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## **Career, Family, and Workforce Mobility: An Interdisciplinary Conversation**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to synthesise conceptual and empirical work from the fields of both sociology and career development to explore how issues of career, family and workforce mobility are necessarily interrelated. The use of work from sociology and career development demonstrates that the complexities of family solutions to career mobility undo the apparent simplicity of delivering a worker to a new worksite. Although organizations and governments work to develop policies that incentivize mobility, including transport infrastructure, housing, employment conditions and tax incentives, these will not necessarily address the private concerns and priorities of families. The article argues for an interdisciplinary approach to better understand the intersubjective complexities implicated in the growing phenomenon and expectation of worker mobility, and suggests both areas and design strategies for further research.

**Keywords:** Career, workforce mobility, family, interdisciplinarity

### **Career, Family, and Workforce Mobility: An Interdisciplinary Conversation**

This paper focuses on how two disciplines, sociology and career development, make visible different aspects of the complex, intertwined and dynamic phenomena of career, family and workforce mobility. An abundant literature in these fields has acknowledged the ongoing challenge in understanding how the individual, family and employment cohere in postmodern times (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2004; Greenhaus & Powell, 2012; Moen, 2003; Powell & Greenhaus, 2012; Richardson & Schaeffer, 2013). Despite this extensive literature, the work on boundaryless careers, and the connection of this work to an understanding of mobility between organizations (Arthur, 2014), both disciplines are yet to fully integrate issues of labor market mobility within theorising on work and career, the worker and family.

To move in this direction, this paper integrates concepts from both disciplines, including the concept of mobility from the sociology literature, and the increasing relevance of constructivism within the career development literature. In acknowledgement that some of these concepts will be new, they will be explained initially to set a context for the reader. Urry (2008) critiques much social science as “a-mobile” (p. 479), arguing that the mobility turn offers “a different way of thinking through the character of economic, social and political relationships” (p.479). Urry’s concept of mobility focuses on the development of sociality and identity through networks of people, ideas and things which are always moving and changing. Cresswell (2010) describes this mobilities paradigm as acknowledgement of increased levels and forms of mobility in the world, leading to “a kind of thinking that takes mobility as the central fact of modern and postmodern life” (p. 550). The focus here is on mobility in the “horizontal” sense of spatial relocation rather than the “vertical sense” of social mobility (Urry, 2000, p. 3), career advancement (Laud & Johnson, 2012), or change of employer (Lyons, Schweitzer, Ng & Kuron, 2012). These two dimensions can become

intertwined when considering workforce mobility. In the sociology literature, the new mobilities paradigm (Urry, 2007) emphasizes how movement is central to many lives and many organizations. Similarly, researchers in the field of career development have become interested in the increasing influence of globalization and labor market mobility on individuals' career decision-making (Collin, 2006; Patton, Doherty, & Shield, 2014).

A contextual worldview is increasingly underpinning the theoretical base of career development (Blustein, 2006, 2013; Collin, 2006; Patton & McMahon, 2014). This worldview emphasizes the importance of the multiple layers of an individual's context (e.g., family, school, workplace) in individuals' career decision-making. Proponents of this worldview critique the ongoing focus on career and work relationships as being relevant only to individuals and somehow analytically separable from other relational structures and intersubjective ties. Rather, the contextual worldview emphasizes the crucial nature of an individual's multiple and complex relationships and intersubjective ties which loom large in career decision-making. Within this worldview, careers are constructed within familial, social, historical, cultural, geographic and socio-political systems in which individuals live (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

This current article contributes to the special issue in focusing on a broader conceptualization of career mobility, and in describing conceptually the importance of family and workforce mobility as factors relevant to both individual and organizational career growth. By synthesizing aspects from both the sociology and career development literatures, this article highlights the importance of family as the prime unit of analysis to understand the mobility choices and dispositions of individual workers and the impact of these decisions on organizations. It therefore emphasizes the importance of attending to the relationships between individual factors and organizational factors in career growth and organizational

growth. It is often whole families which are made mobile and it is a family which needs to reconstitute lives in multiple institutions.

