

Suburban Pink Collar Ghettos: The Spatial Entrapment of Women?

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Abstract. The restructuring of the U.S. economy has resulted in the expansion and suburbanization of office employment. One theory is that an attraction of suburban locations is their large supply of women whose domestic responsibilities restrict their employment prospects and job-search area, spatially entrapping them in their neighborhood of residence. Firms employing large numbers of pink collar workers may relocate to the suburbs to employ these spatially entrapped women. I examine the applicability of the spatial-entrapment thesis underpinning much of the literature on the changing geography of office locations, gender divisions of labor, and urban labor markets. I use "triangulation" as a research strategy that involves the analysis of a variety of overlapping work-place and residential-based commuting studies and in-depth, interactive interviews with the personnel managers of suburban offices and suburban women employed as clerical workers. The results show that, contrary to "conventional wisdom," clerical workers have relatively long commutes and that neither the presence of another adult nor children in the household decreases a woman's work-trip. A reconceptualization of the spatial-entrapment thesis is offered, which attempts to untangle the relationship between women's commutes and the extent to which they are enmeshed in an evolving, complex web of localized relations.

Key Words: spatial entrapment of women, spatial fixity, clerical workers, commuting patterns, in-depth interactive interviews, suburban office locations.

thing of myself, being from a farming background. He thought that officework was real grand. He was so happy that I didn't go into domestic service like most farm girls. I rented an apartment on South High Street and took the street car . . . Oh, everyone took the street car to work, the only people who drove came in from out of town, and even then they carpooled. Not like now, when I go into the different offices 'round town [she works for a temporary agency] everyone drives and on their own too [Betty].

IN REMINISCING about being a clerical worker for most of the last forty-five years, Betty highlights the urban expression of post-World War Two economic, social, and spatial restructuring. During Betty's (paid) work-life, the service industries have expanded, accompanied by a growth of office land use throughout metropolitan areas, especially in the suburbs. Thus the reason "everyone took the street car to work" was that it took them downtown, where the majority of pink collar jobs were located at that time. But today, as a "temp," Betty finds herself working at office locations all over the city, getting to those places by driving alone in her car.

The suburbanization of office-work is a well documented trend in the U.S. and other Western countries (see Cervero 1986; Daniels 1982, 1985; Gad 1985; Ley 1985). Developments in the standardization and routinization of office work and in communications technology have facilitated this trend. In turn, this has allowed more routine functions, such as payroll, billing, and claims processing, to be spatially separated from those other aspects of office work requiring a good deal of face-to-face contact. Given the necessity for such linkages with clients in other offices, nonroutine office employment has tended to remain downtown. Routine aspects of office employment can be decanted

I began work as a clerk for [a downtown insurance firm]. My dad was real pleased I was making some-

to the suburbs with their cheaper rents, adequate land for employee parking and future expansion, and "probusiness" local governments that encourage development (Massey 1984; Moss 1986; Noyelle and Stanback 1984; Storper and Walker 1989).

The growth of feminist research into the geography of employment has focused attention on the role of gender divisions of labor. