

## A New Look at Family Migration and Women's Employment Status

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Various studies demonstrate that 'family migration', or the long-distance moves of partnered individuals, has a negative impact on women's employment status (e.g. Boyle *et al.* 2001). This paper extends this literature in two distinctive ways. First, previous studies compared long and short distance movers, with the assumption that the former are primarily employment-related moves associated with the man's job. This misclassifies some moves, as not all long-distance moves are employment-related, while some shorter distance moves are for work-related reasons. We use longitudinal data drawn from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) which includes information about the reason for the move, and we compare this with the more common distance-based approach. We then assess whether *moving for the man's job* has a significant negative effect on women's employment status, compared to being immobile or moving for other reasons.

Second, we consider 'state dependence' which has been ignored in family migration studies to date. This refers to the likelihood that a person's characteristics are similar through time; in our example, we might assume that women who were out of employment at  $t - 1$  are also more likely to be out of work at time  $t$  and this persistence needs to be controlled for (Heckman 2001). Thus, we included a one-year lag of employment status in our models but, mindful that the inclusion of such a variable is likely to lead to bias in conventional random effects panel models, we fitted appropriate dynamic panel models which adjust for unobserved heterogeneity and initial conditions to account for state dependence (Stewart 2005, 2006).

Our outcome variable compares women who were unemployed or economically inactive (about one third of the observations) with those who were in employment and we control for a range of explanatory variables. In particular, we compared migrants who moved for the man's job, those who moved for either the woman's or both jobs, and those who moved for other reasons.

Our results demonstrate that moving for the sake of the man's job has a significant negative effect on employment status for women (Figure 1, Model 4). Model 5 includes the lag of the outcome variable in the model and shows how the effects vary by prior employment status. Model 6 is the dynamic panel model which controls accounts for the potential bias of including lagged  $y$  variables in the model.

Our results are important as they demonstrate that previously employed women do

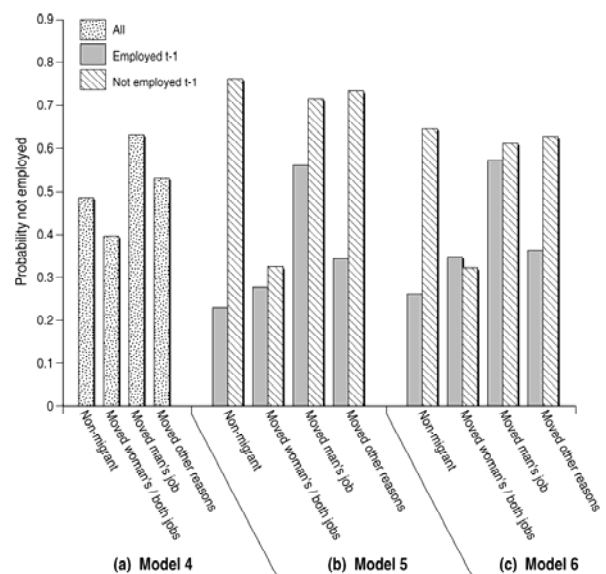


Figure 1 (Figure 3a – c in the original paper) Women's probability of being not employed (unemployment or economic inactivity) at time  $t$  by mover status at time  $t$  and employment status at time  $t - 1$  (estimates derived from models 4-6 in the original paper)

suffer from family migration. Many previous studies have compared women's employment status post move and have failed to explore whether women who moved were more likely to be out of work prior to the move. One possibility is that women appear more likely to be out of work following family migration, but in fact the effect is driven by the movement of women who were previously not employed. Our results suggest that it is not the case that women who were previously out of work explain the apparent association between family migration and women being out of work. These results provide convincing evidence of a family migration effect, but show that state dependence is a crucial factor.

### References

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