First, this article documents the growing imperative to be mobile within the context of changes and challenges in more global workplaces and explores calls for a greater interdisciplinary approach to examining career. The article then reviews conceptual and empirical literature from both sociology and career development to identify common ground and possible articulations. The thesis of this article is that in a changing world of work, governments, organizations and associated fields of scholarship need to embrace broader considerations with regard to expectations of workforce mobility. Despite workforce mobility having both individual and organizational impetus and outcomes, it is often the family which bears the brunt of workforce mobility. It is noted early in this article that the literature in this space to date has focused on heterosexual (and indeed dual parent) families and that attention needs to focus on other families.

### **The Context: Changing Global Workplaces and the Mobility Imperative**

Population mobility has become an attractive policy goal for nations, organizations and corporations to protect economic competitiveness and to foster productivity, flexibility, and responsiveness. For example, a recent inquiry by the Australian Productivity Commission (2014), a key Australian government advisory body, builds from the premise that labor mobility is an important element of a well-functioning, efficient and flexible labor market. Its authors argue that, by improving the match between employers and workforce, geographic labor mobility can contribute to economic efficiency and ultimately to community wellbeing through higher incomes.

The authors of Deloitte Australia's (2013) report, *Workplace 2030*, identify eight 'mega trends' in future workplace considerations—demographic patterns, empowered individuals, resources crunch, political change, technology, global networks of knowledge,

unstable and abrupt change, prosperity and wealth. The following key points were made in relation to the mobility underpinning global networks of knowledge:

- a) the number of people on international assignments has increased 25% over the past decade, and a further growth of 50% is predicted by 2020;
- b) 5 billion users could be online by 2020; and
- c) by 2030 China, India and Brazil will become the world's major exporters of qualified talent.

These Deloitte projections accord with those in the Price Waterhouse Cooper's report, *Talent Mobility 2020* (PWC, 2010). PWC predicts a significant shift in mobility patterns as workers from emerging markets operate more globally, producing a noticeable change in the global talent pool and its flows. Although technology might play a key role, the authors note it will not "erode the need to have people deployed on the ground" (p. 5). The PWC report also highlights the greater sophistication and complexity of mobility assignments and the need for strategies which will meet changing career and workforce expectations of organizations and employees.

Workforce mobilization extends within and across national boundaries. Strategies of economic regionalization have scaled up labor markets by reducing barriers to movement to allow people and businesses to pursue opportunities emerging elsewhere. Globally, these strategies include financial incentives for organizations and ease of international movement for workers. Within countries, a number of strategies such as housing, employment tenure, and schooling preferences for children are employed to incentivize workers to move to less favorable locations.

However, there is evidence that some of these schemes to mobilize people have failed to attract sufficient numbers of workers for meaningful lengths of time. A number of international reports have demonstrated the importance of family considerations in career

decision-making which includes workforce mobility. A European Commission (2010) report noted that while the majority of Europeans think moving is good for the economy, the labor market, and individuals, fewer think it is good for families. Similarly the Canadian Employee Relocation Council's Global Mobility Survey (2013), reporting data from 24 countries, found that family and young children are cited as the main barriers to mobility. The Australian Productivity Commission (2014) reported that government schemes to move professional workers into rural and remote areas had limited effect. Doherty, Shield, Patton & Mu (2015) emphasized that with the considerable problems involved in moving for all family members, incentives offered by government and organizations need to be cognizant of individual life cycle circumstances rather than presumed cohort attractions and benefits.

As the 21<sup>st</sup> century world of work increasingly implicates mobility as part of career opportunity, so mobility is relevant to career decision-making. New theoretical understandings in career development psychology emphasize the importance of an individual's context, especially family, as a key influence in career decision-making. This interconnectedness challenges our field to develop interdisciplinary responses to understanding these phenomena. The next section will introduce calls for interdisciplinary approaches, and in particular the imperative to connect concepts from sociology and career development psychology.

