and thereby undermined the implicit public service  
30  
31 contract between professions and their client populations. In other words, we are interested in  
32  
33 whether a policy 'solution' emerging in one public sector is contributing to policy problems  
34  
35 elsewhere.  
36  
37  
38

39  
40 Rural sociology typically foregrounds stability in rural populations, and the outbound flow of  
41  
42 young people (for example, Carr & Kafalas, 2009). This framing renders invisible the  
43  
44 inbound flow of mobile professionals with trailing families needed to sustain viable  
45  
46 communities where communities cannot produce their own such professionals. In contrast,  
47  
48 this same professional fraction of the middle class has become increasingly visible in the  
49  
50 sociology of education, given the role of educational credentials in their own life  
51  
52 opportunities and their intense investment in the school choice market to pursue similar  
53  
54 educational advantage for their children (Ball, 2003).  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3  
4  
5 A study by Campbell, Proctor and Sherington (2009) documents the Australian middle  
6  
7 class's growing aspirations and anxieties in the current policy climate whereby school choice  
8  
9 behaviours are endorsed and encouraged. They provide evidence of families buying a house  
10  
11 to ensure enrolment in the school of choice. We suggest there is another scale to such strategy  
12  
13 – choosing the town for its school market. They argue: 'We need to ask questions about the  
14  
15 consequences of these new school choice regimes for individual families, for schools and for  
16  
17 Australian society as a whole. Choosing schools strategically becomes an ever higher priority  
18  
19 for families' (Campbell et al., 2009, p.12). Other research (Lareau, 2011; Power, Edwards,  
20  
21 Whitty, & Wigfall, 2003) suggests that for professional families more so than others,  
22  
23 education should be understood as an all-consuming primary concern about intergenerational  
24  
25 status reproduction. To date, the research around middle class strategy in school choice has  
26  
27 focussed on metropolitan centres with deep educational markets. The missing link between  
28  
29 rural sociology and the sociology of educational markets lies in understanding how  
30  
31 professional families view and engage with the more limited educational choices available in  
32  
33 smaller communities.  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39

40 ***A theoretical frame articulating families, neoliberalism and professionals.***

41  
42 This paper explore professional families' mobility decisions not by analytically partitioning  
43  
44 the domains of work, family and education, but rather by asking how competing priorities are  
45  
46 reconciled within family units with regard to the opportunities in different communities. This  
47  
48 section develops conceptualisations of family, neoliberalism and professional status that can  
49  
50 articulate with each other around this question.  
51  
52  
53  
54

55 We understand the social institution of family to be the relational nexus where contradictory  
56  
57 demands of institutions that govern public domains such as education and work have to be  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 negotiated through normative assumptions around gender, sexuality, reproduction, care and  
4  
5 emotion that govern the private domain (Berger, 2002; Sherif-Trask, 2010). Social  
6  
7 conventions around families have been shown to be both responsive and resilient in the face  
8  
9 of social change, but we would highlight the analytic constant of families' dense and  
10  
11 formative intersubjectivity as their distinguishing feature. Crossley (1996) explains the  
12  
13 concept of intersubjectivity through the metaphor of fabric:  
14  
15

16  
17 It is what holds us all together in an identifiable group or unit. Secondly, 'fabric'  
18  
19 conjures up an image of multiple overlappings and intertwinings, organised and  
20  
21 arranged in different ways, sometimes becoming disorganised. It connotes a sense of  
22  
23 unity and strength which is achieved by way of this overlapping. No thread is either  
24  
25 strong or significant on its own but the intertwining gives it strength and form. (p.173)  
26  
27

28  
29  
30 A family, however constituted, will be more than the sum of its individuals. Through its  
31  
32 constitution, new properties emerge that serve to overwrite or decentre the individual:  
33  
34

35  
36 plans are not necessarily the properties of individuals. They can be formed between  
37  
38 individuals, as an irreducible property of a couple ... In these situations it is not I who  
39  
40 decide what to do, nor you. It is we who decide. (Crossley, 1996, p. 81)  
41  
42

43  
44 Following Pocock (2003) we similarly understand the domains of work and family to be  
45  
46 entangled, 'part of a seamless, messy whole: a conglomerate' (p.16) and seek to keep this  
47  
48 complexity in play. In the mobility literature, Bonnet, Collet and Maurines (2008) develop  
49  
50 the concept of the 'family career' to account for 'how family and conjugal events have an  
51  
52 impact on each partner's occupation' and capture 'the necessary adjustments between  
53  
54 individual itineraries and founding a family ... between the "I" and the "we"' (p.142). In this  
55  
56 vein, Whitaker's (2010) interview study of middle class mothers involved as trailing spouse  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 in corporate relocations documents the ‘work of recreating daily lives’ (p.432) and  
4  
5 reconstituting community in new locations. Explanations of workers’ mobility decisions must  
6  
7 attend to these intersubjective subsidies that accommodate individual’s projects within the  
8  
9 family’s project of being together over time.  
10

11  
12  
13  
14 Following Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2004), we are also alert to the loosening of social  
15  
16 scripts and the growing play of reflexive deliberation and improvisation in how families  
17  
18 work. They argue there are fewer reliable templates or guarantees governing how family  
19  
20 relations ought to be done. They associate these social transformations with the politically  
21  
22 engineered ‘individualisation’ of the social fabric:  
23

24  
25  
26 Central institutions of the Western world ... are now addressed to the individual, not  
27  
28 to the collective or to groups. The education system, labor-market trends, job careers,  
29  
30 indeed markets in general are individualizing structures, individualizing institutions,  
31  
32 hence ‘engines’ of individualization. (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2004, p. 504)  
33  
34

35  
36 This individualised design on public sector services reflects decades of neoliberal metapolicy  
37  
38 ‘administering society as if it were a market’ (King & Kendall, 2004, p. 215). Pusey’s (2003)  
39  
40 large interview study of middle Australia explored how the march of neoliberal economic  
41  
42 reform has pushed citizens to reluctantly become ‘risk managers of their own lives’ (p. 2),  
43  
44 producing uncertainty, anxiety and stress. Pusey concludes that while corporations are the  
45  
46 winners under such economic reform, ‘families are the big losers’ (p.107). However some  
47  
48 families, in particular those with the credentialed professional as parent, will be better  
49  
50 resourced than others to play the market and manage its risks.  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



1  
2  
3 We understand professionals as workers whose licensing via educational credentials and/or  
4 registration processes grants them membership in a closed, self-managing occupation with  
5 associated rewards and status (Collins, 1990). Given the broad uptake of a discourse of  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

We include Australian police, and nurses, as well as the traditional high status professions of doctor, teachers and lawyer under this definition, in light of their social function, their carefully regulated membership, and accredited certification of skill levels that attract commensurate pay rates (see for example, Queensland police salary rates and promotion requirements at <http://www.policerecruit.qld.gov.au/whatWeOffer/employmententitlements.htm>, accessed 28 January 2014).

Sciulli (2009) summarises the sociology of professions as having functionalist origins that celebrated the professions' ameliorative contribution to civil society, being 'oriented normatively by altruism, a service orientation' (p.44) in contrast to more commercial motives. The field then underwent critique and revision by others who highlighted the professions' unwarranted monopolies, self-interested socioeconomic advantage, their place in 'the structure of privilege' (Collins, 1990, p. 13) and their contribution to social control. Where the former approach would highlight the social benefits that accrue to the collective from a system of professions, the latter more critical perspectives would highlight the positional advantage the individual gains from professional status.

Saks (1995) similarly highlighted the altruistic commitment to the public good and ethical codes that have served to distinguish professions from other occupations in the past, and

1  
2  
3 justified public subsidy of their extended preparation. However Saks questions the strength of  
4  
5 commitment to the public service ethic in contemporary, marketised societies: ‘do these elite  
6  
7 occupational groups in fact embody a special moral standard based on the ideal of service?  
8  
9 Or should such claims, which are often used in defence of professional privilege, be viewed  
10  
11 with rather more cynicism?’(p. 6). Sciulli (2009) sought to reassert that ‘norm-based, extra-  
12  
13 economic behaviour’, that is, altruistic service, is as ‘constitutive of any ongoing  
14  
15 professionalism project as is providing expert services’ (p. 295), and that the professions are  
16  
17 an important intermediary institution for civil society, regardless of whether individual  
18  
19 professionals themselves are motivated by self-interest. In other words, society can rightfully  
20  
21 expect a service orientation from the profession, if not from the individual occupying that  
22  
23 position. These treatments, though varied, converge around the question of whether the  
24  
25 public service ethic is under stress.  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31

32 Both camps in the sociology of the professions focus on the individual worker, and fail to  
33  
34 dignify the extended context of the worker’s web of family responsibilities and investments.  
35  
36 These constitute a mediating realm of private interests which are more than merely ‘self’-  
37  
38 interested. We ask whether the tension between professionals’ public duty and such private  
39  
40 familial interests is contributing to underserved rural and remote communities.  
41  
42  
43  
44

45 To summarise the arguments above, policy discussions about the recruitment and retention of  
46  
47 professionals to staff rural and remote services could benefit from considering the intrusion  
48  
49 of market logic into public institutions, private realms, and professional sensibilities. These  
50  
51 conditions are likely to promote proactive, risk-managing strategy by those in a position to do  
52  
53 so, to protect current and future life opportunities for family members. The professional  
54  
55 fraction of the middle class are of pivotal importance, given the tensions between their public  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 role in maintaining viable communities and their concerns around educational choice for their  
4  
5 children. The risks and opportunities within the policy landscape are left to family units to  
6  
7 resolve in their intersubjective ‘family careers’ over time and place. Given their chronic mal-  
8  
9 distribution across the communities that subsidise their credentials, there is a growing  
10  
11 concern about professionals’ commitment to the public good, and its possible erosion under  
12  
13 neoliberal individualisation.  
14

15  
16  
17  
18 **The literature reviewed invokes an either/or dichotomous logic, one value set cancelling the**  
19 **other, but there is equally the possibility that families try to fulfil both at the same time.** This  
20  
21 paper explores their interaction through a mixed methods study of how family units of  
22  
23 selected professions reconcile work and educational strategies in decisions to relocate, and  
24  
25 how they view opportunities in rural and remote Queensland. The paper proceeds in four  
26  
27 sections. The first section outlines the methodological design and sample. The second reports  
28  
29 on an analysis of survey responses to test whether an endorsement of neoliberal strategy in  
30  
31 school choice interacts with professionals’ commitment to public service in their career. The  
32  
33 third section analyses survey responses to hypothetical scenarios whereby respondents  
34  
35 explain how work, family and community considerations intersect when contemplating  
36  
37 household moves. The final section reflects on what it might mean for Australia when  
38  
39 services in rural and remote communities are considered to be of insufficient quality to attract  
40  
41 the professionals needed to staff them.  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48

## 49 **Methods**

50  
51 This study was conducted in two phases. The first involved semi-structured interviews with  
52  
53 27 ‘professional’ and 5 ‘non-professional’ workers with school-aged children living in six  
54  
55 Queensland rural communities, ranging from a sizeable regional centre with a deep  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 educational market, to a remote ‘outback’ town offering minimal educational choice (see  
4 Author 1 et al, 2013). Our interview sample included 4 doctors, 10 teachers, 4 nurses, and 9  
5  
6  
7 police. These professions were targeted to provide a graduated cline of ‘professional’ status,  
8  
9  
10 from the high status of doctors with their long professional preparation, through teachers and  
11  
12 nurses as university credentialled and registered professionals, to the restricted occupation of  
13  
14 policing which relies more on in-house training to certify skills. We also interviewed five  
15  
16 other parents working in non-professional occupations that were neither closed nor regulated  
17  
18 by educational credentials. The hour long interviews elicited each family’s history of  
19  
20 household mobility, and their concerns around each relocation.  
21  
22

23  
24  
25 This phase informed the development of an online survey of the same professional groups  
26  
27 more broadly across Queensland in 2011. This paper reports on this survey phase. Of the 278  
28  
29 respondents (27 doctors, 134 nurses, 45 policemen, and 72 teachers), there were more  
30  
31 females within the doctor, nurse, and teacher groups, while more males amongst police  
32  
33 respondents. The number of children in the sampled family households varied between one  
34  
35 and eight, with an overall mean of 2.21. The demographic features of our sample are  
36  
37 summarised in Table 1.  
38  
39

40  
41  
42  
43 <<Insert Table 1 about here>  
44  
45

46  
47 In addition to demographic and mobility questions, the survey included attitudinal items  
48  
49 using a Likert scale (from 1 “don’t agree at all” to 7 “totally agree”) to plumb respondents’  
50  
51 responses on the following constructs:  
52  
53

- 54 • ‘neoliberalism’, being their level of endorsement of neoliberal market ideology in the  
55  
56 education sector;  
57  
58  
59  
60

- ‘public good’ being the importance given to the public good in the professional’s career decisions.

Another set of questions invited open responses to hypothetical career opportunities in three rural/remote locations. The next section presents an analysis of how the professionals’ neoliberal attitudes correlated with their degree of commitment to the public good. The following section elaborates on how respondents constructed and combined family, work, education and community rationales in their qualitative responses to the hypothetical opportunities.

#### *Neo-liberalism versus public good*

We validated a set of attitudinal items using Structural Equation Modelling to develop single-factor measurement models for the constructs of ‘neoliberalism’ and ‘public good’. Both constructs were specified as latent variables with four reflective indicators, and the data fitted the model well. Item sets mapping the two constructs are detailed in Table 2.

<< Insert Table 2 about here >>

A proportionally weighted index was developed for each construct then computed as a continuous variable for each respondent. A test of the relationship between neoliberalism and public good was conducted using Pearson’s correlation ( $r = -.004$ , one-tailed  $p = .476$ ) but did not offer enough evidence to support the negative relationship between neoliberalism and public good that we expected. This finding is at odds with the literature’s concern about the gradual erosion of professionals’ commitment to the public good and our speculation that this would be hastened by growing adherence to neoliberal attitudes.

1  
2  
3 To further unpack our data, comparative ANOVA tests with post hoc tests were conducted to  
4 gauge the mean differences in the level of the constructs neoliberalism and public good  
5 between each professional group. Overall, there was a significant effect of profession on  
6 levels of the construct public good, with a small to medium effect ( $F(3, 274) = 4.986, p =$   
7  $.002, \omega = .20$ ). There was a gradual decline in the mean level of the construct public good  
8 from doctors, through teachers and police, to nurses. Between groups, the level of public  
9 good of doctors and teachers was significantly higher than that of nurses, with a small to  
10 medium effect (doctors compared to nurses:  $t(159) = 2.837, p = .005, r = .22$ ; teachers  
11 compared to nurses:  $t(204) = 3.289, p = .001, r = .22$ ).  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23

24  
25 Overall, there was also a significant effect of profession on levels of neoliberalism, with a  
26 small to medium effect ( $F(3, 274) = 13.448, p < .001, \omega = .20$ ). There was a gradual decline  
27 in the mean level of neoliberalism from police, through doctors and nurses, to teachers.  
28  
29 Between groups, the level of neoliberalism for the police group was significantly higher than  
30 that of nurses and teachers, with a small to medium effect ( $t(177) = 3.383, p = .001, r = .25$ )  
31 and a large effect ( $t(115) = 6.303, p < .001, r = .51$ ) respectively. The level of neoliberalism  
32 among the doctor and nurse groups was significantly higher than among teachers, with a  
33 medium to large effect ( $t(97) = 4.200, p < .001, r = .39$ ) and a small to medium effect ( $t$   
34  $(204) = 3.665, p < .001, r = .25$ ) respectively. Of particular interest here, the doctors reported  
35 both relatively high scores on the neoliberalism construct and public good construct. This  
36 patterning suggests a departure in this sample from Sak's thesis of eroding commitment to the  
37 public good in the traditional high status professions.  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53

