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The importance of  
geographical scale in  
explaining return migration  
of young adults to the  
parental home and to the  
parental neighbourhood

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper makes two original contributions to research on the return migration of young adults to the parental home. First it argues that the numerical significance and complexity of return moves by young people to their parental home (boomeranging) is greater than has previously been recognised. Secondly we show that the determinants and associates of return migration vary significantly when analysed at two different geographical scales – the parental home and the parental neighbourhood area. We compare boomerang mobility behaviour in Sweden to work undertaken previously in the United Kingdom. By using longitudinal data (1986 to 2009) on four cohorts of young adults we find that boomeranging to parents' home is an increasing mobility behaviour in Sweden associated with economic vulnerability, such as leaving higher education or entering unemployment, and partnership dissolution. While returning to parents' home can offer financial support in times of life course reversal, we found gender differences indicating a larger independence among young women than men. Returning to the parental neighbourhood is found to be a much wider phenomenon than return to co-residence with parents, involving migration decisions of more economically independent young adults.

## **KEYWORDS**

Boomerang mobility; life course; young adults; longitudinal; returning home.

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THE PARENTAL HOME AND TO THE PARENTAL  
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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Returning to the parental home is a significant mobility behaviour amongst young adults and it is on the increase. Its conceptual significance is threefold. First, it matters to those studying housing markets and so-called housing careers (Arundel and Ronald 2015). Second, it is important to demographers interested in transitions to adulthood and changing patterns of household composition and family ties, and third it matters to researchers interested in the relationship between lifecourses and residential mobility trajectories (Berrington et al. 2013; Billari 2004; Coulter et al. 2016; Davanzo and Goldscheider 1990; Mulder and Wagner 2010).

Attention has rightly focussed on the return of young adults to the parental home because of concerns over the consequences that this move can have for child-parent relationships, the development of young people's identities at a sensitive stage in their lifecourse, and the implications for their subsequent re-launching into careers and becoming independent households once again (Sassler et al. 2008). Mobility researchers have, however, been slow to draw attention to the importance of parallel return mobilities involving young people choosing to return to their parental neighbourhood rather than their parental home. Such moves could be stimulated by very positive forces, such as the increased well-being that flowing from re-engaging in the social networks of their wider society of upbringing or a desire for a higher quality of life than they have experienced during their initial period away from 'home' for study or completion of an apprenticeship. It is therefore of interest to ask how boomeranging behaviour to the parental neighbour replicates or diverges from return moves to the parental address. While the latter may result from lack of housing and economic resources in an earlier stage of the life course, the former may be conditioned by a more independent economic position and may be more likely to take place at older ages.

This paper addresses this agenda by introducing a research design that seeks to replicate aspects of the trail-blazing study of Stone et al. (2014) of the boomerang behaviour of young adults in the UK, by asking 'do young Swedes boomerang?' It sets six hypotheses that allow an argument to be developed about the generalizability of previous research, linking life transitions and lifecourse reversals to boomerang

behaviour. It then adds the key additional element of comparing boomerang moves made by those returning to the parental neighbourhood, with Swedes returning to their parental home.

## **2. WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE BOOMERANG?**

The term boomeranging has been used increasingly widely to refer to the mobility of young people moving to and from their parental homes (Kaplan 2009; Stone et al. 2014; Taylor et al. 2013). It has also been applied in other contexts such as in relation to transnational mobility involving frequent to and fro movements between two domiciles in different countries (Baldasser and Merla 2013; Ong 1991). The former usage is the one of interest in this paper since it arises from a fascination with how human mobilities have evolved over time in relation to changing demographic circumstances (Cooke 2011) and in particular in response to the uncertainty surrounding contemporary lifecourses.

Mobility by young adults between their parental home and other residences has always been associated with key transitions for education, entering work, marriage and family formation (Elder 1977; Gee et al. 2003; Niodomysl and Amcoff 2011; Nilsson and Strandh 2001). The second demographic transition (van de Kaa 2004), however, has encouraged demographic researchers to move away from linear notions (Urry 2007) of youth mobility as part of a strongly sequenced set of lifecourse transitions, and to recognize instead the increasing complexity of mobility trajectories associated with residential change in the early years of adulthood. Transitions to adulthood, as Billari and Liefbroer (2010, 60) have noted, have become 'late, protracted and complex'. The complexities have included many lifecourse 'reversals' stimulated by the termination of the very processes that may initially have encouraged young people to leave 'home'. Thus, leaving education without secure employment or increased tendencies towards partnership dissolution (Coulter et al. 2016; Feijten and Mulder 2002; South and Lei 2015) appear to have become associated with return moves by young adults to their parental home. Moreover, changes in the roles and identities of western young people have affected their residential behaviour in relation to their parents (Sassler et al. 2008) within the context of trends towards an ever-more individualistic society (Laesthaege 2010; Oppenheimer 2004). But as maintained by Bengtson (2001), intergenerational family ties remain important, even in less

familistic countries. And several studies have demonstrated the role of family ties for adult children's residential choice, for instance in the Netherlands (Smits 2010) and in Sweden (Pettersson and Malmberg 2009).

Analysing boomerang behaviour essentially means studying the nature of people's linked lives (Bailey 2009; Elder 1977), not simply within households but between generations and relatives in different households. However, to do this is methodologically difficult if based only on cross-sectional data or on retrospective surveys. The increasing availability of high quality longitudinal datasets however has transformed the potential to study the topic. Arguably the first pioneering study taking advantage of a large longitudinal dataset to examine linked lives and boomerang behaviour is that by Stone et al. (2014). They used the British Household Panel Survey and hypothesized that boomeranging behaviour would increase with the passage of time as a result of the emergence of increasingly fluid lifecourses; it would be especially associated on the one hand with the increasing number of young adults engaging in and leaving higher education, and on the other hand with partnership dissolution. Stone et al. confirmed that reverse turning points in an individual's lifecourse influenced the likelihood of young adults returning home, and they found that gender and parenthood were particularly critical in moderating mobility behaviour following partnership dissolution. In particular, they noted that in the UK men who experience partnership dissolution and who had a child were more likely to return home (Stone et al. 2014).

Stone et al.'s work stimulated other studies examining the generalisability of their work. Kleinepier et al. (2016), for example, recognise both the cultural specificity of the roles assigned to young adults and the important differences in views about relations with the parental home that is detected in ethnically differentiated households. In line with these ideas, Arundel and Ronald (2015) have asked whether more familistic societies such as those of southern Europe with rather different welfare regimes might experience very different propensities in terms of boomerang behaviour. One could also ask whether similar boomerang behaviour to that observed in the UK can be found in other social democratic societies such as Sweden. The choice of Sweden, the site of research in this paper, is problematized in more detail in the methods section, but it is worth noting here that even between

relatively close west and north European societies such as the UK and Sweden, there exist significant contextual differences, including expectations about leaving home to enrol in differently funded higher education systems, or in the expectations of the kind of housing careers that will be followed by young adults in different housing markets.

International comparisons reveal a lower average age for nest-leaving in Sweden than in most other European countries and with an earlier move from home for young women (Billari et al. 2001; Angelini et al. 2011). This indicates better housing and economic conditions for independent living for young Swedish adults. In contrast, Swedes tend to enter into higher education at higher ages than in many European countries and e.g. the portion of students under age 25 is lower than in for instance the UK (OECD 2016). Moreover, the age when Swedes establish themselves in the labour market has increased substantially over recent decades (Uusitalo 2011). The postponement of important life events may result from harsher conditions in the labour and housing market or alternatively from a wish to extend the transition to adulthood. For whatever reason, this trend may have an impact on the likelihood of returning to the parental home.

During the period investigated, the Swedish policy to increase the number of students and to decentralise higher education altered the preconditions of boomerang moves. The number of students in higher education in Sweden was twice as high in the early 2000s as in the late 1980s (Högskoleverket 2013). And due to this expansion, the average distances between the students and their parents increased in Sweden, despite the ambition to decentralise higher education (Chudnovskaya and Kolk 2015).

So far, empirical research has consistently examined boomerang behaviour in relation to return to the parental address of young adults. However, the complexity of transitions to adulthood that Billari and Liefbroer (2010) referred to include many other possible to and fro mobilities, where temporary 'return home' might not mean relocation to the parental address, but to the locality where parents live or the locality of a younger adult's upbringing. Such moves, while not offering the financial support experienced by those returning to live with their parents, provide the possibility of other support roles, such as grandparent provision of childcare for young working

parents and access to familiar social networks in the neighbourhood of origin. For others the end of higher education may simply be an opportunity to engage in return migration to a desired residential neighbourhood offering increased wellbeing across a spectrum of life domains (Nowok et al. 2013).

In this paper, we seize the opportunity to analyse the different geographical scales of boomerang behaviour, because of the value in terms of theory building that comes from differentiating the benefits of return to the parental address and from those associated with boomeranging to the parental neighbourhood. Put in a different way, it seems logical to suggest that for certain young adults, return to the parental neighbourhood without co-residence with parents, may offer increased social support and a raised sense of wellbeing, but will not be associated with the cost savings associated with living in the same house. Clearly boomerang behaviour of this kind will appeal to rather different demographic groups from those co-residing with parents.

Arising from this brief literature review, we arrive at six hypotheses.

First, we propose that in times of uncertain housing and labour market opportunities the changing mobilities, associated with the extended transition to adulthood and in some cases the increased fluidity of the life course, will be a key driver of increased boomerang behaviour. Thus:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). Boomerang mobility will increase with the passage of time.

Second, following Stone et al. (2014), we hypothesize that boomerang mobility involving return to the parental home will be associated with partnership dissolution, as found for instance by Smits (2010). We expect gender and parenthood status of young adults to operate selectively in boomerang behaviour because we anticipate that following dissolution of a partnership, more women will stay with children at the address previously occupied by a couple, as found in previous studies from the Netherlands and Sweden (Mulder and Wagner 2010; Mulder and Malmberg 2014). Thus:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). Amongst women who have experienced partnership dissolution mothers will be less likely to return to the parental home than childless women. Mothers will also be less likely to boomerang than fathers following dissolution of a partnership.

Third, we expect economic reversals in the lifecourse to trigger return mobility by young adults to their parental address. Thus:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). Leaving full-time higher education and/or becoming unemployed will be associated with return to the parental home.

Fourth, we assume that one of the major reasons for boomerang behaviour is the financial savings that can be achieved during economic setbacks in the lifecourse transitions of young adults. We therefore expect return to the parental address to be more attractive for young people whose parents are relatively better resourced/have a higher income, since this group will be more able to offer financial support to boomerangers. Thus:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). Boomerang mobility will be stronger by young adults moving to higher income parental homes.

Fifth we have argued that return to the parental neighbourhood also provides support, but a different kind of support from boomerang behaviour involving return to the parental residence of young people. Returning to the parental neighbourhood, but not the parental address, involves extra costs in providing independent housing. Thus:

Hypothesis (H5). Return by young adults to the parental neighbourhood will involve higher income and older movers than boomerang moves that end with the young person at the same address as their parents.

Following from hypothesis 5, since the constraints on boomeranging to the parental neighbourhood differ from those returning to the parental home, we would expect the gender selectivity to also differ because the moves are not necessarily

driven by lifecycle reversals associated with partnership dissolution and other setbacks. Thus:

Hypothesis (H6). Gender effects of boomeranging to the parental neighbourhood will differ from gender effects of return mobility to the parental home.

### **3. METHODOLOGY, DATA & MEASURES**

#### **3.1. DATA**

Data used in this study originates from the Linnaeus Database (Malmberg et al. 2010), based on micro-data from various administrative registers provided by Statistics Sweden. The database contains anonymized individual records of all residents in Sweden, with annually updated information on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics such as, sex, age, family status, education, occupation, income, coordinates for place of living on a 100-metre square resolution and multi-generational family relations. The longitudinal set-up of the data makes it possible to perform life-course analyses of relations between events and various conditions over time with high-resolution data. In contrast to using census or panel data, this register data captures the entire population on a yearly basis and the problem with e.g. nonresponses and measurement errors often occurring in surveys are therefore minor problems.

#### **3.1. POPULATION**

We have analysed the boomerang mobility behaviour over time (1986 to 2009) for four cohorts of young Swedish adults. All 19-year-old Swedish residents in 1986, 1991, 1996 and 2001 (born in 1967, 1972, 1977 and 1982) who at that time point had moved from their parental home were followed until their return to parental home or parental neighbourhood area, lost to follow up, or to the year 2009 which is the last year of observation in the database (in the study by Stone et al the last year was 2008). The Swedish longitudinal sample encompasses 542 860 young adults of whom 277 958 are men with 4 501 393 time-units of person-years and 264 902 are women with 4 724 887 person-years (see Table 1 for descriptive characteristics of these young adults).

We follow young adults from the age of 19 (not 20 as in the UK study by Stone et al. 2014 since this is the graduation age from post-secondary education, and also an age where the majority of young adults in Sweden have moved from the parental home. We do not have an upper age limit in the analysis, and with a dataset comprising of several cohorts this gives different follow-up periods. The 19-year-olds in 1986 can be followed to the age of 42 and those 19-year-old in 2001 reach the age of 27 in the analysis. This means that the share of individuals in the age group 35 to 42 only includes individuals from one cohort (born in 1967), but nevertheless the analysis is based on a total population, representing all young adults at target for the analysis, rather than a sample. Some would argue that it is problematic to include individuals up to age 42 as young adults, but we selected to do this in order to be able to examine cohort effects over the long run. Furthermore, the long time period makes it possible to analyse possible changes in boomerang mobility behaviour over historical time. To these young adults we extracted information on a number of demographic and socio-economic attributes from the database for the years 1986-2009, together with information on their mother's and/or father's' place of residence and income.

### **3.1. MEASURING THE DEPENDENT VARIABLES**

As the data used is geo-referenced at a residential level, it is possible to examine how boomerang mobility behaviour can be understood at different geographical scales. We therefore scrutinise if the analysed 'turning points' in young adults' life courses have the same relationship to return migration to the parental home as those returning to the parents' neighbourhood. Our analysis includes two dependent variables: the timing of returning to parental home and the timing of returning to parental neighbourhood area.

Where one lives (the home) is based on the place of residence on a 100-metre square resolution (100x100 metres). We define young adults living in their parental home as living in the same 100 metre square as their father and/or mother. The definition of returning to parental home, (boomeranging) is when the young adult moves to the same 100 metre square as their mother and/or father at one point in time

and where the place of residence one year before (t-1) was not in the same 100 metre square. Since a small number adult children may move to the same 100 metre square as the parent without moving into the household there is a minor overestimation of the boomerang moves in the Swedish data. The definition of moving back to the parents' neighbourhood is when the young adult moves to live within 5,000 metres of the individual's mother and/or father and where the place of residence one year before (t-1) was more than 5,000 metres away from the parents. The 5000-metre limited is chosen to include movers who end up within comfortable reach of their parents, alternative distances could have been chosen with some obvious advantages and disadvantages. To distinguish boomeranging to home neighbourhood from boomeranging to parental home we have excluded all young adults moving back to parental home in these analysis.

In our data an individual's place of residence is where you live on the last December each year. This means that we can only know if someone has moved once a year. If living shorter periods, for example some months in the parental home, it is not possible to capture this in the analysis. As you can only be registered at one residential place in Sweden, and since university students have strong incentives to register within the municipality where they study, this allows us to follow the vast majority of young adults who have made a move from home.

In this study, we focus on the moves by the young people towards their parents' home and home neighbourhood only. While parents' can choose to move and live closer to their adult children this has not been analysed in this study. It is also the first boomerang move after the age of 19 that is the focus of this study, we have therefore not controlled for how long young adults stay with their parents or in their neighbourhood area.

### **3.1. METHOD**

For our study of return moves we use event history analysis (Allison 1982; Singer and Willett 1993) and similar to the analysis of boomerang mobility behaviour in the United Kingdom (Stone et al. 2014) discrete time logistic regression was used to model the probability of return migration to parental home or neighbourhood at each

point in time as a function of life course transitions, demographic and socio-economic characteristics. To implement the event history analysis, we restructured the data into a person-year dataset. Thus we examined the impact on boomerang moves of time-varying covariates, such as employment or family status from year to year, and events such as ending university studies or becoming unemployed.

The logistic regression model for the estimates of boomeranging by person  $i$  in the year  $t$  is:

$$\log[P_{it}/(1 - P_{it})] = \alpha_t + \beta'x_{it}$$

where,  $\alpha_t$  ( $t = 1, 2, \dots$ ) is the constant term;  $x_{it}$  the explanatory variable; and  $\beta$  is the logistic regression coefficient.

The event (return migration) can only occur at discrete time points (years) and the transition from one discrete state to another can only occur once for each person, hence only the first return migration is included in the analysis. Once making a boomerang move, the young adult is no longer at risk of moving again in that direction, and is no longer observed.

All models were estimated separately for women and men to compare possible gender differences in determinants of boomerang mobility behaviour. First, we run a basic model (Model 1) containing control variables representing the young adult's individual socioeconomic and demographic characteristics and then we add the variables representing the analysed "turning points" (Model 2) to test our hypothesis.

While our method was selected to keep the analysis as close as possible to Stone et al (2014) in order to facilitate comparisons between the UK and Sweden, we acknowledge that the approach is also problematic in some respects. Being self-critical we acknowledge that combining into one group the non-mobile with others who move to places other than their parents' neighbourhood has a potentially confounding effect. It could be that the results for return to the parental neighbourhood simply reflect the overall migration behaviour among young adults. Clearly an alternative approach would have been to exclude young adults who move

somewhere else, but our expectation is that this would make little difference to the analysis and that the same variables would remain significant.

### **3.1. CONTROL VARIABLES**

As one focus in this study is to compare the boomerang mobility behaviour among young adults in Sweden to the mobility behaviour found by Stone et al. (2014) in the United Kingdom we use as similar definitions of variables as possible to be able to compare the results. Included in the analysis are a number of time-varying covariates (Table 1), as well as fixed variables, including *gender* and *being born* in Sweden. The age variable is categorised into *age-groups* for each year. The socio-economic variables include *educational experience*, *individual income* and *parental income* (mother and father respectively) each year. The annual income from work is deflated according to the value in the year 2009 of the Swedish kronor. The individual income is furthermore used as an indicator of socioeconomic position for the young adults and the parents, and is divided into four quartiles, with the lowest income in the first quartile each year. Income information is available for the selected young adults as well as their parents. *Educational experience* is categorised into in three levels by the individual's highest educational attainment each year; no post compulsory education, post compulsory education and Bachelor's degree or higher.

### **3.1. TURNING POINTS**

Following Stone et al. (2014) the variables parenthood status (*already a parent*), *change in economic activity* and *change in partnership status* represents events of 'turning points' in the individual's life course trajectory, assumed to have an effect on the risk of returning home. The parenthood status of the young adults is defined as a dummy variable each year, where 1 represents if the young adult is a parent at time  $t-1$ . The economic activity each year represent if the young adult is employed, unemployed or inactive on the labour market, or full-time student. Being employed is defined as having an annual income from work of at least 20 000 SEK at time  $t$  and not receiving study allowance, in order to exclude those who are not part of the workforce, e.g. students. If the individual has received study allowance and their income from work is less than 20 000 SEK at time  $t$  they are identified as full-time

students. A change in economic activity is categorised into eight categories; student to employed, student to unemployed, unemployed, employed to unemployed, new student, stable student, stable unemployed and stable employed (used as the reference category). A stable activity status refers to no change in activity between time  $t$  and  $t-1$ . To capture possible effects of partnership dynamics on the risk of returning home we define the young adults' partnership status each year as: new or stable partner<sup>1</sup>, dissolution and the reference category was 'consistently unpartnered'. A stable partnership or consistently unpartnered refers to no change in marital status between time  $t$  and  $t-1$ . To control for how gender and parenthood may have an effect on the relationship between partnership dissolution and returning home we also measure the interaction effects between a change in partnership status and parenthood status. Being married and not having children was the reference category. To more easily interpret these interaction effects, we have calculated the predicted probabilities of returning home to parent(s) by using the coefficients from the regression models. We also calculated the predicted probabilities for returning home by change in economic activity. To capture eventual changes in boomerang mobility over time we also controlled for interaction effects between time and age.

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<sup>1</sup> Having a partner refers to being married or having a registered partner. Cohabitation is not included in the analysis since the data available data does not provide information about cohabitation without children.

Variable	Category	% in Each Category		
		Female (n=4 501 393 person-years)	Male (n = 4 724 887 person-years)	Total (n=9 226 280 person-years)
<b>Returned Home</b>	Yes	1.62	1.76	1.69
<b>Sex</b>		48.8	51.2	100
<b>Age Group</b>	19 - 24	35.3	35.3	35.3
	25 - 29	26.8	26.8	26.8
	30 - 34	20.1	20.1	20.1
	35 - 42	17.9	17.9	17.9
<b>Educational Experience</b>	No postcompulsory	12.1	14.1	13.1
	Postcompulsory	54.8	58.4	56.6
	Bachelor's degree	33.2	27.4	30.2
<b>Individual Income</b>	Quartile 1	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Quartile 2	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Quartile 3	25.0	25.0	25.0
	Quartile 4	25.0	25.0	25.0
<b>Country of Birth</b>	Sweden	76.2	77.0	76.6
	Outside Sweden	23.9	23.0	23.4
<b>Change in economic activity</b>	Student to employed	6.5	5.3	5.9
	Student to unemployed	1.5	1.3	1.4
	Unemployed	3.8	2.9	3.3
	Employed to unemployed	3.8	2.5	3.1
	New student	4.6	3.0	3.8
	Stable student	19.2	14.8	16.9
	Stable unemployed	8.9	7.1	8.0
	Stable employed	51.7	63.3	57.6
<b>Change in partnership status</b>	New or stable partnered	26.2	18.4	22.2
	Dissolution	0.8	0.5	0.6
	Consistently unpartnered	73.1	81.1	77.2
<b>Already a parent</b>	Yes	37.9	25.7	31.7
<b>Parental income</b>				
<b>Income mother</b>	Quartile 1			26.9
	Quartile 2			25.9
	Quartile 3			24.3
	Quartile 4			23.0
<b>Income father</b>	Quartile 1			25.7
	Quartile 2			25.2
	Quartile 3			24.4
	Quartile 4			24.7

**Table 1:** Characteristics of young adults in the sample.

## 4. RESULTS

The starting point for this paper was the suggestion that a significant proportion of people in contemporary western societies engage in boomerang mobility behaviour (return to the parental home). It has been suggested that this type of mobility is in large part a response to life course transitions and in particular the increasing number of lifecourse reversals that are taking place (for example in living arrangements from partnered to single, from student to unemployed and from employed to unemployed). In Sweden, for the population aged 19 to 42, 1.7% of the population recorded a boomerang move of this kind between 1986 and 2009, involving a return to the same 100 metre square as their parent. The figure is higher (4.8%) where return migration is measured to the same neighbourhood, within 5 kilometres of a person's parental address. Later in the paper we will compare the differences of return to the parental home with return to the parental neighbourhood, but first it is important to analyse return home to the parental address.

Table 2 shows the pattern of return mobility in Sweden to a parent's home or to a residence within the same 100 metre square. The table records the probability of return by age and sex. It shows that the youngest women, aged 19 -24, are the most likely to return to their parental home and that they are significantly more likely to do so than men of the same age. Return rates drop with age, but the gender differential changes, since men of 25 and older are more likely to return than women.

Age Group	Men	Women
19 - 24***	0.024 (0.023, 0.024)	0.027 (0.027, 0.027)
25 - 29***	0.023 (0.023, 0.023)	0.017 (0.017, 0.018)
30 - 34***	0.010 (0.010, 0.011)	0.007 (0.007, 0.007)
35 +***	0.005 (0.00, 0.99)	0.003 (0.003, 0.003)

**Table 2:** Returning to parental home by age group and sex (100 m), Sweden, 1986-2009 (Percentage of cohort with 95 % Confidence intervals).

**Notes:** \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ : significant gender differences within age group.  
N=6 918 152 person-years.

Comparison with the results produced for the UK by Stone et al (2014) show that boomeranging is an increasing mobility behaviour also in Sweden. In the UK 2.2% returned to the parental home, while in Sweden the level of return for the overall population was a somewhat lower at 1.7%. The UK showed a similar downward

gradient in boomerang mobility in Sweden with age. There was however one interesting contrast between UK and Sweden in the descriptive statistics. In UK men under 21 years of age were more likely to go back to their parents than women in contrast to Sweden.

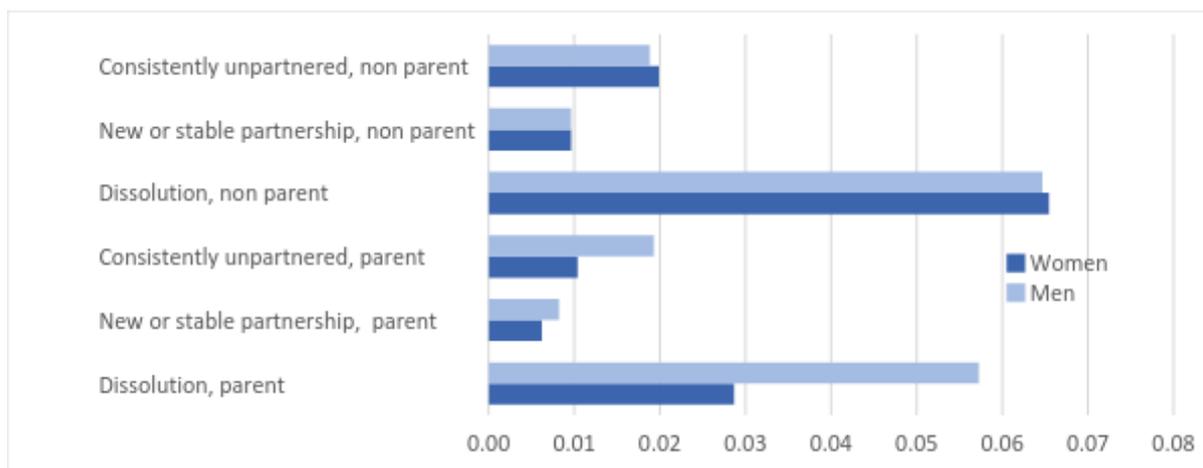
The regression coefficients for Model 1 (Table 3) confirm the downward gradient in boomerang behaviour with age. There is also evidence in an increase in return to the parental home over time, supporting the expected correlation between increased uncertainties on the housing and labour market as a key driver to boomerang mobility (H1). In the UK no significant trend was evident for men, while for women the effect was only evident for younger women in the most recent time period of Stone et al.'s (2014) study (although no significant effect is noted in their analysis for women of interactions between age, period and return). In Sweden although interaction effects between age, period and gender were complex, the dominant statistically significant trend evident in Table 3 is an increase in boomerang behaviour for both genders in 1994-2001 relative to the period 1986 to 1993 and a further strengthening of the effect between 2002 and 2009.

	Men		Women	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<b>Period (ref. 1986-1993)</b>				
1994-2001	0.198***	0.261***	0.135***	0.169***
2002-2009	0.289***	0.468***	0.323***	0.361***
<b>Age group (ref. 19-24)</b>				
25-29	0.028*	0.348***	-0.472***	-0.104***
30-34	-0.739***	-0.796***	-1.440***	-1.017***
35-42	-1.465***	-1.368***	-2.200***	-1.557***
<b>Education (ref. Post-secondary education)</b>				
Secondary education	-0.320***	-0.331***	-0.393***	-0.332***
Primary education	-0.021	-0.059***	-0.158***	-0.045**
<b>Individual income (ref. Quartile 1 lowest)</b>				
Quartile 2	-0.118***	-0.016	-0.155***	-0.082***
Quartile 3	-0.521***	-0.321***	-0.465***	-0.326***
Quartile 4	-0.778***	-0.527***	-0.605***	-0.436***
<b>Country of Birth (ref. Sweden)</b>				
Outside Sweden	-0.351***	-0.375***	-0.280***	-0.333***
<b>Income mother (ref. Quartile 1 lowest)</b>				
Quartile 2	0.060***	0.056***	0.065***	0.058***
Quartile 3	0.090***	0.086***	0.088***	0.070***
Quartile 4	0.097***	0.090***	0.145***	0.110***
<b>Income father (ref. Quartile 1 lowest)</b>				
Quartile 2	-0.090***	-0.083***	-0.073***	-0.071***
Quartile 3	-0.089***	-0.081***	-0.095***	-0.103***
Quartile 4	-0.124***	-0.119***	-0.050***	-0.077***
<b>Change in economic activity (ref. Stable employed)</b>				
Student to employed		-0.059**		0.048**
Student to unemployed		0.285***		0.394***
Unemployed to employed		0.273***		0.085**
Employed to unemployed		0.629***		0.356***
New student		0.503***		0.427***
Stable student		0.172***		0.145***
Stable unemployed		0.300***		0.200***
<b>Change in partnership status (ref. New or stable partnership)</b>				
Dissolution		1.980***		1.990***
Consistently unpartnered		0.686***		0.739***
<b>Parent (ref. Non parent)</b>				
Parent		-0.159***		-0.441***
<b>Change in partnership status x Parent (ref. New or stable partnership &amp; non parent)</b>				
Dissolution x Parent		0.027		-0.435***
Consistently unpartnered x Parent		0.184***		-0.222***
<b>Age group x Period (ref. 19-24 x 1986-1993)</b>				
25-29 x 1994-2001		-.323***		-0.205***
30-34 x 1994-2001		.287***		0.056
25-29 x 2002-2009		-.421***		-0.228***
Constant	-3.129***	-4.067***	-3.012***	-3.885***
Pseudo-R2	0.0354	0.0422	0.0486	0.0584

**Table 3:** Coefficients from discrete time logistic regression of returning to parental home (100 metre square) at age 19 to 42 years, by sex.

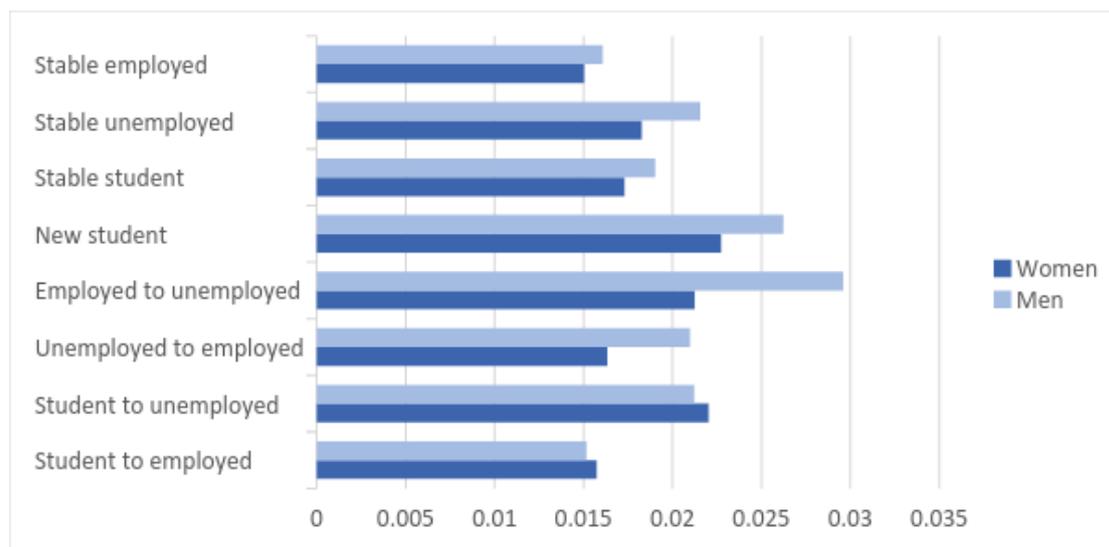
Table 3 also shows how place of birth, income, education and partnership status affect boomerang behaviour. Young adults born in Sweden were more likely to return to their parental address than those born abroad. It is also not surprising to note that those on the highest incomes were least likely to return home, reflecting the greater economic independence of this group from their parents. A further income effect that the Swedish dataset lets us consider is the income of the parents of boomerang movers and we hypothesized that boomerang mobility was stronger among young adults having high income parents (H4), as they potentially could offer financial support in times of economic setbacks. The results reveal a positive correlation between mothers' income and boomerang mobility, i.e. young adults (both men and women) were more likely to return to their maternal home address if their mother had a high income, while for the paternal address of boomerang movers the effect of paternal income was negative, reducing the chance of return. In introducing the effect of the control variables shown in Table 3 on propensity to boomerang, it is finally worth noting that the effect of education are complex to interpret, but with those with post-secondary education more likely to return home than those without. This may dominantly reflect the difference between those migrating for education being more likely to return home following the end of their studies ahead of taking up employment. This suggestion leads to our next arena of inquiry – that of the effect of life transitions on boomerang behaviour.

Above all the discrete time regression allows us to address several of the key hypotheses of the paper relating to *reversals* of the lifecourse and the effects on return migration to parental home. These transitions are shown graphically in Figure 1, although the direction of the relationship is not graphed. Holding all other covariates constant, the Swedish data suggests that the likelihood of returning home is greatest following partnership break-up for couples without children. Figure 1 also supports hypothesis H2 that after a partnership dissolution mothers will be less likely to boomerang compared to childless women and compared to fathers.



**Figure 1:** Predicted probability of returning home to parents (same 100 m square) by partnership status and parenthood status. All other covariates held constant.

Turning to changes in activity status as measured in Model 2 (Table 3), the results uphold the hypothesis that change, especially reversals in activity status generate boomerang behaviour (H3). Consistent with H3 the calculated probabilities in Figure 2 show that the greatest likelihood of returning to the parental home) was found amongst those forced out of work into unemployment and by those moving out of education into unemployment but also by those moving into education. Table 3 confirms that by comparison with those who were continuously employed all other shifts of status (except for students entering employment) were associated with a greater likelihood of return. Reversals in fortune led to the greatest increase in boomerang behaviour. Unlike in the UK all economic transitions were statistically significant, probably reflecting the much larger size of the Swedish dataset. Gender differentials in boomerang behaviour were, however, most striking for men losing work and for men moving from unemployment into work. Men setting out on their studies and men who were long term unemployed were also more likely to boomerang than their female counterparts. By contrast gender differentials were smaller, but still significant for people moving from study to unemployment or indeed leaving study to take up a job. These patterns of results are rather different from those observed in the UK (Stone et al. 2014) although in both countries it is clear that economic uncertainty or a reduction in income was positively associated with return migration to the address of at least one parent.



**Figure 2:** Predicted probability of returning home to parent (same 100 m square) by change in economic activity status. All other covariates held constant.

When return migration is to the parental neighbourhood (within 5 kilometres), there is a similar age gradient for returning (Table 4). During this period 4.8 % of the population recorded a boomerang move to parental neighbourhood. As opposed to the same 100 metre square as the parental address, the results clearly reflect that there a different set of processes are at work. This group of young adults boomeranging to the parental neighbourhood act in line with hypothesis 5. In contrast to those moving back to the parental home, it is those with a high income level who return to their parental neighbourhood. As can be seen in Table 5 it is significantly more likely for both men and women to boomerang to their parental neighbourhood if income levels are higher. This likelihood also increases with education level. People are also more likely to make such a move if the economic activity status is stable and provides an income. Studying as well as unemployment significantly decreases the likelihood for making a move compared to having stable employment.

Age Group	Men	Women
19 - 24***	0.068 (0.0676, 0.0686)	0.077 (0.0767, 0.0780)
25 - 29***	0.044 (0.0436, 0.0448)	0.035 (0.0347, 0.0359)
30 - 34***	0.022 (0.0217, 0.0229)	0.018 (0.0177, 0.0188)
35 - 42*	0.012 (0.0117, 0.0126)	0.011 (0.0109, 0.0118)

**Table 4:** Returning to parental neighbourhood by age group and sex (5000 m), 1986-2009 (in percent with 95 % CI).

**Notes:** \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  significant gender differences within age group.  
N= 3316906 person-years.

Unlike the migration pattern for returning to the parental home, there are larger gender differences in boomerang behaviour among stable students and those leaving their full-time education. The predicted probabilities for returning to parental neighbourhood area in Figure 4 clearly show that women have significantly higher probabilities of returning to their parental home area than men during their education or when ending their education. Still, most likely to return are both men and women in stable employment or when they move into employment. Thus, while reversals in economic status seem to generate a mobility pattern of returning to the parental home for economic support, this is not the case when the move is to the same area as the parents (within 5 km of the parental address). Consistent with H5, the boomerang behaviour to the parental neighbourhood seems to result from migration decisions among young adults who are economically independent of their parents and who presumably have residential preferences which make their parent's neighbourhood attractive for living. The results also reveal that this migration behaviour significantly increases over time among men while significantly less women return to their parental neighbourhood over time. This is contrary to the trend for women boomeranging to their parental home (H6).

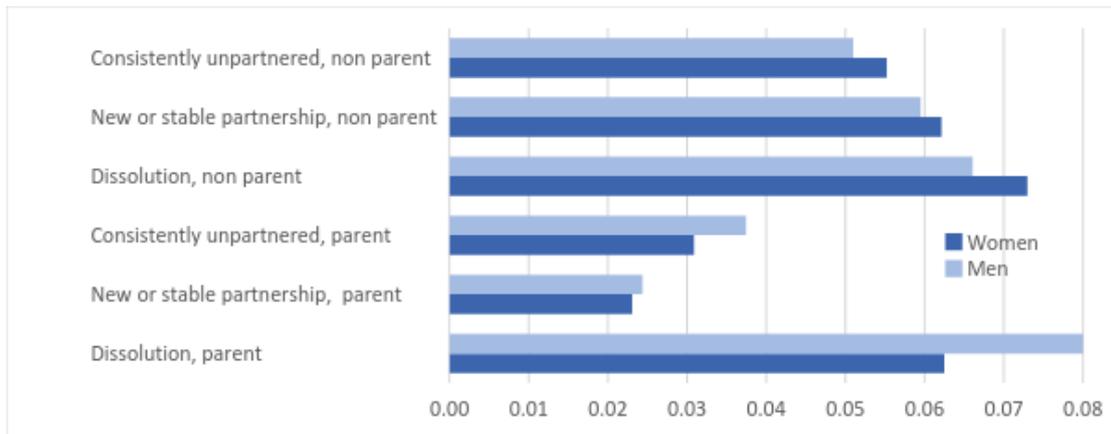
Other life transitions such as change in partnership status or parenthood, also have another impact on return migration to parental neighbourhood compared to parental home. Change in partnership status does not increase boomerang behaviour towards the parental neighbourhood, but rather it decreases it. Being consistently unpartnered significantly decreases the likelihood for both women and men to return

to their parental neighbourhood and union dissolution does not have a significant correlation with this boomerang behaviour compared to those in a stable or new partnership.

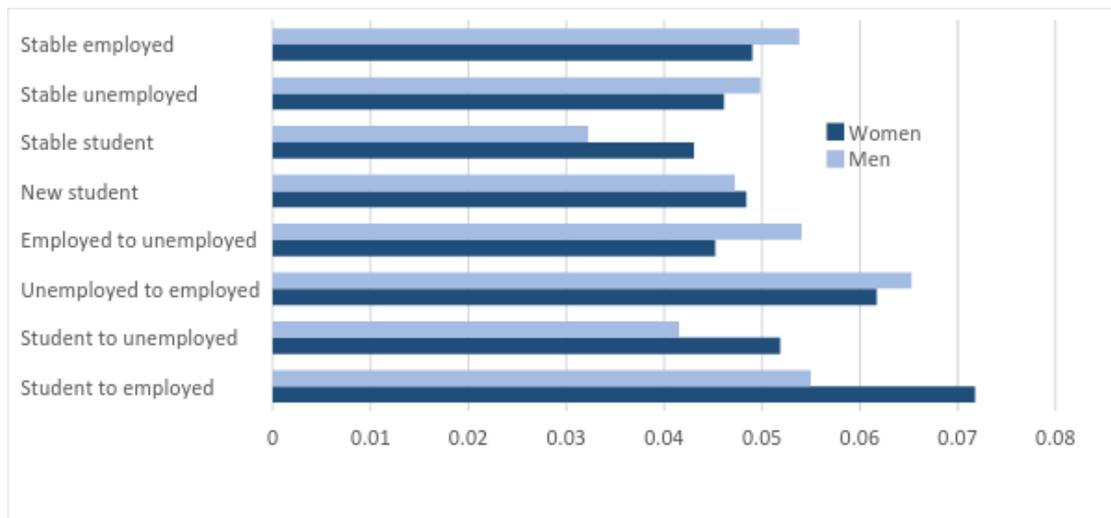
	Men		Women	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<b>Period (ref. 1986-1993)</b>				
1994-2001	-0.034***	0.069***	-0.163***	-0.097***
2002-2009	0.133***	0.092***	0.043**	-0.051***
<b>Age group (ref. 19-24)</b>				
25-29	-0.665***	-0.517***	-1.014***	-0.905***
30-34	-1.460***	-1.316***	-1.759***	-1.282***
35-42	-2.192***	-1.884***	-2.364***	-1.693***
<b>Education (ref. Post-secondary education)</b>				
Secondary education	-0.090***	-0.155***	-0.092***	-0.053***
Primary education	-0.028*	-0.098***	-0.068***	0.063***
<b>Individual income (ref. Quartile 1 lowest)</b>				
Quartile 2	0.742***	0.611***	0.654***	0.626***
Quartile 3	0.847***	0.657***	0.710***	0.667***
Quartile 4	0.780***	0.597***	0.627***	0.628***
<b>Country of Birth (ref. Sweden)</b>				
Outside Sweden	-0.118***	-0.156***	-0.043*	-0.063**
<b>Income mother (ref. Quartile 1 lowest)</b>				
Quartile 2	0.045***	0.050***	0.034**	0.033**
Quartile 3	0.027*	0.040***	0.008	0.001
Quartile 4	0.018	0.050***	-0.030*	-0.040**
<b>Income father (ref. Quartile 1 lowest)</b>				
Quartile 2	0.034**	0.041***	0.065***	0.064***
Quartile 3	0.021*	0.036***	0.055***	0.049***
Quartile 4	0.004	0.039***	0.006	-0.005
<b>Change in economic activity (ref. Stable employed)</b>				
Student to employed		0.024		0.417***
Student to unemployed		-0.276***		0.061
Unemployed to employed		0.209***		0.251***
Employed to unemployed		0.005		-0.086**
New student		-0.140***		-0.013
Stable student		-0.542***		-0.139***
Stable unemployed		-0.083***		-0.065**
<b>Change in partnership status (ref. New or stable partnership)</b>				
Dissolution		0.114		0.177
Consistently unpartnered		-0.166***		-0.128***
<b>Parent (ref. Non parent)</b>				
Parent		-0.940***		-1.048***
<b>Change in partnership status x Parent (ref. New or stable partnership &amp; non)</b>				
Dissolution x Parent		1.179***		0.877***
Consistently unpartnered x Parent		0.612***		0.430***
<b>Age group x Period (ref. 19-24 x 1986-1993)</b>				
25-29 x 1994-2001		-0.276***		-0.045
30-34 x 1994-2001		-0.056		-0.069
25-29 x 2002-2009		-0.056*		0.244***
Constant	-2.995***	-2.544***	-2.754***	-2.613***
Pseudo-R2	0.0425	0.0485	0.0582	0.0676

**Table 5:** Coefficients from discrete time logistic regression of returning to parental neighbourhood (within 5 km) at age 19 to 42 years, by sex.

When examining the interaction effects between partnership status and parenthood with the calculated predicted probabilities (Figure 3) we see that parenthood overall reduces the chances of returning to the same area as the parental home. The exception is for fathers who are experiencing a union dissolution, who are the most likely to return to parental neighbourhood. In contrast, parenthood has less effect on the probabilities of boomeranging for women who have experienced a union dissolution. Thus the gender effects for boomeranging to parents' neighbourhood differs from returning to parental home (H6).



**Figure 3:** Predicted probability of returning home to parental neighbourhood (same 5000 m square) by partnership status and parenthood status. All other covariates held constant.



**Figure 4:** Predicted probability of returning to parental neighbourhood (same 5000 m square) by change in economic activity status. All other covariates held constant.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper has interrogated a large Swedish dataset to analyse ideas about the mobility of young adults following lifecycle reversals. In providing findings in a fashion that is comparable with a similar recent study in the UK (Stone et al. 2014), the paper makes an empirical contribution to the research literature, but in what follows our aim is to offer more than incremental advance. We seek to raise conceptual issues by discussing the differential significance of boomerang behaviour in relation to the parental neighbourhood and not only parental address.