### **An Interdisciplinary Approach to Careers**

Collin (2009) outlined the multi-dimensional and multi-layered nature of career as a lived phenomenon, commenting that studies of career need to reflect this complexity. Broad conceptualizations of career studies embrace a wide array of disciplines including philosophy, economics, psychology, organizational behaviour, industrial psychology, personnel selection and retention, vocational education, psychiatry, sociology, education, industrial relations and human resource management. However, scholars continue to pursue



questions about career from within their own disciplinary theoretical and methodological frames, resulting in a separation and lack of exchange (Collin & Patton, 2009).

There have been multiple calls for a greater connection in career studies (Arthur, 2008; Collin & Patton, 2009; Dany, 2014). In particular Dany commented “Keeping in mind that careers unfold in inhabited worlds could help to have both convergence and diversity to sustain the integrative approach we are calling for” (p. 727). Collin (2009) drew an important distinction between multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity, and transdisciplinarity:

With multidisciplinary, several disciplinary perspectives come together to work independently on the same problem, and are unchanged in themselves when they disperse. With interdisciplinarity, their collaboration may result in the building of bridges between them or, going even further, integration between them and the formation of a new, hybrid, discipline (p. 8).

Collin then defined transdisciplinarity as “the use of theories, concepts, and approaches from one or more disciplines as an overarching conceptual framework to address issues in a number of disciplines” (p. 8).

Using these definitions, the conjuncture of disciplinary approaches presented in this paper demonstrates an example of interdisciplinarity, provoked by a complex object of study, and precipitated by an interest in the processes on the individual’s side that make workforce mobility thinkable and doable. Practitioners of a sociology of reflexivity treat intra-individual deliberations as a social phenomenon, while a contextual (or systems) approach to career development demands attention to context and related influences. In this way the sociological and psychological gazes extend and intrude into each other’s traditional territory, because the research problem demands a complex response that neither discipline can deliver alone.

### **Thinking from the Field of Sociology**

The mobility turn in sociology can articulate with other work that has probed the growing demand for reflexive negotiation between individuals, their relational ties and their social context, to illuminate strategic life decisions such as career mobility. Beck's (1992, 2007) thesis of "institutionalised individualisation" (2007, p. 682) argues that, through global waves of neoliberal policy, governments have divested themselves of the responsibility to provide default social structures for the population as a collective, instead transferring responsibility onto families and individuals to make their own way. For example, families with children need to make specific investigation into choice of school as previous assumptions that all government schools provide the same educational opportunities can no longer be guaranteed. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2004) extend this perspective to understand the impact of institutional individualisation on families, emphasizing that the erosion of predictable social scripts forces families to reflexively improvise how the family unit can work in its contextual circumstances. Mobility decisions thereby become one avenue for managing risk and optimizing life chances of individuals and families in an increasingly uncertain world. The increased complexity, however, is that these mobility decisions need to consider all family members, however institutions (for example, employers) tend to engage with family members as individuals, not as a cohesive unit.

Archer's (2007) sociology is interested in the internal conversation that weighs up opportunities and risks presented in the social context to design life projects, because this is the process that mediates between society and the individual. Archer notes how structural constraints and enablements deter or encourage certain projects, so any outcome is the result of the interplay between the individual's agency and what their social context enables, that is "reflexive projects" (p. 4). The response by individuals is not just rational choice. Rather it is emotional, tapping their deep concerns. Archer uses the term "dovetailing" to capture the way these occupational concerns must mesh or accommodate family concerns.

The sociology derived life course perspective has provided a scholarship in which “careers extend beyond occupational concerns and into other aspects of people’s lives, such as family careers and marking progressions through family forms and structures” (Moen & Sweet, 2004, p. 212). Moen and Sweet drew on this perspective to frame their discussion of work and family, moving the discourse from one of individuals to a focus on dynamic relationships between roles and among individuals as lives unfold – over time; in tandem; and in particular contexts. These authors emphasized the need to move away from the work-family dichotomy to focus on the complex interface among social structures, social changes and individual biographies which are careers. They emphasize the contextual changes which highlight the disjunctures where careers intersect with existing gender, occupational, labor market and workforce changes.

**Family, work and mobility.** While there is an expanding sociological literature regarding the family/work interface (Altobelli & Moen, 2007; Moen, 2003; Moen & Sweet, 2004), there has been less focus on family/work and mobility, although some empirical work has tracked the emergence of new spatial arrangements for family households precipitated by work demands or opportunities. The embeddedness of individuals and families in existing work contexts and in social networks has been identified as deterrents to whole of family relocation (Arnold & Cohen, 2013; Green & White, 2007; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erwz, 2001), so families are experimenting with new residential arrangements to achieve stability for children and access to mobile career opportunities. Levin (2004) described the “new family form” of “living apart together” (p. 224). Van der Klis and Karsten (2009) considered the gender imbalance of “commuter families”, which “enable parents to seize distant work opportunities and preserve solid local roots for family life” (p. 341). Schneider and Limmer (2008) highlighted the growing demand for job-related mobility of various scales in Germany and its impact on family and community life, while Haslam McKenzie

(2010) documented the “fly-in fly-out” family form in remote Australia, whereby typically the male partner works in a remote location with little social infrastructure over a compressed working period, returning to the family home for breaks. Green (1997) initially documented the long commuting solution adopted by British dual career families to keep the family together; but, in more recent work, Green (2015) reported the emergence of “dual location households” (p. 17). Luck and Ruppenthal (2010) compared the “mobility culture” (p. 44) of different European nations and birth cohorts, while Hardill (2004) documented the contingent trade-offs within the family unit when transnational career opportunities present.

**Gendered implications of mobility.** At the macro sociological scale, these solutions have raised concerns about their reinvigoration of an asymmetrical, gendered division of labor in the home and the further entrenchment of traditional female roles (Bonnet, Collet & Maurines, 2008; Doherty & Lassig, 2013; Schneider & Limmer, 2008). The impact of family mobility on women’s careers is well documented. Bielby and Bielby (1992) reported that wives are more likely to relocate for the sake of their husband’s job than for their own, although Pixley (2008) reported that this trade-off is related to respective income levels. Roberts (2015) emphasizes that “Women’s family careers often disrupt their employment careers”, in particular in the way “some women’s careers had been unhinged by needing to relocate because their husband’s jobs required this” (p. 244). The well documented “trailing spouse” pattern (Doherty, Patton & Shield, 2015; Green, 2015; Pixley & Moen, 2003) also highlights how it is more typically the female parent who compromises her career stakes in the collective’s interest. Haasler (2015) confirms that women in dual earner households are still responsible for managing the households, especially if they also have young children.

**Families with children.** Families with children, especially when they reach school age, have another layer of complexity to work through. Studies that document how job-related mobility can relocate the worker away from the family home implicitly demonstrate

the normative reluctance to relocate households with school-aged children (Holdsworth, 2013). There is some evidence that whole family mobility can be detrimental to schooling outcomes (Doherty et al., 2015; Voight et al., 2012).

An Australian study provides data on whole family relocations (Doherty et al., 2015; Doherty, Shield, Patton & Mu, 2015; Patton, Doherty & Shield, 2014). Their sample included military personnel and core public service professionals in Australia, groups for whom career progression is often conditional on frequent mobility. For these families, this strategy of whole family mobility typically worked until children reached critical junctures in their education. At this point, the military interviewees described how family priorities tipped, sometimes at the expense of military career advancement, other times at the expense of the military career itself. However, the public service professionals understood the mobility expectations within their career structures and were largely able to plan for broader family educational considerations.

However the existing literature largely fails to account for those families who choose to remain together while on the move for career purposes. Taken together, these different sociological studies thus fail to account for the conundrum at their intersection: how the immobility/stability typically valued for children can at times be set aside in the pursuit of an individual family member's career opportunities. There is a crucial process of intersubjective bargaining and risk calculation within family units that mediates individualized career strategy.

The new mobility paradigm in sociology, in conversation with other social theory, can inform not just greater understandings of mobility patterns and their differences, but also reveal how families are constituted in and by the web of accommodations and intersubjective bargains that both enable and constrain the individual's career project. The next section

reviews literature from the discipline of career development psychology to examine these phenomena through a different disciplinary lens.

### **Thinking from the Field of Career Development**

The field of career development has been challenged for its theoretical focus on intra-individual influences to the neglect of the broader environmental context (Blustein, 2006, 2013; Collin, 2006; Patton & McMahon, 2014). This focus has prevented a stronger analysis of the individual's relational connections. However, it is increasingly being recognized within the career development psychology literature that an individual's career is impacted not just by the macro societal context in which they live, but also by the micro social circumstances that emerge as work and family lives intersect. A contextual worldview emphasizes that how events are viewed is linked to the perspective of each individual, with development conceived as an ongoing process of interaction between the person and their environment. Career work within the contextualist worldview focuses on individuals interacting with multiple intrapersonal influences and with those from their social and environmental contexts.

A number of theoretical discussions have developed from this worldview. Collin (2006) raised the concept of the "family friendly career" (p. 298) and advocates for a systems approach to conceptualize a family friendly career in increasingly mobile times. Drawing on systems theory, Patton and McMahon (2014) developed the metatheoretical Systems Theory Framework (STF) of career to demonstrate the importance of all levels of an individual's system and the relative influences of these levels (individual, social, environmental) on an individual's career. The STF is composed of several key interrelated systems, including the intrapersonal system of the individual, the social system and the environmental-societal system. The processes between these systems are explained via the recursive nature of interaction within and between these systems, change over time, and chance. The individual system is composed of several intrapersonal content influences which include gender, age,

self-concept, health, ability, disability, physical attributes, beliefs, personality, interests, values, aptitudes, skills, world of work knowledge, sexual orientation, and ethnicity.

Influences representing the content of the social system include peers, family, media, community groups, workplace, and education institutions. Environmental-societal system influences include political decisions, historical trends, globalization, socioeconomic status, employment market, and geographical location.

**Family and work decisions.** In expanding on their notion “family relatedness of work decisions” (FRWD), Greenhaus and Powell (2012) emphasize the relevance of family to a large number of work decisions. They also note the relationship between family situations and work decisions, and in particular the effect of context in which individuals live, explaining that these contexts will affect work decisions differentially for each individual. Echoing the systems identified in the STF, these authors identify individual context, the organizational context, and the societal context. However, there is little attention specifically to mobility related family career decisions in the work of Patton and McMahon and Greenhaus and Powell.

A number of authors have extended the field’s understanding of relationships and career development (Blustein, 2006, 2013; Blustein, Schultheiss, & Flum, 2004; Richardson, 2012), emphasizing that their theoretical ideas have been derived in particular from what they term the ‘relational cultural paradigm’ (Schultheiss, 2013). The term relational in career development is largely associated with the assumption that humans are relational beings for whom developing and sustaining meaningful connections with others is a core activity. In contrast, thinking relationally is built into the sociological gaze that will orient to the constitutive relations built into structures, categories and fields. It is not just between people (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

**Influence of changing social context of work.** In addition to these reconceptualizations, much of the social context of work has been changing, forcing a rewriting of previous understandings of career processes (see Bimrose et al., 2015 for a comprehensive global summary). The emphasis in the emerging 21<sup>st</sup> century career has shifted from the organization to the individual, and as such has reinvigorated the emphasis on the individual in discussions of career (also evident in the sociology literature discussed previously). This shift is reflected in new notions of ‘protean’ (Hall, 1996; Hall & las Heras, 2009) and ‘boundaryless’ careers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). The concept of protean career refers to the notion that, to adapt and survive in a changing world, the individual needs to be self-generating; that is, protean, managing the intersection between self-organizing and social phenomena, or “in charge of his/her own career” (Hartung, 2013). However, this theoretical work again de-emphasizes the important role of context and in particular family in career decision-making (Collin, 2006). A more relational, intersubjective lens emphasizes the interface between adults, work and relationships in multiple ways.

**Women’s careers.** Although much of the career development literature has focused on work-family conflict and stress for both women and men in managing competing roles, empirical work overwhelmingly suggests that women remain more likely to change their career paths and forego workplace opportunities because of family responsibilities (Schultheiss, 2009). Although governments in many Western countries have implemented key policy levers in support of both male and female participation in the workforce, such as family leave, child care support and flexible work arrangements, these have been introduced more in connection with pressures for all citizens, women and men, to be economically independent. Schultheiss (2009) and Richardson and Schaeffer (2013) critique such policy as privileging paid market work over unpaid work, such as caring for children, ageing parents and other loved ones, especially at a time when care of the elderly is a pressing social issue.