54 This finding of independent value sets suggests that families will be seeking to reconcile and  
55 satisfy a number of priorities at the same time, not pursuing one value at the expense of the  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 other. This led us to look more closely at how the professional parents expressed priorities  
4  
5 across their variety of considerations in their qualitative responses to the hypothetical  
6  
7 opportunities.  
8  
9

### 10 11 *Reconciling priorities*

12  
13  
14 Survey respondents were given the hypothetical scenario of being offered ‘very attractive  
15  
16 positions’ in three locations, and invited to share their reaction, outlining the considerations  
17  
18 that ‘would guide your decision’. The three locations were Bowen on the tropical coast,  
19  
20 inland regional hub Roma, and more remote and disadvantaged Cunnamulla. As an  
21  
22 indication of the difficulty these communities have attracting professionals, the Queensland  
23  
24 Department of Health currently offers medical officers an ‘inaccessibility incentive’  
25  
26 allowance of AU\$41,400 for a year’s service in Cunnamulla, and AU\$20,700 per annum in  
27  
28 Roma or Bowen ([http://www.health.qld.gov.au/rural/docs/remote\\_allowance.pdf](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/rural/docs/remote_allowance.pdf), accessed 1  
29  
30 July 2013). With this purposeful range, we sought to explore how professionals with school-  
31  
32 aged families related to rural and remote communities, and on what terms. This question  
33  
34 received 275 responses from a few words to a paragraph in length.  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39

40  
41 A thematic analysis of the responses would point to repeated mentions of considerations such  
42  
43 as: lifestyle attributes of the locations; school quality; access to medical services; proximity  
44  
45 to extended family; remuneration and incentives; disruption to children’s education;  
46  
47 opportunities for spouse employment; career prospects. These concerns are well documented  
48  
49 in the literature around rural workforce and regional sustainability (for example, Australian  
50  
51 Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2008; Cameron, 1998; Humphreys, Jones,  
52  
53 Jones, & Mara, 2002; Miles, Marcheall, Rolfe, & Noonan, 2006; OECD, 2005; Owen, Kos,  
54  
55 & McKenzie, 2008). However, we were interested in how the responses assembled these  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 predictable concerns, and what kind of hierarchy or relations were evident in the logic  
4  
5 between elements to help us understand how families reconcile such concerns. How did these  
6  
7 professionals weigh and balance competing demands and opportunities of community, work,  
8  
9 and family?  
10

11  
12  
13  
14 We drew our analytic approach from the theoretical concept of conjunction from systemic  
15  
16 functional linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Conjunction refers to the variety of  
17  
18 ways a text creates relations between its messages. With this focus our analysis attended to  
19  
20 the nature of the logico-semantic links between the considerations raised in the responses.  
21

22  
23 There are a number of possible relations. In a 'paratactic' relationship elements are accorded  
24  
25 equal and status, such as in '*a and b*' or a list, '*a, b, c*'. An example of paratactic links  
26

27 between considerations would be: '*I would look into medical facilities and schooling, also*  
28  
29 *job opportunity for my husband*' (#52). In contrast the relationship of '*if a, then b*' or '*b*  
30

31 *depends on a*' constructs a 'hypotactic' rank, with one element hierarchically more important  
32  
33 than another (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p.374). An example of a hypotactic link would  
34

35 be: '*I would have no hesitation in living in those towns if it best suited my family at that*  
36  
37 *particular time*' (#6). In this case, suiting the family is the top ranked condition and deciding  
38  
39 priority. Another way to express such priority is in the strength of modulation pertaining to  
40

41  
42 the conditions imposed. A bald 'must', or its semantic equivalent, marks a condition more  
43  
44 strongly as necessary in comparison to a more mitigated statement of a condition as desirable.  
45  
46

47 Examples of unmitigated, non-negotiable conditions would be: '*significant financial*  
48  
49 *incentives would be required*' (#24). This contrasts with the expression of a desirable  
50

51 condition: '*Would maybe need boarding school*' (#35). A further possible relationship  
52  
53 between ideas is where one trumps or negates the other – '*a but b*'. For example, '*No thank*  
54  
55

56 *you. I have family in Cunnamulla but not sufficient resources schools etc for children's*  
57  
58  
59  
60



1  
2  
3 *education*' (#18). Finally, responses often embedded a causal link (*a because b*) justifying  
4 their expressed position, for example: *'Wouldn't go because kids are in a good school'*  
5 (#142); *'... realistically would be unlikely to move because we like where we live and are in*  
6 *the catchment for one of the best high schools in the state'* (#25). Respondents frequently  
7 employed a mixture of these relations, for example: *'Would have to be a promotion to*  
8 *commissioned rank and only if partner agreed'* (#10), building layers of conditional  
9 complexity. Different logical relations between considerations could be expressed through a  
10 variety of wording choices, not just the summary formulations above. Our interest here is in  
11 typifying the clustering, ranking and meanings created by the links between considerations,  
12 not their linguistic realisation.  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26

27 There were only seven unconditional positive responses indicating that the respondent would  
28 entertain any location offered, for example: *'If I was transferred I'd go. I joined a Statewide*  
29 *organisation, not a South East Queensland organisation'* (#19); *'would move to all three,*  
30 *rural nursing is my passion'* (#83). There were also ten unconditional rejections: *'no, not*  
31 *going'* (#64); *'have no interest in changing work locations. Am not interested in uprooting*  
32 *myself and the family'* (#124).  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42

43 In between these two poles, the vast majority of respondents outlined multifaceted decisions  
44 that integrated a number of work, family and community considerations. The paratactic  
45 clusters displayed the variety of conditions and considerations that came into play across a  
46 number of institutional fronts, which needed to align to make such a move thinkable. For  
47 example:  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 *I am happy to try a move and living in a rural/remote location given consideration to*  
4 *the following: Minimal or no impact on husband's career opportunities. Opportunity*  
5 *to excel in given career. Opportunity to increase family's financial position.*  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10 *Opportunity to school kids in an excellent learning environment including curricula,*  
11 *sports, social and cultural opportunities. (#239)*

12  
13  
14  
15  
16 These lists of contingencies reference the multiplicity of risks involved in moving a family  
17 unit, and how any relocation decision must manage risk on a number of fronts. Conditions  
18 over which a prospective employer has some influence are only one facet in this multifaceted  
19 complex.  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24

25  
26  
27 Where respondents stipulated a necessary condition, they nominated one dominant factor, but  
28 which factor this was differed across respondents: *'If our religious beliefs were strong in that*  
29 *area', (#16), 'If a location does not have good health facilities and schools, I would not*  
30 *consider moving' (#12); 'would have to be significant career and financial reward to get me*  
31 *to move' (#34); 'we would not be prepared to go because of the educational choices for our*  
32 *children would not be there and we would not like to send them to a boarding school' (#217).*

