

Living Far Apart Together: Dual-Career Location Constraints and Marital Non-Cohabitation

Marta Murray-Close*

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Location decisions pose a unique problem for dual-career couples. Highly educated, specialized workers are likely to find that the quality of their employment opportunities varies widely across locations; consequently, they may also find that career-motivated migration is an important means of advancement. When these workers form families with similarly educated, specialized partners, they may face difficult trade-offs between their ability to build a shared life with their partner in a single location and their ability to pursue desirable employment opportunities wherever the opportunities arise. The manner in which dual-career couples respond to these trade-offs has important implications for the health of their careers, on the one hand, and the health of their relationships, on the other.

Early research on family migration assumed that the dual-career location problem had only two solutions: couples could live together in the location that maximized their combined career opportunities, or they could break up and move separately to the locations that maximized their individual opportunities (Sandell, 1977; Mincer, 1978). Most subsequent work has adopted the same assumption. A small number of studies have explicitly defined marriage to require cohabitation (Lundberg and Pollak, 2003; Guler, Guvenen and Violante, 2009). A much larger number have restricted their focus to the migration experiences of couples who live together (Lichter, 1980; Spitze, 1984; Shihadeh, 1991; Bielby and Bielby, 1992; Shauman and Xie, 1996; Bailey and Cooke, 1998; Costa and Kahn, 2000; Jacobsen and Levin, 2000; Boyle et al., 2001; Cooke, 2001; Boyle et al., 2003; Cooke, 2003; Jorges, 2006; Rabe, 2006; Compton and Pollak, 2007; Shauman and Noonan, 2007; Gemici, 2008; Lee and Li, 2008; McKinnish, 2008; Cooke et al., 2009; Shauman, 2010).

Despite the prevailing focus of family researchers on couples who live together, a small literature suggests that the dual-career location problem has a third solution: couples can live apart while pursuing career opportunities in separate locations. This solution, which I call *committed non-cohabitation*, has

*Department of Economics, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 200 Hicks Way, Amherst, MA 01003-9277, martam@econs.umass.edu.

been the focus of several qualitative empirical studies (see Gerstel and Gross (1982) and Rhodes (2002) for reviews). More recently, a theoretical study incorporated committed non-cohabitation as a possible outcome in an economic model of joint job search (Guler, Guvenen and Violante, 2009). These studies have provided valuable insights about the motivations of couples who live apart and the consequences of the arrangement for their personal and professional lives. On the other hand, because they have relied on non-probability samples or have not included empirical tests of their theoretical models, previous studies have not provided information about the prevalence, predictors, or consequences of committed non-cohabitation in the larger population of dual-career couples. The only study to date that has examined non-cohabitators using a nationally representative dataset speculated about, but did not empirically assess, the role of dual-career location constraints in the decision to live apart (Rindfuss and Stephen, 1990).

This paper uses data from the 2000 United States Census (Ruggles et al., 2010) to estimate the prevalence of committed non-cohabitation among married, college-educated workers and to examine the association between committed non-cohabitation and two proxies for career-related location constraints. Following Rindfuss and Stephen (1990), I identify non-cohabitators as married people whose spouse was not enumerated in the same household in the Census. Because the Census questionnaire offers a distinct response option for respondents who are separated from their spouse, I assume that these non-cohabitators are living apart from their spouse for reasons other than marital discord. My proxies for career-related location constraints include a measure of occupational mobility from McKinnish (2008) and a measure of occupational concentration from Benson (2011). The rationale for these proxies is the following: working in an occupation that requires frequent moves or one in which jobs are concentrated in a small number of geographic areas constrains the location choices of workers and increases the likelihood that they will face location-related conflicts between their careers and their relationships. Because education beyond college usually entails the accumulation of specialized human capital, and because workers with specialized human capital may stand to gain more than other workers from career-motivated migration, I also examine the association between committed non-cohabitation and educational attainment.

To provide a preliminary assessment of the relationship between my proxies for dual-career location constraints and the prevalence of committed non-cohabitation, I conduct an exploratory analysis using the Census data and a categorical measure of occupational mobility from McKinnish (2008). McKinnish classifies an occupation as low-mobility if less than 15 percent of college-educated workers in the occupation migrated in the five years preceding the Census; she classifies it as high-mobility if more than 25 percent of college-educated workers migrated. McKinnish defines migration as moving between metropolitan areas or, for workers living outside of metropolitan areas, between Public Use Microdata Areas. I adopt these classifications from McKinnish and classify all remaining civilian occupations as middle-mobility. I also classify workers

according to their highest degree received, excluding workers with less than a college degree from my sample and grouping other workers into the following categories: college degree, master's degree, professional degree, and doctoral degree.

Results from the exploratory analysis suggest that occupational mobility has the expected association with committed non-cohabitation: married people are more likely to live apart from their spouse when they work in higher-mobility occupations. Panel A of Table 1 shows the proportion of married people in the Census sample who lived apart from their spouse at the time of the survey, for classes defined by age and occupational mobility. Consistent with the results from previous research using Census data (Rindfuss and Stephen, 1990), the results in Table 1 indicate that younger workers are more likely than older workers to live apart from their spouse. Moving beyond the results from previous research, the results in Table 1 also indicate that workers in higher-mobility occupations are more likely than workers in lower-mobility occupations to live apart. For four of the six age groups in Table 1, the prevalence of non-cohabitation increases monotonically with occupational mobility; for all six age groups, the prevalence is lower among workers in low-mobility occupations than workers in either middle- or high-mobility occupations.

Results from the exploratory analysis also suggest that, among college-educated workers, higher levels of educational attainment are associated with greater probabilities of committed non-cohabitation. Panel B of Table 1 shows the proportion of married people who lived apart from their spouse at the time of the Census, for classes defined by age and educational attainment. The results in Panel B are qualitatively similar to those in Panel A: younger people are more likely than older people to live apart, and the prevalence of non-cohabitation increases monotonically with education for three of six age groups. In addition, the results in Panel B suggest that committed non-cohabitation is especially prevalent among workers with doctoral degrees. Among workers age 25 to 29 with doctoral degrees, more than 7 percent lived apart from their spouse at the time of the Census; among workers in older age groups, no less than 2 percent lived apart.

The completed paper will replicate the continuous measure of occupational mobility from McKinnish (2008) and the measure of occupational concentration from Benson (2011). I will use discrete-choice regression models to assess the empirical association between each of these measures and the probability that a married, college-educated worker lives apart from his or her spouse. The regression models will allow me to assess the unique contributions of occupational mobility, occupational concentration, and educational attainment to the probability of living apart, controlling for a range of demographic characteristics. I expect to find, as the results in Table 1 suggest, that these proxies for dual-career location constraints are positively associated with the probability of committed non-cohabitation.

This paper highlights a non-traditional family arrangement in keeping with

Table 1: Proportion of married people living in household without spouse

Panel A				
Age group	Occupational mobility			
	Low	Middle	High	
25-29	0.019	0.037	0.056	
30-34	0.013	0.022	0.032	
35-39	0.011	0.018	0.022	
40-44	0.013	0.017	0.016	
45-49	0.012	0.017	0.015	
50-54	0.013	0.019	0.022	
N	185,610	778,640	84,779	
Panel B				
Age group	Highest degree			
	College	Master's	Professional	Doctoral
25-29	0.031	0.042	0.052	0.077
30-34	0.019	0.024	0.030	0.049
35-39	0.015	0.018	0.022	0.036
40-44	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.028
45-49	0.016	0.015	0.016	0.028
50-54	0.017	0.018	0.017	0.027
N	681,204	248,532	84,165	35,128

Notes: Sample includes observations from the 2000 Census 5-Percent Sample who were married, college-educated, working in civilian occupations, and between the ages for 25 and 54. High- and low-mobility occupations are identified in McKinnish (2008). High-mobility occupations are occupations in which between 26 and 39 percent of college-educated workers migrated in the past five years; low-mobility occupations are occupations in which between 7 and 14 percent of college-educated workers migrated. Medium-mobility occupations are all other civilian occupations. A worker is coded as having migrated if the worker moved between metropolitan areas or, if not living in a metropolitan area, moved between PUMAs.

widespread changes in the relationship between families and labor markets. The past half century has witnessed a historic increase in women's labor force participation and a concomitant increase in the proportion of families who diverge from the traditional, gendered breadwinner-caretaker model. Among these non-traditional families are a growing number that extend across multiple households for reasons such as divorce, non-marital childbearing, incarceration, transnational migration, and the voluntary maintenance by couples of separate households in a single location (Cherlin, 2010). Committed non-cohabitation, like these other arrangements, challenges longstanding assumptions about what it means to be a family and points for a growing need for social and demographic researchers to document cross-household kinship ties.

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