While the mobilities turn in the social sciences (Urry, 2000, 2007) has impacted a number of disciplines, this brief review has indicated that the application of mobilities studies to career development is less evident. Within this literature, the focus has been on boundaryless careers (i.e., job mobility between organizations, Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), and identifying a definitional focus for career change in terms of job change, organizational change, occupational change and career mobility (Feldman & Ng, 2007). Mobility in this field refers more to change within a professional field, change across occupational groupings, and change which may include geographical mobility — short or long term, national or international — within individuals' careers. The challenge for this field is to account for how multiple factors interact to produce or deter spatial mobility. While analytically each factor offers some explanatory power, ultimately the phenomenon is explained in how these facets cohere and dovetail in lived experiences of individuals and families.

### **Future Research: Interdisciplinary Themes**

The conceptual and empirical literature from both sociology and career development acknowledges the challenges involved in understanding career mobility as the complex interplay between labor market, workplace mobility, individual and family. However, both fields of scholarship are yet to fully explore this new nexus. This section offers key themes for future research from this brief interdisciplinary theoretical and empirical conversation, and proposes fields of inquiry for research. These themes include: the pressure the mobility imperative places on women's domestic and family roles and the gender (im)balance in intersubjective compromises around career mobility for dual career couples; the influence of children (at various ages) in families' career mobility decision-making; and different rationales and improvisations around career mobility. Finally this section proposes some methodological considerations.

### **Women's Careers, Family and Workforce Mobility**

The impact of the family career on the female career has been documented in both literatures (Bonnet et al., 2008; Doherty & Lassig, 2013; Doherty et al., 2015; Haasler, 2015; Green, 2015; Moen, 2003; Richardson & Schaeffer, 2013; Roberts, 2015; Schultheiss, 2009, 2013), with the compromise in paid work and career progress primarily being made by the female, even when there are no children. The international studies reported in Bimrose et al. (2015) document the extensive and complicated nature of the interaction between women's unpaid and paid (market) work experiences.

Similarly, research has consistently shown that it is most often the women's career trajectory which is compromised when a mobility opportunity presents itself (Doherty et al., 2015; Green, 2015; Pixley & Moen, 2003; Roberts, 2015). Although Pixley (2008) reported data that income levels may moderate this (that is, if the female income was higher, then the family may move for the female breadwinner), most documented literature continues to present the traditional view. As the nature and structure of the workforce continues to change, and with the expectation that women's career projects will come to exert more priority in family decisions, research into career decisions of women and men over the life course, and in particular in relation to mobility decisions, will be vital for understanding relevant influences. Such data will also be highly important for individuals deliberating on career mobility, and for organizations developing policy frameworks for women's careers, and for working to attract and retain a mobile talent.

### **Families with Children and Workforce Mobility**

It has been documented from both sociology and career development perspectives that families with children, especially school-aged children, face significant barriers with respect to mobility if they prioritize educational opportunity for their children (Doherty et al., 2015; Holdsworth, 2013; Patton et al., 2014). Doherty et al. (2015) showed how mobile children could accrue cumulative educational complications from institutional discontinuities over

their family's mobility history. Similarly this research demonstrates that parents modified their own career aspirations and therefore income potential to protect the stability of their children's education. Such impacts of worker mobility absorbed by children and the family unit have received scant attention within both the sociology and career development literature and would be worthy of additional research. A focus on the family unit living mobility highlights the intersubjectivity of this social unit and the compromises being made by all members. These data derived from all family members would again assist organizations to prepare attractive packages to attract mobile workers. In addition, tracking the educational progress of children of mobile families would assist in understanding this phenomenon further.