33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40 More subtly, some responses engaged with the hypothetical locations assuming the condition  
41 that they as professionals would travel in and out, leaving the family home and its associated  
42 spouse employment and schooling projects in place: *'Would only consider if fly in fly out on a*  
43 *4 week on, 1 week off at the employer's expense' (#256): 'Depending on payrise and work*  
44 *conditions, flexibility of holidays to go back and visit family 8+ weeks of paid leave, having a*  
45 *set roster to allow for family to visit me ...' (#216). For other respondents, the necessary*  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65  
66  
67  
68  
69  
70  
71  
72  
73  
74  
75  
76  
77  
78  
79  
80  
81  
82  
83  
84  
85  
86  
87  
88  
89  
90  
91  
92  
93  
94  
95  
96  
97  
98  
99  
100  
101  
102  
103  
104  
105  
106  
107  
108  
109  
110  
111  
112  
113  
114  
115  
116  
117  
118  
119  
120  
121  
122  
123  
124  
125  
126  
127  
128  
129  
130  
131  
132  
133  
134  
135  
136  
137  
138  
139  
140  
141  
142  
143  
144  
145  
146  
147  
148  
149  
150  
151  
152  
153  
154  
155  
156  
157  
158  
159  
160  
161  
162  
163  
164  
165  
166  
167  
168  
169  
170  
171  
172  
173  
174  
175  
176  
177  
178  
179  
180  
181  
182  
183  
184  
185  
186  
187  
188  
189  
190  
191  
192  
193  
194  
195  
196  
197  
198  
199  
200  
201  
202  
203  
204  
205  
206  
207  
208  
209  
210  
211  
212  
213  
214  
215  
216  
217  
218  
219  
220  
221  
222  
223  
224  
225  
226  
227  
228  
229  
230  
231  
232  
233  
234  
235  
236  
237  
238  
239  
240  
241  
242  
243  
244  
245  
246  
247  
248  
249  
250  
251  
252  
253  
254  
255  
256  
257  
258  
259  
260  
261  
262  
263  
264  
265  
266  
267  
268  
269  
270  
271  
272  
273  
274  
275  
276  
277  
278  
279  
280  
281  
282  
283  
284  
285  
286  
287  
288  
289  
290  
291  
292  
293  
294  
295  
296  
297  
298  
299  
300  
301  
302  
303  
304  
305  
306  
307  
308  
309  
310  
311  
312  
313  
314  
315  
316  
317  
318  
319  
320  
321  
322  
323  
324  
325  
326  
327  
328  
329  
330  
331  
332  
333  
334  
335  
336  
337  
338  
339  
340  
341  
342  
343  
344  
345  
346  
347  
348  
349  
350  
351  
352  
353  
354  
355  
356  
357  
358  
359  
360  
361  
362  
363  
364  
365  
366  
367  
368  
369  
370  
371  
372  
373  
374  
375  
376  
377  
378  
379  
380  
381  
382  
383  
384  
385  
386  
387  
388  
389  
390  
391  
392  
393  
394  
395  
396  
397  
398  
399  
400  
401  
402  
403  
404  
405  
406  
407  
408  
409  
410  
411  
412  
413  
414  
415  
416  
417  
418  
419  
420  
421  
422  
423  
424  
425  
426  
427  
428  
429  
430  
431  
432  
433  
434  
435  
436  
437  
438  
439  
440  
441  
442  
443  
444  
445  
446  
447  
448  
449  
450  
451  
452  
453  
454  
455  
456  
457  
458  
459  
460  
461  
462  
463  
464  
465  
466  
467  
468  
469  
470  
471  
472  
473  
474  
475  
476  
477  
478  
479  
480  
481  
482  
483  
484  
485  
486  
487  
488  
489  
490  
491  
492  
493  
494  
495  
496  
497  
498  
499  
500  
501  
502  
503  
504  
505  
506  
507  
508  
509  
510  
511  
512  
513  
514  
515  
516  
517  
518  
519  
520  
521  
522  
523  
524  
525  
526  
527  
528  
529  
530  
531  
532  
533  
534  
535  
536  
537  
538  
539  
540  
541  
542  
543  
544  
545  
546  
547  
548  
549  
550  
551  
552  
553  
554  
555  
556  
557  
558  
559  
560  
561  
562  
563  
564  
565  
566  
567  
568  
569  
570  
571  
572  
573  
574  
575  
576  
577  
578  
579  
580  
581  
582  
583  
584  
585  
586  
587  
588  
589  
590  
591  
592  
593  
594  
595  
596  
597  
598  
599  
600  
601  
602  
603  
604  
605  
606  
607  
608  
609  
610  
611  
612  
613  
614  
615  
616  
617  
618  
619  
620  
621  
622  
623  
624  
625  
626  
627  
628  
629  
630  
631  
632  
633  
634  
635  
636  
637  
638  
639  
640  
641  
642  
643  
644  
645  
646  
647  
648  
649  
650  
651  
652  
653  
654  
655  
656  
657  
658  
659  
660  
661  
662  
663  
664  
665  
666  
667  
668  
669  
670  
671  
672  
673  
674  
675  
676  
677  
678  
679  
680  
681  
682  
683  
684  
685  
686  
687  
688  
689  
690  
691  
692  
693  
694  
695  
696  
697  
698  
699  
700  
701  
702  
703  
704  
705  
706  
707  
708  
709  
710  
711  
712  
713  
714  
715  
716  
717  
718  
719  
720  
721  
722  
723  
724  
725  
726  
727  
728  
729  
730  
731  
732  
733  
734  
735  
736  
737  
738  
739  
740  
741  
742  
743  
744  
745  
746  
747  
748  
749  
750  
751  
752  
753  
754  
755  
756  
757  
758  
759  
760  
761  
762  
763  
764  
765  
766  
767  
768  
769  
770  
771  
772  
773  
774  
775  
776  
777  
778  
779  
780  
781  
782  
783  
784  
785  
786  
787  
788  
789  
790  
791  
792  
793  
794  
795  
796  
797  
798  
799  
800  
801  
802  
803  
804  
805  
806  
807  
808  
809  
810  
811  
812  
813  
814  
815  
816  
817  
818  
819  
820  
821  
822  
823  
824  
825  
826  
827  
828  
829  
830  
831  
832  
833  
834  
835  
836  
837  
838  
839  
840  
841  
842  
843  
844  
845  
846  
847  
848  
849  
850  
851  
852  
853  
854  
855  
856  
857  
858  
859  
860  
861  
862  
863  
864  
865  
866  
867  
868  
869  
870  
871  
872  
873  
874  
875  
876  
877  
878  
879  
880  
881  
882  
883  
884  
885  
886  
887  
888  
889  
890  
891  
892  
893  
894  
895  
896  
897  
898  
899  
900  
901  
902  
903  
904  
905  
906  
907  
908  
909  
910  
911  
912  
913  
914  
915  
916  
917  
918  
919  
920  
921  
922  
923  
924  
925  
926  
927  
928  
929  
930  
931  
932  
933  
934  
935  
936  
937  
938  
939  
940  
941  
942  
943  
944  
945  
946  
947  
948  
949  
950  
951  
952  
953  
954  
955  
956  
957  
958  
959  
960  
961  
962  
963  
964  
965  
966  
967  
968  
969  
970  
971  
972  
973  
974  
975  
976  
977  
978  
979  
980  
981  
982  
983  
984  
985  
986  
987  
988  
989  
990  
991  
992  
993  
994  
995  
996  
997  
998  
999  
1000

1  
2  
3 *possibility as it is only 4 hour drive away – my daughter could board at her current school'*  
4  
5 (#172). These responses that considered de-aggregating family units to maintain individual  
6  
7 projects give some indication of the middle class family's intense dedication to children's  
8  
9 education as a priority.  
10

11  
12  
13  
14 Some responses indicated that although the professional opportunity appealed, other family  
15  
16 circumstances inarguably trumped any such possibility: *'Fantastic, but I cannot move there*  
17  
18 *because my children need the stability of attending the same school'* (#219); *'My husband is*  
19  
20 *in his "perfect job" ... and the kids love their schools and social life. I personally love rural*  
21  
22 *and remote nursing but cannot do it until a later time'* (#227). For families with chronic  
23  
24 health needs, or special educational needs, these factors trumped career prospects: *'Would*  
25  
26 *resign from job - husband unable to get medical treatment in Roma or Cunnamulla'* (#280).  
27  
28 These responses demonstrate the intersubjective web that constitutes family units and de-  
29  
30 centres the individual's career project. For this reason, financial incentives addressed to the  
31  
32 individual worker often fall short, as one respondent explained: *'Kids very stable at current*  
33  
34 *school main reason not to leave. I earn enough. Not greedy and financial reasons not enough*  
35  
36 *incentive to move'* (#21).  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42

43 Other responses brought to the surface the constraints of more complex and extended family  
44  
45 forms and how these intersubjective interdependencies trump public service or career  
46  
47 opportunity. As a stark example, family units negotiating shared custody arrangements had  
48  
49 other more pressing accountabilities to meet which decided any response:  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 *I would refuse due to family reasons. I have already indicated to the department that I*  
4 *will not be able to do 'country service' until my current school-aged children have*  
5 *finished school and no longer require custodial access to their father. (#189)*  
6  
7  
8  
9

10  
11 *I would have to decline as my ex-partner will seek to get a court order stating his*  
12 *boys need to be in the same town/city as he resides ... this, at the moment, affects most*  
13 *of my future career options. (#281)*  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19

20 Respondents in single parent families reported deferring or resisting mobility to stay close to  
21 extended family and their support: *'Would not be able to do it without family support as my*  
22 *parents and sisters help care for my child when I am working different shifts'* (#91). While  
23 the extended family contributed care in this case, in many other cases, the extended family  
24 required care which made mobility equally unthinkable: *'I would not be prepared to move at*  
25 *present as I need to remain in my current location to care for aging parents'* (#205). In this  
26 way access to extended family for both giving and receiving care imposed spatial limits on  
27 the mobility range that would be entertained.  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39

40 As respondents weighed up the three hypothetical options, proximity to extended family  
41 featured as a key consideration in many responses. Towns were considered more or less  
42 appealing to respondents given the presence of, or distance from, extended family. For  
43 example, two respondents assessed Roma differently on the same criteria: *'... my first choice*  
44 *would be to Roma due to the fact that it is closer to our extended family in south east corner*  
45 *of Queensland'* (#39) as opposed to *'Roma would be a bit of a shock ... due to its remote*  
46 *location and having no family close by'* (#41). In contrast, one respondent ruled out a town  
47 *'because I have family there'* (#89).  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3  
4  
5 This relative or subjective sense of space and place sat alongside consideration of more fixed  
6 attributes of locations (such as their climate, environment) and their social affordances (such  
7 as air connections, medical services, cultural activities, recreational opportunities, access to  
8 universities). Respondents were frank in their assessments, for example: *'would not live out  
9 west as too isolated and no ocean'* (#152); *'I could not cope with hot climate'* (#162). Across  
10 the data set, Bowen as a choice benefited from its more attractive coastal setting, while  
11 Cunnamulla, more so than Roma, suffered from its remoteness: *'A dry and distant town like  
12 Cunnamulla holds zero attraction for me. I would move back to Scotland before teaching  
13 even a term there'* (#304). More problematically, Cunnamulla<sup>1</sup> as an option suffered from a  
14 reputation for being *'racist'* (#191) and unsafe: *'doesn't give me a sense of safety being a  
15 single mum'* (#56); *'I do not want to work in Cunnamulla due to both the distance and the  
16 challenges of living in that community'* (#308). **Such stigmatised reputations circulate and  
17 serve prospective residents in the absence of other information.** Where respondents had  
18 previously worked in these locations, the attitudes were differently framed and more  
19 personalised: *'Roma is a nice small country town that my husband has worked in previously'*  
20 (#262); *'I've visited Bowen and Roma for extended stays. It seems too hard to find people  
21 with compatible interests or the conveniences and choice of living offered by a metropolitan  
22 area'* (#304); *'I grew up in the South West so Roma and Cunnamulla would not worry me  
23 personally'* (#291).

---

24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
<sup>1</sup> Cunnamulla was the subject of a controversial documentary, "Cunnamulla", directed by Dennis O'Rourke (2000), which presented a depressing picture of the town and its residents, and has inevitably coloured public perception.

1  
2  
3 How did any professional orientation to public service feature in the responses? Twelve  
4 responses explicitly mentioned past remote/rural service. Nine of these invoked past service  
5 in rural/remote or disadvantaged communities as the reason why they wouldn't, or shouldn't  
6 have to, consider the locations suggested: *'have done western service'* (#295); *'Disappointed*  
7 *as I feel I have served various communities for extended periods of time'* (#66). In other  
8 words, past service in rural/remote communities was proffered as evidence of having satisfied  
9 any claim such public duty could make on them as professionals, and hence their right to  
10 legitimately prioritise other needs. One respondent was very clear about how public service  
11 and family priorities had been purposefully staged sequentially: *'... I have done 6 years in a*  
12 *rural location – I chose to do this before having my children so I could give them a stable*  
13 *home environment surrounded by extended family'* (#305). Such a temporal solution to  
14 competing demands solves the private problem for families, but exacerbates the public  
15 problem for rural/remote communities, which serve as nurseries with rotating doors for early  
16 career professionals. Commitment to a public service ethic thus impinged on these  
17 professionals' decisions to some degree, but within temporal limits as well as spatial  
18 boundaries: *'I have already done my country service and worked in [disadvantaged*  
19 *community], it is my turn to work in an "easier" location!'* (#308).

20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43 Two respondents indicated that they had already worked in remote/rural settings and had not  
44 ruled out further, but now faced additional considerations given family responsibilities:

45  
46  
47 *'Working remote locations is not a fear I have as my partner and I have done this before.*  
48 *Current considerations would include ease of travel back to Brisbane if necessary for family*  
49 *or health reasons, medical and school options'* (#49). The remaining response amongst those  
50 that mentioned past country service was unique in being able to reconcile service, family and  
51 professional considerations in favour of such locations:  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3  
4  
5 *I would take any position available in any of these areas. I think it is very important*  
6  
7 *for my children to experience both city and country locations and also that nursing in*  
8  
9 *these areas provide more specific and wider based skills in a smaller, close knit*  
10  
11 *environment. Money is also a factor but having already experienced this as a new*  
12  
13 *graduate the experience and the money was very worthwhile in order to come back to*  
14  
15 *Brisbane and work as an agency nurse in any environment with extended skills to use*  
16  
17 *in all areas of nursing. (#136)*  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22

23 Beyond this group, two more responses alluded to professional service but in terms of  
24 rejecting or deferring the idea. One of these was from a child of country doctors, whose  
25 public service shaped her stance as a parent: *'I am the daughter of country GPs who went to*  
26 *boarding school, so have seen firsthand the impact of the sacrifices required. My parents*  
27 *served their community well and I have put my children before my patients as a deliberate*  
28 *life choice'* (#74). The other (#189) could not consider it given shared custody arrangements  
29 curtailing her mobility. There was another group of four responses that espoused a sense of  
30 responsibility to go where sent, that is, to serve as needed. These included unmitigated  
31 commitment - *'If I was transferred I'd go'* (#19) - to more fatalistic compliance - *'But ... if I*  
32 *would really have to move, of course. You make the best of what you're given'* (#245).  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

48 In addition to imposing temporal limits around a service chapter in professional careers, there  
49 were two other temporal logics at play across responses. The second temporal logic was to  
50 contemplate relocation only if it was a short term assignment, for example: *'I would be*  
51 *worried about their schooling, I would consider it if it was temporary'* (#215). A third  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60 temporal logic was evident across the data set, in which respondents reported that they would



1  
2  
3 consider such locations and mobility more generally only after children had finished  
4 schooling, for example: *'In four years my daughter will have completed Yr 12 and I would*  
5 *be happy to go'* (#51). These non-negotiable temporal limits demonstrate the strong  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10 normative preference to maintain stability in children's education that has been reported  
11 elsewhere (Holdsworth, 2013). Stability was often presented as the non-negotiable priority in  
12 other ways: *'We would not accept any positions outside of the metro area at this time as our*  
13 *children are settled within their schools'* (#13); *'I am reluctant to disturb schooling'* (#75).  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18 Protecting the stability of schooling was a distinct concern in itself, additional to concerns  
19 about school quality in the rural/remote locations, with their conjectured combination heavily  
20 biased against the rural/remote location: *'As I have a daughter, my priority is her and her*  
21 *chosen education and school. Not so keen to move at this stage'* (#186).  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28

29  
30 This section has analysed qualitative responses to a survey question regarding hypothetical  
31 professional opportunities in three purposefully selected rural/remote locations, to understand  
32 how the multiple considerations of work, family and community interacted and logically  
33 cohered in the mindsets of these professional parents. Considerations of distance, proximity  
34 and climate created spatial limits to the professionals' mobility. Different types of temporal  
35 limits on public service in rural/ remote localities were also repeatedly invoked.  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44

#### 45 **Conclusion: the private limits to public service**

46  
47 This paper has reframed Australia's problem in recruiting and retaining professionals to  
48 service remote and rural communities through firstly, the intersubjectivity of families, and  
49 secondly, the multifaceted risks in family mobility, to understand the terms and conditions  
50 under which professionals and their families are prepared to move to such locations.  
51  
52  
53  
54

55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65  
66  
67  
68  
69  
70  
71  
72  
73  
74  
75  
76  
77  
78  
79  
80  
81  
82  
83  
84  
85  
86  
87  
88  
89  
90  
91  
92  
93  
94  
95  
96  
97  
98  
99  
100  
101  
102  
103  
104  
105  
106  
107  
108  
109  
110  
111  
112  
113  
114  
115  
116  
117  
118  
119  
120  
121  
122  
123  
124  
125  
126  
127  
128  
129  
130  
131  
132  
133  
134  
135  
136  
137  
138  
139  
140  
141  
142  
143  
144  
145  
146  
147  
148  
149  
150  
151  
152  
153  
154  
155  
156  
157  
158  
159  
160  
161  
162  
163  
164  
165  
166  
167  
168  
169  
170  
171  
172  
173  
174  
175  
176  
177  
178  
179  
180  
181  
182  
183  
184  
185  
186  
187  
188  
189  
190  
191  
192  
193  
194  
195  
196  
197  
198  
199  
200  
201  
202  
203  
204  
205  
206  
207  
208  
209  
210  
211  
212  
213  
214  
215  
216  
217  
218  
219  
220  
221  
222  
223  
224  
225  
226  
227  
228  
229  
230  
231  
232  
233  
234  
235  
236  
237  
238  
239  
240  
241  
242  
243  
244  
245  
246  
247  
248  
249  
250  
251  
252  
253  
254  
255  
256  
257  
258  
259  
260  
261  
262  
263  
264  
265  
266  
267  
268  
269  
270  
271  
272  
273  
274  
275  
276  
277  
278  
279  
280  
281  
282  
283  
284  
285  
286  
287  
288  
289  
290  
291  
292  
293  
294  
295  
296  
297  
298  
299  
300  
301  
302  
303  
304  
305  
306  
307  
308  
309  
310  
311  
312  
313  
314  
315  
316  
317  
318  
319  
320  
321  
322  
323  
324  
325  
326  
327  
328  
329  
330  
331  
332  
333  
334  
335  
336  
337  
338  
339  
340  
341  
342  
343  
344  
345  
346  
347  
348  
349  
350  
351  
352  
353  
354  
355  
356  
357  
358  
359  
360  
361  
362  
363  
364  
365  
366  
367  
368  
369  
370  
371  
372  
373  
374  
375  
376  
377  
378  
379  
380  
381  
382  
383  
384  
385  
386  
387  
388  
389  
390  
391  
392  
393  
394  
395  
396  
397  
398  
399  
400  
401  
402  
403  
404  
405  
406  
407  
408  
409  
410  
411  
412  
413  
414  
415  
416  
417  
418  
419  
420  
421  
422  
423  
424  
425  
426  
427  
428  
429  
430  
431  
432  
433  
434  
435  
436  
437  
438  
439  
440  
441  
442  
443  
444  
445  
446  
447  
448  
449  
450  
451  
452  
453  
454  
455  
456  
457  
458  
459  
460  
461  
462  
463  
464  
465  
466  
467  
468  
469  
470  
471  
472  
473  
474  
475  
476  
477  
478  
479  
480  
481  
482  
483  
484  
485  
486  
487  
488  
489  
490  
491  
492  
493  
494  
495  
496  
497  
498  
499  
500  
501  
502  
503  
504  
505  
506  
507  
508  
509  
510  
511  
512  
513  
514  
515  
516  
517  
518  
519  
520  
521  
522  
523  
524  
525  
526  
527  
528  
529  
530  
531  
532  
533  
534  
535  
536  
537  
538  
539  
540  
541  
542  
543  
544  
545  
546  
547  
548  
549  
550  
551  
552  
553  
554  
555  
556  
557  
558  
559  
560  
561  
562  
563  
564  
565  
566  
567  
568  
569  
570  
571  
572  
573  
574  
575  
576  
577  
578  
579  
580  
581  
582  
583  
584  
585  
586  
587  
588  
589  
590  
591  
592  
593  
594  
595  
596  
597  
598  
599  
600  
601  
602  
603  
604  
605  
606  
607  
608  
609  
610  
611  
612  
613  
614  
615  
616  
617  
618  
619  
620  
621  
622  
623  
624  
625  
626  
627  
628  
629  
630  
631  
632  
633  
634  
635  
636  
637  
638  
639  
640  
641  
642  
643  
644  
645  
646  
647  
648  
649  
650  
651  
652  
653  
654  
655  
656  
657  
658  
659  
660  
661  
662  
663  
664  
665  
666  
667  
668  
669  
670  
671  
672  
673  
674  
675  
676  
677  
678  
679  
680  
681  
682  
683  
684  
685  
686  
687  
688  
689  
690  
691  
692  
693  
694  
695  
696  
697  
698  
699  
700  
701  
702  
703  
704  
705  
706  
707  
708  
709  
710  
711  
712  
713  
714  
715  
716  
717  
718  
719  
720  
721  
722  
723  
724  
725  
726  
727  
728  
729  
730  
731  
732  
733  
734  
735  
736  
737  
738  
739  
740  
741  
742  
743  
744  
745  
746  
747  
748  
749  
750  
751  
752  
753  
754  
755  
756  
757  
758  
759  
760  
761  
762  
763  
764  
765  
766  
767  
768  
769  
770  
771  
772  
773  
774  
775  
776  
777  
778  
779  
780  
781  
782  
783  
784  
785  
786  
787  
788  
789  
790  
791  
792  
793  
794  
795  
796  
797  
798  
799  
800  
801  
802  
803  
804  
805  
806  
807  
808  
809  
810  
811  
812  
813  
814  
815  
816  
817  
818  
819  
820  
821  
822  
823  
824  
825  
826  
827  
828  
829  
830  
831  
832  
833  
834  
835  
836  
837  
838  
839  
840  
841  
842  
843  
844  
845  
846  
847  
848  
849  
850  
851  
852  
853  
854  
855  
856  
857  
858  
859  
860  
861  
862  
863  
864  
865  
866  
867  
868  
869  
870  
871  
872  
873  
874  
875  
876  
877  
878  
879  
880  
881  
882  
883  
884  
885  
886  
887  
888  
889  
890  
891  
892  
893  
894  
895  
896  
897  
898  
899  
900  
901  
902  
903  
904  
905  
906  
907  
908  
909  
910  
911  
912  
913  
914  
915  
916  
917  
918  
919  
920  
921  
922  
923  
924  
925  
926  
927  
928  
929  
930  
931  
932  
933  
934  
935  
936  
937  
938  
939  
940  
941  
942  
943  
944  
945  
946  
947  
948  
949  
950  
951  
952  
953  
954  
955  
956  
957  
958  
959  
960  
961  
962  
963  
964  
965  
966  
967  
968  
969  
970  
971  
972  
973  
974  
975  
976  
977  
978  
979  
980  
981  
982  
983  
984  
985  
986  
987  
988  
989  
990  
991  
992  
993  
994  
995  
996  
997  
998  
999  
1000



1  
2  
3 on the mobility of such professionals for their viability, while the mobility of such  
4  
5 professionals inherently implicates their families.  
6  
7

