Satisfied Movers Revisited

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# Quits and Ladders: Mechanisms for Improving Outcomes?

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#### Purpose:

This study compares internal and external job mobility (quits and promotions) as mechanisms for improving outcomes.

#### Design/methodology/approach:

The article uses the British Household Panel Survey. It estimates the effects of quits and promotions using linear fixed-effects methods for the core workforce.

#### Findings:

Quits and promotions are distinctly different mechanisms for improving outcomes. External quits improve subjective outcomes, but have no effect on earnings growth. Internal promotions bring earnings growth but have smaller effects on subjective outcomes. The findings shed light on recent debates over what drives “voluntary” mobility; internal mobility may be driven by “skill acquisition”, while external mobility may act as a “sorting mechanism” for conditions and job-fit.

#### Practical implications:

The promises of highly mobile labour markets should be treated with scepticism. The growth of “boundaryless careers” may act as a release valve for poor working conditions and poor job-fit.

#### Originality/value:

Studies have overwhelmingly focused on the effects quitting, without explicitly comparing this mobility to promotions. This omission gives an incomplete picture of mobility. Our article shows how quits and promotions have distinctly different consequences for the core workforce, despite both mobility types being labelled “voluntary”. Focusing on one form of mobility tells only half the story of mobility and outcomes. Our analysis helps to understand inequality in earnings and working conditions; core workers who are able to pursue promotion are rewarded objectively; workers who quit for a new employer seek a better job-fit.

## Introduction

Job mobility is an important concept in earnings inequality research. A central assumption in the field states voluntary mobility is pushed by the promise of “better” positions elsewhere (Gesthuizen 2009; Le Grand and Tåhlin 2002; Kalleberg and Mastekaasa 2001). This assumption can be found in both the *job-match* and *job-search* approach to mobility types; both are widely used in labour market inequality research (Schmelzer 2016; Jovanovich 1979; Sorensen 197x; Burdett 197x). However, empirical studies of voluntary mobility tend to focus on external mobility alone, ignoring the effects of promotion (Le Grand Tahlin; Kalleberg and Maastekaasa). In these studies authors treat promotions as a form of *immobility*, this approach offers an incomplete picture of mobility types.

The topic of job mobility is underdeveloped in two ways. First, researchers have tended to focus more on the likelihood of mobility than on its consequences (Steenackers 2016; Hachen Jr 1990; Hachen Jr 1992). Second, when exploring the consequences of mobility, authors focus on the impact of quits, and ignore the impact of promotions (Kronberg 2013; Kronberg 2014; Ruiz 2004).

This article compares the effects of internal and external job mobility for the core workforce. Do these mobility types have similar effects, do they carry similar rewards for workers? Beyond this, we estimate mobility’s impact on subjective and objective outcomes, in an effort to capture its effects on earnings-growth and job-fit. This approach is informed by recent debates regarding the motivations behind job mobility (Kalleberg and Maou 2018; Steenackers 2016). Is mobility used to correct the “fit” between an employee and her working conditions, or is mobility used to correct earnings?

We use the British Household Panel Survey as a representative sample of British workers. Our approach has three strengths. First, we use explicit measures of quits and promotions. A review of the literature shows, authors often sample and operationalise mobile workers in complex ways some of which may not be valid (Steenacker 2016; Kalleberg and Mastekaasa; Keith and Williams). Second, we consider outcomes other than objective pay. By including subjective outcomes we capture trade-offs made by workers who change jobs within and between firms (Latzke et al 2012; Dwyer 2004; Kalleberg and Mastekaasa 2001). Third, we accept recent suggestions and use longitudinal data. In this way we explore the effects of moving positions rather than comparing movers to non-movers (Reichelt and Abraham 2017; Cha 2014; Ruiz 2004).

Two findings are offered. First, voluntary mobility is common; quits and promotions are equally likely and are the dominant form of mobility among core workers. Second, internal and external mobility are distinctly different mechanisms with separate effects on outcomes. Internal mobility has the strongest effect on earnings growth, while external mobility has the strongest effect on subjective feelings about work. Crucially, there is no evidence that quits can act as a substitute for promotions. Instead, British workers may be using external mobility to correct job-fit, instead of attainment as it is described in the literature. In this way, “exit strategies” improve feelings about work; while “loyalty strategies” move workers’ careers forward (Hirschman 1982).

The article is structured as follows; section one summarises the theoretical literature, and introduces a key assumption. Section two summarises the empirical literature and introduces three hypotheses. Section three presents our methodology and approach, while section four presents our results. A brief discussion concludes.

## Theoretical framework

Workers are assumed to seek the highest level of compensation possible (Sorensen 1975; Sorensens 1978). Voluntary job mobility may be one strategy to achieve this, wether within firms (gesthuizen; Altahuser and Kalleber; Althauser) or between them (jovanovic; burdett; Keith and Williams).

In economics, job mobility is understood through two approaches; the *job-search* approach relies on two reservation wages, X and Y (where X<Y). Reservation wage X draws a worker into employment, while reservation wage Y draws a worker to a new position. Mobility between positions can only occur if workers see financial gains; *“An employed worker who is looking for another job will accept any offer received with a wage greater than his current wage”* (Burdett 1970; p212). Here, mobility is driven by the promise of higher wages, which results in workers pursuing *wage quits*. The *job-mismatch* approach (Jovanovic 1979) sees mobility as stemming from a mismatch between a worker’s skills and her earnings or conditions. Since work is essentially an “experience good”, workers take time to evaluate whether their productivity fits with their compensation (Ruiz). If there a mismatch exists, workers correct this by pursuing new positions (Sorensen 1970; Jovanovic 1970). In this approach too, mobility is assumed the best mechanism to improve worker outcomes, which can be either earnings or conditions.

Sociology also sees mobility as a mechanism which moves workers to “better” jobs. Sørensen (1975: p460) suggests *“A person may be assumed to shift jobs voluntarily if he can obtain a better job”*; while Hachen (1990: p 320) claims *“… in industrial societies, individual attainment… is in large part a function of job changes”*. Since rewards are assumed specific to positions in a labour market, only a change in positions can lead to a change in rewards, or *“different people in the same job will obtain the same rewards… the same person will obtain different rewards in different jobs”* (Aage B Sørensen 1977: p967).

Few of the theories above, especially those in sociology, differentiate between quits and promotions. Most authors only suggest a relationship between a given position and the next position; the channels which secure the second position are irrelevant. Thus, the theories above can easily apply to internal promotions as well as external quits. Despite this, the literature around job mobility focuses heavily on external changes to new employers. Invaraibly, these artciles frame quitting as a strategy to improve outcomes. Whats more, among the few papers which *have* compared internal and external mobility; there is concensus that mobility types lead workers to different outcomes, and at least some evidence that internal mobility yields greater gains than external mobility. We summarise these below.

## Voluntary mobility to “better” positions

Mobility’s consequences are somewhat understudied. Traditionally, authors have focused more on predicting mobility than its effects (Steenacker 2016; Fuller 2008; Pavlopoulos et al. 2007; Ruiz 2004; Le Grand and Tåhlin 2002). Among existing studies, conclusions on the effects of mobility differ depending on whether internal promotions are included. In order to illustrate the point, we split the literature into two camps; first, studies where authors estimate the impact of external quits alone; second, studies which compare and contrast the effects of internal and external mobility. Studies which estimate the effect of quitting, frame quits as mechanisms for improving most outcomes. Studies which compare and contrast internal and external mobility hold different conclusions. Here, internal mobility yields higher objective returns, but lower subjective returns. At the very least, internal and external mobility yield different outcomes for workers, which suggests two separate mechanisms for workers to use (Kalleberg and Mastekaasa 2001; Gesthuizen and Dagevos 2008; Dwyer 2004). A brief summary follows.

### External mobility

Generally, authors find a positive relationship between external mobility and outcomes. Whether these are subjective (Sallaz 2017; Kalleberg and Mastekaasa 2001) or objective (Kronberg 2013; Kronberg 2014; Cha 2014; Reichelt and Abraham 2017; Ruiz et al 2004), workers who quit tend to move to more favourable positions; even when remaining in a similar occupation (Le Grand and Tåhlin 2002). When workers report worse outcomes after a move, these tend to be framed as concessions for greater gains in other outcomes. For example, voluntary downward mobility in the US has lead many workers to lower paying positions with greater opportunities or conditions (Sallaz 2017; Dwyer 2004).

In terms of objective pay, workers who quit move to higher paying positions (Kronberg 2014; Kronberg 2013; Schmelzer 2012; Ruiz et al. Keith and Williams 197x). The effect is also significant over the long-term, and is increasing for some workers (Latzke et al. 2016; Kronberg 2014). Even when models correct for individual heterogeneity (where certain workers are more likely to quit than others), “economic” quits lead to better paid positions with new employers (Fuller 2008; Keith and Williams).

There are some caveats to the effect. First, Latzke et al. (2016) and Schmelzer (2016; 2012; 2010) find that the benefits of external mobility depend largely on direct external mobility, where workers avoid unemployment and move from one position directly to another. Successful transitions from one job to another require workers to search for opportunities *on the job*. Second, there are significant differences between workers in the mobility-outcomes relationship. The positive effect of quitting may be mitigated by worker characteristics, where men benefit from mobility more than women, and white workers gain from mobility more than black workers (kronberg 2014; kronberg 2013). However worker differences are not always replicated in other studies, and generally authors agree that core workers tend to benefit from external mobility (Ruiz et al. 2004; Cha 2012; Fuller 2008).

In terms of subjective or “soft” outcomes, external mobility also leads to better positions. Sallaz (2017) finds that call centre workers with poor conditions see quitting as a strategy to improve these, even when moving to lower paid positions. Here, workers are motivated to leave “dead-end” jobs and are willing to accept less money for better opportunities. Dwyer (2004) too argues that downward wage mobility is an explicit strategy to improve conditions with new employers. In both examples, workers trade pay for better “soft outcomes”, a strategy which goes against *job-search* approach, but fits with the *job-matching* approach. Latzke et al find that external quits to a new employer also have a significant effect on satisfaction with work, and that the effect has remained strong over time.

None of the authors above consider internal mobility or promotions as a means to improve outcomes, and so they take a limited view of “voluntary” mobility. Despite a decline in tenure and career opportunities (Cappelli Jacoby), internal careers are the main hope for the majority of the core workforce (Riggotti). It is also the *“most desired type of job mobility, because promotions increase status, esteem, responsibilities, and financial rewards”* (Ng et al 2007: p365). How does this mobility type compare with external mobility?

One key reason for its omission may be related to data. Both Fuller (2008) and Keith and McWilliams (1995) sample young workers from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, where mobility is defined as a split with the firm for family, involuntary, and “other” reasons. None of these categories consider internal mobility. In Germany too, certain mobility captured by the German Socio-Economic Panel may be flawed (Kattenbach et al. 2014), forcing Reichelt and Abraham (2017) to use alternative data, and Schmelzer (2010) to drop internal mobility entirely. Thus, finding data on internal promotions and external job quits is challenging. Despite this, when internal promotions are included into predictive models, significant differences emerge between estimates.

### Internal and external mobility patterns

Studies comparing the consequences of quits and promotions are rarer than the above. However, when authors compare and contrast these mobilities they tend to highlight three wrinkles. First, internal mobility presents stronger and more significant earnings growth than external mobility (le grand tahlin; gesthuizen dagevos). Second, external mobility presents stronger and more significant effects on subjective outcomes than internal mobility (Gesthuizen 2008 2009). Lastly, internal mobility is associated with a mix of positive and negative consequences (Lup 2017, Rigotti. 2007). In short, if workers want to improve outcomes, they may have to consider which outcomes are in need of attention before committing to a mobility type.

When compared, internal promotions yield greater and more significant earnings growth than external job quits (Le Grand and Tåhlin 2002; pavlopoulous; gesthuizen and dagevos). In Sweden Le Grand and Tahlin (2002) compare internal and external mobility, controlling for a variety of biases. They find internal promotion has the strongest effect on earnings, although external movement has a premium too. The effect is also “pure”, in that it remains when controlling for occupations. In the Netherlands Gesthuizen and Dagevos (2008) show internal promotion has the strongest effect on both earnings and socio-economic status. As before, external mobility also holds a premium for both outcomes, but these are weaker and less significant. One caveat to the effect, is that it may rely on a labour market’s institutional setting. Pavlopoulos et al (2007) analyse panel data from the UK and Germany. Results from Britain confirm Le Grand and Tahlin’s (2006) results, internal mobility has the strongest effect on British workers’ earnings. Howeveer, results from Germany are the reverse; external mobility has the strongest effect on German workers’ earnings. Generally, when authors compare internal and external mobility, it is internal mobility that rewards objective outcomes best.

Elsewhere authors argue that external mobility has the stronger effect on subjective feeelings about work, when compared to internal mobility (Gesthuizen 2008; 2009). In the Netherlands, Gesthuizen (2009) finds external mobility improves several subjective outcomes, while internal mobility has a weak effect on these. Moving to a new employer improves workers evaluation of their job fit, their satisfaction with wages, and their satisfaction with hours. Gesthuizen and Dagevos (2008) also find that external mobility has the strongest effect on subjective feelings about work using several measures of satisfaction. These papers suggest that subjective feelings about work and the mismatch between a workers expectations and working conditions, drive mobility.

Lastly, the two sets of findigs above make sense when the full effect of promotions are considered. Typically, respondents who experience promotion report a mix of positive and negative outcomes (Lup, Rigotti). In the UK Lup (2018) finds that women who experience promotions, often report lower working conditions after the transition. In Germany Rigotti (2012) find that upward career transitions are associated with both positive and negative outcomes, with higher career satisfaction being balanced with increased strain on employees. It makes sense that promotions would yield stronger earnings growth while having negative effects on some subjective outcomes. Here, workers transition to new positions which have new responsibilities and pressures. However, these pressures are often greater than the objective rewards and resources given to those promoted. Thus internal mobility moves workers to “better” jobs in some outcomes, but leads to compromises in others.

Overall the paper above challenge the idea that job mobility is a utilitarian process, which brings workers to “better” positions. From the review, we suggest two conclusions; first, there is a lack of studies which consider the impact of both quits and promotions. Second, there is a lack of studies which use outcomes other than pay. With this in mind, we propose three hypotheses:

##### Hypothesis 1: Internal and external mobility have significantly different effects on outcomes

##### Hypothesis 2: External mobility will bring greater subjective satisfaction than internal mobility

##### Hypothesis 3: Internal mobility will bring greater earnings growth than external mobility

## Methodology

The general approach of the paper can be summarised as follows. We sample nine rounds of the BHPS covering the pre-crisis period (2000-2008). Using the sample we draw out subjective and objective measures of reward, a number of controls, and a measure of job mobility. We also restrict the sample to a semi-balanced panel, allowing respondents to miss only a single year in the 2000-2008 period. We first estimate the effect of job mobility on subjective outcomes using fixed-effects linear regression. We then compare the estimates for internal and external mobility using an f-test. We carry out the same estimation for objective outcomes, and discuss the results.

### Sample

The British Household Panel Survey is a longitudinal study of UK respondents (Taylor et al., 1993). The data was collected at the household level between 1991 and 2008, and contains detailed work histories, socio-economic measures, and measures of work reward. It is routinely used to represent the wider British workforce (Pavlopoulos et al., 2014), and is particularly useful for studies of job mobility since it operationalises both internal and external mobility types.

The sample used through the article is made up of; observations from respondents missing no more than one wave between 2000 and 2008; observations where respondents are employed at each interview and are not in self-employment, inactivity, or education; and observations where respondents have no missing job history information for a given survey year. The final data shape takes the form of a semi-balanced, person-year file, which ignores households and focuses on individual responses. It is made up of 3,782 respondents and 32,560 person-year observations. Although authors argue that unbalanced panels do not hinder multilevel estimation techniques (Gelman and Hill, 2006), we use a semi-balanced panel for theoretical reasons, avoiding respondents who are not part of the core workforce, and are prone to periods of unemployment.

### Variables

This section outlines the variables used in estiamtion. For clarity, we break these down into three cateogries; measures of job mobility, control measures, and outcomes. We discuss each in turn. Two file-sets contain the variables used for estimation, the individual response files “INDRESP”, and the individual job history files “JOBHIST”. Individual response files measure the status of respondents in a given survey year. They contain all outcomes used in estimation and most of the controls. The job history files measure job mobility and changes in job spell for a given year. These take the form of job-spells which are nested in individual responses, rather than observations nested in individuals. For the purpose of this paper, we consider only the most recent spell in a given respondent’s work history file. Brief, earlier, spells (lasting less than a year) represent economic turbulence rather than clear transitions to new positions. As a result, these are not representative of career transitions as they appear in the literature. Further, although previous authors often control for unemployment, this is not the aim of this article, and so these periods are ignored. In short, respondents are permitted brief periods of unemployment when changing positions, although these are relatively rare.

#### Job Mobility

Each job history file contains spell data for the last 12 months of a respondent’s career. Respondents recount each spell of employment, from their most recent, working backwards. Respondents who work in the same job, with the same employer, describe “spell 0” and have only one entry in the job history file. Of those who change spell, it’s possible to discern between internal and external changes (JHSTAT). It is also possible to discern between voluntary and involuntary changes (JHSTPY). Those who list a “promotion” or a move to a “better job” are said to move for voluntary reasons. Those who move due to “dismissal”, “redundancy”, or “temporary contracts” are said to move for involuntary reasons. The purpose of the article is to estimate the effect of voluntary mobility, but is important to control for involuntary events also, which likely have an effect on outcomes (Keith and McWilliams, 1995, Sørensen, 1975). Respondents who change positions for “other” reasons are controlled for in a category marked “other”; these estimates are not relevant to the analysis and are ignored, although they feature in the models below.

#### Outcomes

Previous studies estimating the consequences of mobility typically focus on pay. While we include the measure here (paygu), the literature notes “jobs may be characterized by the economic, social and psychological rewards they provide incumbents” (Sørensen 1977: p967). With this in mind, focusing on economic consequences alone would offer an incomplete picture of mobility. For this reason, we consider three subjective outcomes, related to pay, hours, and the work itself (jobsat2, jobsat6, and jobsat7). Beyond this, authors routinely show the impact of mobility on working time and working hours. We use weekly working hours as an outcome to test the effect mobility has on working conditions.

#### Controls

Measuring the impact of mobility on outcomes without controls would not give a “true” effect. This is especially true for fixed effects linear estimation which is susceptible to “ommitted variable bias” (Longhi and Nandi, 2014, Wooldridge, 2015). Previous authors cite the importance of controlling for industry and occupation when predicting the effect of mobility (Le Grand and Tåhlin, 2002). Others cite the importance of age and the number of children in the home, which are strong predictors of earnings (Cha, 2014, Keith and McWilliams, 1997, Fuller, 2008). Contract type, and the size of the firm are standard controls for the economic sector (Schmelzer, 2010; Steenacker 2016). Lastly, the survey year, the country’s unemployment rate, and the rate of economic growth are included in an effort to control for macro changes which may affect wages and subjective evaluations of work (Gesthuizen 2009).

#### Estimation

Voluntary mobility, of either type, is not a random event. Part of the reason several articles report strong and significant estimates, between mobility and outcomes, are due to fundamental differences between mobile and immobile workers (individual heterogeneity). Since worker characteristics play a part in deciding who quits and who is promoted, we remove their influence from the estimation process using fixed-effects estimation (Allison, 2009, Longhi and Nandi, 2014).

The within-transformation, or fixed-effect, removes all unobserved individual heterogeneity from the model’s estimates by subtracting each term from its cluster mean. Wooldridge (2014:p 485) refers to this process as “time demeaning”, claiming *“…any explanatory variable that is constant over time for all [individuals] gets swept away by the fixed effects transformation”*. In this approach, all time invariant measures, both observed and unobserved, are dropped from the estimates. The method is particularly suited to two authors mentioned above. Sørensen (1977) argues that worker resources are fixed from the moment they enter the labour market. Thus, the change in outcomes resulting from mobility is the effect of respondents “closing the gap” between resources and attainment. Jovanovic (1979) too sees mobility as stemming from a job-mismatch, and assumes that fixed worker resources have little to do with mobility. Since all of the proposed outcomes are linear, we use linear fixed-effects estimation throughout.

Two limitations of this method should be noted. First, fixed-effects estimation provides unbiased estimates for mobility. However, the method is inefficient and relies on variance within clusters alone, discarding between cluster differences which are “contaminated” by unobserved subject-specific characteristics (Longhi and Nandi, 2014, Allison, 2009). By focusing on fixed-effects estimates, we trade variation between workers for unbiased estimates of the effects of mobility. Fixed-effects estimates produce larger standard errors, wider confidence intervals, and larger p-values. For this reason, we treat estimates with p-values of less than 0.1 as statistically significant. Second, fixed effects estimates are susceptible to omitted variable bias. If models omit crucial time-variant variables, other measures which correlate with the effect will produce significant results. However, the models below already consider a wide range of explanations for inequality in outcomes, including both changes in the occupation and industry of respondents. On average, the models presented here are more conservative than those of other authors.

## Results

Table 1 lists the frequency of mobility within the sample. Here, we present the commonality of voluntary mobility first, before checking the commonality of quits and promotions. The figures are split in three ways; overall, between, and within respondents. Regarding observations alone, most of the UK’s mobility is “voluntary”, either to a new employer, or to a new position with the same employer (column 1). Thinking of mobility between respondents (column 2), 33% of respondents quit voluntarily at least once during the panel; 30% of respondents took a promotion at least once during the panel. Regarding mobility for the average respondent (column 3), both types of voluntary mobility are more common over the 9 wave period than other mobility types. Together, the figures suggest *many British workers move often for voluntary reasons*. We now consider the key question of the analysis, what do workers get from this mobility?

[TABLE 1 HERE]

### Mobility and subjective outcomes

The results of three fixed-effects regression models are listed below. Here, we focus on three subjective outcomes; satisfaction with work (1), satisfaction with pay (2), and satisfaction with hours (3). For clarity, we omit the estimates for “other” mobility types, which are controlled for, but are not relevant to our wider argument. Specifically, we are interested in whether quits and promotions have significantly different effects on these outcomes (hypothesis 1), and whether quits have a stronger effect than promotions (hypothesis 2).

[TABLE 2 HERE]

There is a clear distinction between voluntary and involuntary mobility in each model. Voluntary mobility leads workers to subjectively better positions while involuntary mobility has no effect. This is consistent with the *job-matching* approach discussed above (Jovavich; Kalleberg and Maouw). However, there are also significant differences between quits and promotions.

Begining with satisfaction with work (model 1), both quits and promotions lead workers to subjectively better positions. However, an F-test reveals that quits have a stronger effect on the outcome than promotions (F(1, 3723)= 25.54, p >F = 0.000). Workers who leave an employer find more satisfying positions than those who take a promotion with the same employer. A similar result emerges for satisfaction with pay (model 2), both quits and promotions lead workers to subjectively better paid positions. Again, an F-test shows that quits have a stronger effect than promotions (F(1, 3723) = 18.21, p > F = 0.000). Respondents who leave an employer find more satisfying positions than respondents who take promotions. Lastly, satisfaction with time (model 3) is affected in the same way as the previous outcomes. Both quits and promotions lead workers to more satisfying positions. However, an F-test shows that those who quit see a larger effect than those taking a promotion (F(1, 3723) = 10.32, p > F= 0.001). This too suggests that quitting has a stronger effect on subjective satisfaction, than taking a promotion with the same employer.

Using the findings above, we confirm hypothesis 1; internal and external mobility have a significantly different effect on outcomes. What is more, we confirm hypothesis 2; external mobility has a stronger effect on subjective outcomes than internal mobility. Quitting may be driven by job-mismatch instead of attainment as described in the literature. Workers who quit a firm may be less interested in career progress, and more interested in leaving poor conditions and a poor job-fi behind.

It’s worth briefly considering a second explanation. Sørensen (1977) suggests that since working conditions vary more between firms than within them, workers are limited in the extent they can improve outcomes in the same firm. “Opportunity structures” within the firm dictate the extent to which workers can close the gap between their rewards and their resources. If such opportunity structures exist, a set of objective outcomes will respond to mobility in the same way as above; with external mobility yielding strong effects, and internal mobility yielding weaker effects. We keep this idea in mind while revisiting hypothesis 1 and testing hypothesis 3.

### Mobility and objective outcomes

The results of three fixed-effects regression models are listed below. Here, we focus on three subjective outcomes; satisfaction with work (1), satisfaction with pay (2), and satisfaction with hours (3). For clarity, we omit the estimates for “other” mobility types, which are controlled for, but are not relevant to our wider argument. Specifically, we are interested in whether quits and promotions have significantly different effects on these outcomes (hypothesis 1), and whether quits have a stronger effect than promotions (hypothesis 2).

The models in Table 3 are similar to those in Table 2, but estimate the effect of mobility on weekly hours worked (1) and log wages (2). Since mobility has a significant effect on both outcomes, we run the model for wages a second time, controlling for weekly hours worked. The results vary drastically from the previous estimates, and suggest internal mobility has the strongest effect on workers.

[TABLE 3 HERE]

The effects of voluntary mobility are less clear than before. Voluntary mobility appears to have an effect on hours and pay, but only under certain circumstances. Internal mobility has the largest premium on pay without the corresponding rise in hours. External mobility has a positive effect on pay, but also has a corresponding effect on hours. While one mobility type rewards workers with higher pay, the other is a bargain over working time.

Starting with weekly working hours; voluntary mobility has mixed effects on hours. External mobility leads workers to positions with longer hours (model 1), and internal mobility leads workers to positions with fewer hours. External mobility may stem from bargains over working time or movement to a full-time position.

Considering gross monthly pay (model 2), voluntary mobility has only a minor effect. Those who change positions voluntarily (within or between firms) gain a 1% increase in pay. There is no difference between internal and external mobility. Although an increase in pay exists, workers may need to pursue several new positions over the course of a career before seeing a substantial change in pay.

Thinking of the two models together, the 1% increase in pay may be tied to the fact that workers who move externally must also work longer hours. This effect does not exist for those who move internally. With this in mind, we re-estimate the effect of mobility on pay, while controlling for weekly working hours (model 3). This eliminates the positive estimate for external mobility, but not internal mobility. Thus external mobility is tied to bargains over hours for similar rates of pay; while internal mobility is tied to higher paying positions in themselves. From the estimates above, we confirm hypothesis 1. Internal and external mobility types have different effects on worker outcomes. We also confirm hypothesis 3, internal mobility rewards workers best when outcomes are objective.

**The estimates in Table 3 cast doubt over the previous findings. Voluntary mobility alone does not have a positive effect on all outcomes. In fact, there are differences between internal and external mobility when it comes to pay and weekly working hours. Further, these differences are the exact opposite of those in Table 2. External mobility is a strategy which increases pay through increased hours, while internal mobility increases the rate of pay, or the worth, of workers. Respondents who quit work for a new employer appear move to similarly paid positions, with longer working hours. Respondents who take promotions experience the attainment described by Sørensen (1977). For this reason, I accept hypothesis 3. Internal and external mobility, affect outcome type differently.**

## Discussion

The idea that workers move to better positions when voluntarily changing jobs, does not emerge (Kalleberg and Mastekaasa, 2001). Neither does the idea that opportunity structures provide large or small premiums within and between firms (Sørensen and Tuma, 1978). Instead internal and external mobility are distinctly different mechanisms, with different forms of bargaining. Internal mobility leads workers to take marginally better conditions in exchange for higher pay, and external mobility leads workers to positions with better conditions without increased pay. Despite authors citing the death of internal labour markets, it seems that the reward systems found in internal structures do not appear in external structures (Cappelli, 1999, Jacoby, 1999).

The models above consistently show the pattern of bargaining between positions. This is most obvious when comparing the effect of mobility on subjective and objective measures of the same outcome. For example, workers who quit move to positions with similar pay but higher satisfaction with pay. The satisfaction that comes with mobility may not be the product of increased pay and reduced hours, but rather a renegotiation of the worker’s role. The increased satisfaction which follows a quit comes from a renegotiation of responsibility and conditions which better align with the respondent’s pay. This strongly suggests that mobility is driven by a need to bargain for better conditions, than a need to reach attainment as described in the literature.

Attainment theory proposed by Sørensen (1975, 1977, 1978) fails to account for two findings, although some are noted by efficiency wage theory (Akerlof and Yellen, 1986) and internal labour market theory (Althauser, 1989, Althauser and Kalleberg, 1981). First, there is a distinct difference between internal and external mobility in terms of their effects on outcomes. External mobility improves subjective outcomes best, while internal mobility improves actual pay without increasing hours. Second, tied to the first point, there is a clear difference between mobility’s effect on subjective and objective outcomes. Attainment theory expects “psychological” rewards to work in the same way as “economic” rewards. The theory of attainment cannot account for mobility driven by precarity and mismatch, where workers try to adjust for poor working conditions for similar rates of pay. From the output, it seems job-mismatch drives external mobility as workers search for better conditions and an internal structure to commit to, one that may eventually offer attainment or progress in the form of internal promotion.

The suggestion that workers should embrace economic turbulence, and multi-employer careers in general, should be treated with scepticism; at least in the UK (Brown et al., 2008, OECD, 2010). This suggestion conflates the interests of employers and the interests of workers as the same. Workers may use external mobility to find firm internal labour markets to commit to, which will eventually grant them the chance to climb a career ladder. However, this is not the promise offered by advocates of mobile labour markets (Brown et al., 2008, OECD, 2010). Generally, sociologists and economists should continue asking what workers get out of mobility.