Our six hypotheses offer an easy route to reflect on what seems to be knowable from comparing the Swedish and UK cases. First, in both countries there is evidence of boomerang behaviour increasing with the passage of time. The larger size of the Swedish dataset and the longer duration for which the Swedish data is available should give greater confidence to researchers in asserting that boomerang behaviour is one form of human mobility which is increasing in relation to the diverse set of drivers underpinning people's more complex mobility trajectories. In Sweden, as in the UK the propensity to boomerang to the parental address drops rapidly after the age of 30 (Table 1). The observed postponement of labour market entrance, family formation and childbearing as well as the extended period in higher education are plausible explanations to increasing of boomerang moves in Sweden, while the better opportunities for independent living may explain the lower percentage compared to the UK. The conceptual issues that arise from these findings include whether the trend observed in UK and Sweden will spread to other societies which currently have stronger familial values, in the same way that demographers have observed the diffusion of the second demographic transition (van de Kaa 2004). It is also interesting to ask how much deeper the effect will become in future in countries like UK and Sweden, given that boomerang moves are still only observed for a minority of young adults. The underlying drivers of boomerang mobility that have been explored in hypotheses two and three may hint at the answer to this question.

Second, the idea that partnership dissolution triggers return to the parental home appears to be upheld both in UK and Sweden. In the Swedish case the effect was particularly marked for men who were fathers following break up with their partner (Figure 1). Although shared custody is the common solution, women still take

more responsibility for the children and men to a larger extent move home to get assistance from parents. Even though the welfare regimes and gender policies of Sweden and UK differ somewhat, in both countries it is fair to conclude that gender and parental status moderate the effects of partnership dissolution and boomerang behaviour.

Third, reversals in activity status have been explored in relation to several transitions experienced by young adults. In both UK and Sweden leaving higher education and entering unemployment was associated with an increased propensity to boomerang to the parental address, but the Swedish case points to the economic reversals associated with losing work and entering unemployment being much more powerful drivers of boomerang behaviour with a particularly strong association for men facing this economic uncertainty. The gender differences are in line with previous findings showing a larger independence among young women in for instance early nest-leaving and long distance migration. However, as neo-liberal political agendas are advanced, in tandem with ever-more individualistic societal values, it seems entirely probable that this mobility response to economic uncertainty will grow in significance over time, while alternative provisions for young people in economically vulnerable positions (such as provision of independent housing by the shrinking welfare state) will decline.

Fourth, the logic that returning to the parental home offers financial savings for young adults facing life course reversals led to the expectation that such moves would be strongest in cases where parental income was higher. The Swedish data set made it possible to test this hypothesis. It was not surprising to find that young people on higher incomes were less likely to return home, while those on lower incomes had a stronger attraction to return to the parental home, where the young person's parents were better off (especially young adults with mothers commanding higher incomes, Table 2). This finding while important in and of itself, takes on greater significance when considered in relation to hypotheses 5 and 6.

Fifth, the capacity in Sweden to compare boomerang behaviour at different scales proved very important in building the case that return to the parental address is a mobility behaviour that is specifically associated with economic vulnerability, and

that returning to the parental neighbourhood (as opposed to the parental home) is a very different kind of mobility. The Swedish case showed that return to a different address in the same neighbourhood was more than three times more popular than returning to share accommodation with parents. And the economic characteristics of those boomeranging to their parental neighbourhood were significantly different from those that returned 'home' to co-reside with their mother or father.

In the absence of in-depth qualitative research it is dangerous to make strong inferences about the motives of returning to the parental neighbourhood. On the one hand dissolution of a partnership remained a significant trigger (Figure 3). On the other hand many lifecourse transitions (progressions as opposed to reversals) were strongly associated with boomeranging to the neighbourhood. As Figure 4 has shown the propensity to return was most intense for those moving into employment, either from unemployment or from having previously been a student. Both these transitions to greater prosperity seem to have enabled this group to select a move to their parental neighbourhood. This demographic involved higher income and more highly educated people (Table 4) and with the process conforming in some respects to previous work on the differential migration attractions of parents to adult children (Pettersson and Malmberg 2009).

Sixth and finally the effect of gender in moderating these neighbourhood boomerang moves was multifaceted. We found a strong dominance of fathers in the return flow to the neighbourhood of parents following dissolution of a partnership. In contrast economic transitions showed a markedly different pattern at the neighbourhood scale, with many more women returning following completion of their studies and entry into the labour market. This, and other effects evident in Table 4 and Figure 4 lead to the conclusion that the support functions offered by return to the parental home are very different from the opportunities offered by young boomerangers moving to their parental neighbourhood.

If the analysis of this paper has made clear advances in extending existing work and suggesting new lines of research on the trend towards increased boomerang mobility amongst young adults, it is also evident that many issues remain unaddressed. Most notable of these is testing the robustness and significance of

measurements of boomerang behaviour. So far research has taken account only of movers in relation to an outward and return event. No investigation has considered either the significance of the length of the period of return, especially amongst those living with their parents, or of the sensitivity of the effects to the length of period spent away from parents prior to return. If temporal duration of spells of absence and spells of return matter, then so too does the distance moved and the geography of the types of places selected for the initial move prior to return. For example one might well ask with good reason, given geographically differentiated housing and labour markets, whether moves in the Swedish context to the three metropolitan areas might be expected to generate higher or lower boomerang propensities and whether return is more likely in the major cities with very high housing costs than in smaller towns and rural areas. Previous research has found that a larger portion of the young people living in densely populated regions have their parents close by and also that the distances between parents and adult children have decreased over time since the portion of young adults born in the cities are larger today than in the 1990s (Malmberg and Pettersson 2007). Assuming that distance influences boomerang moves the patterns of intergenerational proximity could affect the boomerang trends observed. Hence, further research calls for analyses across different regional settings and of long and short distance moves.

This paper confirms that in Sweden, as elsewhere, an ever-increasing proportion of young adults only make a temporary initial departure from the parental home (Arundel and Ronald 2015; South and Lei 2015) and that boomeranging behaviour is not simply associated with the uncertainties of leaving higher education (Lewis et al. 2015) but is also correlated with uncertainties and risks in the labour market (Kaplan 2012). Partnership dissolution remains a key trigger for many reverse moves. However, this paper has argued that the numerical significance and social complexity of boomeranging behaviour is even greater than has previously been recognised. This is because many more young people boomerang to their parental neighbourhood than return to the original parental address. Returning to the parental neighbourhood is attractive even though it does not offer the fuller financial safety net of co-residence during periods of lifecourse reversal. This paper has suggested that return to the parental neighbourhood is actually a much wider phenomenon than return to co-residence with parents. For those with greater financial means it appears

to provide the potential for emotional and social support without the potentially harmful effects that co-residence can produce in terms of passivity amongst young people and the limitations placed on social networking (Sassler et al. 2008). On the one hand the identification of wider boomerang behaviour to parental neighbourhoods calls for a deeper theorisation of the phenomenon, while on the other hand it highlights the need to explore social policies to tackle the particular vulnerabilities of those on lower incomes who feel obligated to return to the parental home in the absence of other viable options, and who feel obliged to return rather than selecting the move as a positive choice.

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