8  
9  
10 Professionals were identified as a distinct and pivotal group of workers, given their  
11 membership in closed occupations which entail implicit contracts of altruistic service with the  
12 public. The literature reviewed suggested that this service ethic could be eroding given more  
13 marketised times that favour self-interest and risk-management strategies. The same  
14 professionals were further identified as a distinct group of parents with vested interests in  
15 their children's education to protect the inter-generational reproduction of advantage. The  
16 same market logic was understood to be fuelling this group's typical focus on school choice  
17 and notional quality. The crux thus lies in their view of educational provision in smaller  
18 rural/remote localities.  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28

29  
30  
31  
32 The quantitative analysis tested the strength of respondent's commitment to neoliberal  
33 strategy in education and to the public good in their career, and the possibility of some  
34 correlation between the two value sets. No statistically significant correlation was  
35 demonstrated. From this we understand that neoliberal educational strategy need not erode  
36 professional's public service ethic, that is, it is not an either/or binary. This led us to enquire  
37 how the two value sets compete or cohere in family mobility decisions. The survey's  
38 scenarios were only ever hypothetical and speculative, but served to bring to the empirical  
39 surface the intersubjective calculations and conditions impinging on professional's mobility.  
40 The respondents' readiness to rule out such opportunities may reflect the constant availability  
41 of numerous vacancies across rural and remote Australia. Harder times may have produced  
42 different results, for example, if urban Australia could no longer absorb an oversupply of  
43 professionals. From our analysis of responses to the hypothetical scenarios, we would  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 highlight how those professionals that alluded to the expectation of public service imposed  
4  
5 both spatial limits and temporal limits on their service ethic to mitigate its claim on their  
6  
7 career path.  
8  
9

10  
11 Participants outlined their spatial limits in a number ways: as absolute space, making remote  
12  
13 locations problematic because of their climate and distance from other centres; as social  
14  
15 space, making communities with poor services or lifestyle amenity unattractive; and as  
16  
17 relative space, favouring proximity to extended family. The problem of absolute space is not  
18  
19 amenable to policy, except perhaps by more frequent and affordable transport links. The  
20  
21 problem of social space presents a chicken and egg conundrum when the medical and  
22  
23 educational services in small communities are not perceived to be of sufficient quality to  
24  
25 attract the professionals needed to staff them, or the community is considered too unsafe for  
26  
27 the families of police. The problem of relative space refers to how proximity to extended  
28  
29 family for care-giving or care-receiving limits the range of thinkable locations. This  
30  
31 preference could be harnessed to increase recruitment and retention of professionals in  
32  
33 rural/remote communities by targeting students from rural and remote communities and  
34  
35 facilitating their access to professional training. It could also be addressed by locating  
36  
37 professional programs in regional universities. These strategies are being explored in multiple  
38  
39 localities, but fail to address the other spatial limits.  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46

47 The temporal limits that respondents described similarly played out in a number of ways.  
48  
49 Some respondents felt that they had done their time in a country service chapter in their past,  
50  
51 excusing them from further such claims. This chapter was typically an early career phase,  
52  
53 staged to avoid conflict with schooling choices later. For others, work in remote communities  
54  
55 could only be considered after completing what was considered the crucial schooling phase.  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 The strong preference for stability for schooling reinforced misgivings about schooling  
4 options in rural/remote communities, revealing the high expectations and risk aversion of the  
5 professional middle class fraction. Another temporal limit invoked was moving under the  
6 condition that it be a short term or mobile posting, thus not displacing schooling choices for  
7 the family. There were thus limited windows of opportunity where rural/remote service  
8 became thinkable, but children's schooling repeatedly dictated such timing.  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17

18 The policy implications of these temporal limits are complex – the rural/remote setting  
19 appeals for the early career professional prior to the high stakes schooling phase in their  
20 family circumstances, however, the spatial limits above suggest that the young family are  
21 drawn to extended family to receive care, and later retained near extended family to give  
22 care. Some medical programs in Australia have shifted to postgraduate courses, effectively  
23 reducing the 'pre-family' chapter that was conducive to rural/remote service. Likewise, the  
24 aging of the population will extend the care-giving chapter, and may reduce the likelihood of  
25 an eventual post-schooling mobility phase.  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37

38 Overall, the qualitative responses did not project as strong an expression of a public service  
39 ethic as the quantitative prompts garnered – few professionals embraced it unconditionally in  
40 their open responses. The common policy 'solution' of incentive schemes to attract  
41 professionals, particularly doctors, to rural and remote locations could be understood to be  
42 contributing to the erosion of the public service ethic, by endorsing and institutionalising  
43 motives attached to self-interest. There is perhaps room to re-energise the public service ethic  
44 in professional preparation. However, their responses were equally not driven simply by  
45 career ambition or financial gain, as the common policy response of financial incentives  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 might suggest. The family unit repeatedly emerged as the mitigating, intersubjective social  
4  
5 unit that absorbed professionals' sense of duty.  
6  
7  
8  
9

10 This paper has probed the relationship between the work and family considerations of  
11  
12 professionals to better understand their chronic shortage in rural and remote communities.  
13  
14 The interplay between family, educational strategy, career opportunities and locality poses a  
15  
16 'wicked problem' (Head, 2008) for policy makers, one that implicates multiple institutions,  
17  
18 and resists simple policy levers. Workforce policy solutions to promote rural recruitment and  
19  
20 retention of professionals often pursue an individualised 'carrot' approach of additional  
21  
22 remuneration or incentive schemes (Health Workforce Australia, 2012), thus gloss over the  
23  
24 complex family interface in mobility decisions. Other solutions, such as bond schemes  
25  
26 attached to university places in medicine, forced postings for teachers in government sectors,  
27  
28 minimum service periods for police promotion, and visa/registration restrictions for overseas  
29  
30 trained doctors, resort to more forceful 'stick' tactics. Neither approach fosters or dignifies  
31  
32 the ethical commitment to altruistic public service that has traditionally underpinned  
33  
34 professions.  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41

42 By virtue of the public's ongoing demand for their services and the closed nature of their  
43  
44 registration systems, professionals have been largely protected from the changes in the nature  
45  
46 of work and the workplace of recent times (Billett, 2006). However with no such guarantees  
47  
48 for the next generation, these professional parents will understandably exercise their relative  
49  
50 advantage in risk management strategies prioritising their children's educational chances.  
51  
52 Metropolitan centres with deeper educational and labour markets offer these families the  
53  
54 capacity to reconcile their cluster of career and educational priorities. 'Good enough' is no  
55  
56 longer good enough for these discriminating educational consumers. However, these private  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 solutions create the public problem of underserviced rural and remote communities. The  
4  
5 problem is not static but will spiral and accumulate over time - as a community's services  
6  
7 erode, local housing prices fall then attract a welfare-dependent population with higher  
8  
9 service needs. These communities will need not just viable services, but services of sufficient  
10  
11 quality to attract and retain the professionals needed to staff them.  
12  
13

### 14 15 16 17 18 **Acknowledgements** 19

20  
21 This study was funded by the Australian Research Council. We would also like to  
22  
23 acknowledge the support and assistance of the Queensland Teachers Union, the Queensland  
24  
25 Nurses Union, the Queensland Police Service and the Australian Medical Association  
26  
27 Queensland.  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33

### 34 35 **References** 36

- 37 Author 1 et al. (2013) – details removed for blind review  
38  
39 Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. (2008). *Report on the audit of*  
40  
41 *health workforce in rural and regional Australia, April 2008*. Canberra:  
42  
43 Commonwealth of Australia.  
44  
45 Australian Government Productivity Commission (2013) *Geographic labour mobility:*  
46  
47 *Productivity Commission draft report*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia  
48  
49 Ball, S. (2003). *Class strategies and the education market: the middle classes and social*  
50  
51 *advantage*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.  
52  
53  
54 Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: Towards a new modernity*. London: SAGE.  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Beck, U., & Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2004). Families in a runaway world. In J. Scott, J. Treas &  
4 M. Richards (Eds.), *Blackwell companion to the sociology of families* (pp. 499-512).  
5  
6 Malden, MA: Blackwell.  
7  
8  
9  
10 Berger, B. (2002). *The family in the modern age: more than a lifestyle choice*. New  
11 Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers.  
12  
13  
14 Billett, S. (2006). *Work, change and workers*. Dordrecht: Springer.  
15  
16  
17 Bonnet, E., Collet, B., & Maurines, B. (2008). Working away from home: juggling private  
18 and professional lives. In W. Canzler, V. Kaufmann & S. Kesselring (Eds.), *Tracing*  
19 *mobilities: towards a cosmopolitan perspective* (pp. 141-162). Farnham Ashgate  
20 Publishing.  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25 Cameron, I. (1998). Retaining a medical workforce in rural Australia. *Medical Journal of*  
26 *Australia*, 169(293-294).  
27  
28  
29  
30 Campbell, C., Proctor, H., & Sherington, G. (2009). *School choice: How parents negotiate*  
31 *the new school market in Australia*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.  
32  
33  
34 Carr, P., & Kafalas, M. (2009). *Hollowing out the middle: The rural brain drain and what it*  
35 *means for America*. Boston: Beacon Press.  
36  
37  
38  
39 Cocklin, C., & Alston, M. (2003). *Community sustainability in rural Australia: a question of*  
40 *capital?* Wagga Wagga: Charles Sturt University.  
41  
42  
43  
44 Collins, R. (1990). Changing conceptions in the sociology of the professions. In R. T. M.  
45 Burrage (Ed.), *The formation of professions* (pp. 11-23). London: SAGE.  
46  
47  
48  
49 Connell, J. (2010). *Migration and the globalisation of health care: The health worker*  
50 *exodus?* Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.  
51  
52  
53  
54 Crossley, N. (1996). *Intersubjectivity: the fabric of social becoming*. London: SAGE.  
55  
56  
57  
58 Halliday, M., & Matthiessen, C. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar* (3rd ed.).  
59 London: Arnold.  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Haslam McKenzie, F. (2007). Attracting and retaining skilled and professional staff in remote  
4  
5 locations, DKCRC Report 21. Alice Springs: Desert Knowledge Cooperative  
6  
7 Research Centre.  
8  
9  
10 Haslam McKenzie, F. (2010). Fly-in fly-out: the challenges of transient populations in rural  
11  
12 landscapes. In G. Luck, D. Race & R. Black (Eds.), *Demographic change in*  
13  
14 *Australia's rural landscapes* (pp. 353-374). Dordrecht: Springer.  
15  
16 Haslam McKenzie, F. (2011) Attracting and retaining skilled and professional staff in remote  
17  
18 locations of Australia. *The Rangeland Journal*, 33, 353-363.  
19  
20  
21 Head, B. (2008). Wicked problems in public policy. *Public Policy*, 3(2), 101-118.  
22  
23 Health Workforce Australia. (2012). Australia's health workforce series: Doctors in focus  
24  
25 2012. Adelaide: Health Workforce Australia.  
26  
27  
28 Holdsworth, C. (2013). *Family and intimate mobilities*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave  
29  
30 Macmillan.  
31  
32 Humphreys, J., Jones, M., Jones, J., & Mara, P. (2002). Workforce retention in rural and  
33  
34 remote Australia: determining the factors that influence length of practice. *Medical*  
35  
36 *Journal of Australia*, 176, 472-476.  
37  
38  
39 King, R., & Kendall, G. (2004). *The state, democracy and globalization*. Hamshire: Palgrave  
40  
41 Macmillan.  
42  
43 Kline, D. (2003). Push and pull factors in international nurse migration. *Journal of Nursing*  
44  
45 *Scholarship*, 35(2).  
46  
47  
48 Lareau, A. (2011). *Unequal Childhoods: Class, race and family life* (2nd ed.). Berkeley &  
49  
50 Los Angeles: University of California Press.  
51  
52 Marchal, B., & Kegels, G. (2003). Health workforce imbalances in times of globalization:  
53  
54 Brain drain or professional mobility? *International Journal of Health Planning and*  
55  
56 *Management*, 18, S89-S101.  
57  
58  
59  
60

- 1  
2  
3 Miles, R., Marcheall, C., Rolfe, J., & Noonan, S. (2006). The attraction and retention of  
4  
5 professionals to regional areas. *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, 12(2), 129-  
6  
7 152.  
8  
9  
10 OECD. (2005). *Teachers matter: Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers*.  
11  
12 Paris: OECD.  
13  
14 Owen, S., Kos, J., & McKenzie, P. (2008). *Staff in Australia's schools: Teacher workforce*  
15  
16 *data and planning processes in Australia*. Canberra: Department of Education  
17  
18 Employment and Workplace Relations, ACER, Australian College of Educators.  
19  
20  
21 Pocock, B. (2003). *The work/life collision*. Sydney: Federation Press.  
22  
23  
24 Power, S., Edwards, T., Whitty, G., & Wigfall, V. (2003). *Education and the middle class*.  
25  
26 Buckingham: Open University Press.  
27  
28 Pusey, M. (2003). *The experience of middle Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University  
29  
30 Press.  
31  
32 Saks, M. (1995). *Professions and the public interest: Medical power, altruism and alternative*  
33  
34 *medicine*. London: Routledge.  
35  
36  
37 Sciulli, D. (2009). *Professions in civil society and the State: Invariant foundations and*  
38  
39 *consequences*. Leiden & Boston: Brill.  
40  
41  
42 Sheller, M., & Urry, J. (2006). The new mobilities paradigm. *Environment and Planning A*,  
43  
44 38, 207-226.  
45  
46  
47 Sherif-Trask, B. (2010). *Globalization and families: Accelerated systemic social change*.  
48  
49 New Yrok: Springer.  
50  
51  
52 Urry, J. (2008). Mobilities and social theory. In B. Turner (Ed.), *The new Blackwell*  
53  
54 *companion to social theory* (pp. 477-495). Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell.  
55  
56  
57 Voigt-Graf, C. (2003). Fijian teachers on the move: causes, implications and policies. *Asia*  
58  
59 *Pacific Viewpoint*, 44(2), 163-175.  
60



1  
2  
3 Wang, D., & Gao, M. (2013). Educational equality or social mobility: The value conflict  
4  
5 between preservice teachers and the Free Teacher Education Program in China.  
6  
7 *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 32, 66-74.  
8

9  
10 Whitaker, E. A. (2010). Where everybody knows your name: the role of social capital in  
11  
12 resettlement after an employee relocation. *Community, Work & Family*, 13(4), 429-  
13  
14 445.  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

For Peer Review Only

## Tables:

**Table 1. Demographics of the sample**

Occupation	N	%	Gender				Number of children		
			Male		Female		Min	Max	Mean
			N	%	N	%			
Doctor	27	9.7	8	29.6	19	70.4	1	7	2.56
Nurse	134	48.2	10	7.5	123	91.8	1	4	2.00
Police	45	16.2	32	71.1	13	28.9	1	4	2.33
Teacher	72	25.9	10	13.9	62	86.1	1	8	2.38
Total	278	100	60	21.6	217	78.1	1	8	2.21

**Table 2. Item sets and their corresponding constructs**

Construct	Item code	Item
Neo-liberalism	Neolib3	We strongly believe non-government schools offer a better education than government schools.
	Neolib4	We choose where to live because of the quality of the schools in the area.
	Neolib5	We think it's good if schools compete with each other in a market of choice.
	Neolib6	The My School* website plays an important role in informing our choice of school.
Public good	Pub2	I feel a strong obligation to give back to society.
	Pub3	I think governments have the right to expect professionals to work in underserved communities.
	Pub5	I think as a professional I have a duty to serve in disadvantaged communities.
	Pub7	As a professional, I feel a strong commitment to ensure that all communities are well serviced.

\*The My School website is an initiative of the Commonwealth Government for 'sharing information about the resources and performance of schools with the Australian public' (see <http://www.myschool.edu.au/>). It lists every registered school in Australia, profiling its demographic background, and cohort performance in standardised tests.