### **Family Strategies to Accommodate Workforce Mobility**

A third theme emerging in both literatures is the family strategy and improvizations around mobility, through different family models or workable solutions. Families are experimenting with new residential arrangements to achieve stability for children and access to mobile career opportunities, such as "dual location households" (Green, 2015) and "fly-in fly-out" solutions (Haslam Mackenzie, 2010). Further research could monitor what costs and benefits accrue to the family and society more broadly under these improvizations. For example, research needs to examine work and career related outcomes (e.g., salary, promotion), in addition to individual and family matters with respect to attachment, family connectedness, well-being and stressors of each family member experiencing these divided households. These data, when compared with family members experiencing whole of family mobility, would assist organizations drawing on mobile workers to develop support strategies. These data would also assist in understanding career decision influences.

Career mobility is not always about moving on to get ahead. Doherty et al. (2015) demonstrate that both the military personnel and the professionals in their study recognize

that mobility was helpful for career progression. However there are other drivers for and against mobility. Much labor market mobility planned by organizations (short term national and international assignments) is only designed to provide short term labor for particular project needs. In this way, mobility decisions for individuals and their families might be about achieving or maintaining employment, or enriching family life, not just career advancement. There are additional risks and uncertainties in more speculative career mobility that warrant further research.

### **Methodological Considerations for Research**

This review of these literatures emphasizes the importance of learning from paradigms that intersect around research problems, and developing an inter- or multi-disciplinary focus for career mobility research (Collin & Patton, 2009; Dany, 2014). This more complex theoretical mix could accommodate and profit from both a range and a synthesis of research methodologies from both disciplines. The empirical studies reviewed in this article included interviews with individuals and couples at different life and career stages, narrative enquiry and surveys - some asking point in time questions, and others asking respondents to reflect back on key mobility decision points. Doherty (2010) describes a method of narrative interviewing of family members, and the construction of an orchestral score which provides a visualisation device for documenting narrative data.

Incorporating a focus on family challenges the individualism inherent in many considerations of career and labor market mobility. Whole of family research highlights the relationship between mobility and family stages, in particular the life stages of children. Other areas which demand a focus include investigating family pressures for elder care, and examining all family forms (for example, families of same sex couples). The dimension of time, or timing, in terms of life course or family phase, would enrich any understanding of career mobility (Moen, 2003).

Such a research agenda will need a diverse and adaptable methodological toolkit, less devoted to disciplinary purities and more devoted to the research problem. From the field of career development, Blustein (2015) emphasizes that “one might need to sacrifice precise linear models for the complex, murky nature of working life that exists among family commitments, shifting political factors, radically transforming economic structures, and complex and nuanced cultures” (p. 225). Blustein calls for research to move beyond quantitative surveys and to pursue narrative as a research approach, although Holdsworth (2013) suggests narrative may be problematic in gathering data from children and adolescents. From the life course sociology literature, Moen and Hernandez (2009) describe strategies and techniques for “capturing the embeddedness of individuals within the lives of others as linked lives at any one point in time and as social convoys over time” (p. 260). They note the need for social groupings and relational units as prime units of analysis, rather than the individual, and suggest gathering individual variables in addition to couple-level (or family level) variables. These authors propose gathering family longitudinal data as follows: household composition, household income, age and education, styles of decision making, family conflict frequency, and nature and frequency of social network contact.

### **Concluding Comments**

This exploration of conceptual and empirical work from two disciplinary fields has demonstrated that the complexities of family solutions to career mobility undo the apparent simplicity of delivering a worker to a new worksite. Although organizations and governments work to develop policies that incentivize mobility, including transport infrastructure, housing, employment conditions and tax incentives, these will not necessarily address the private concerns and priorities of families.

Within a world where career opportunities increasingly implicate mobility, this article has focused thinking around this influence through the disciplines of sociology and career

development. It is evident that each field could learn from the other, and we suggest that socially complex problems such as workforce mobility will benefit from multidisciplinary conversations which articulate and mesh theories and methodologies from each field. Indeed Cresswell (2010) has argued that “Mobilities research has linked the fact of movement across scales and in a way that links the humanities at one end to the sciences to the other” (p. 556). Current mobilities research includes scholars from multiple fields (e.g., economics, geography), and the fields of sociology and career development discussed in this article are but two. More integrative work, incorporating theorizing and methodologies from both the humanities and the sciences, will contribute to a maturing of our understanding of the complex interaction between individual, family and the social and economic contexts in which careers develop.

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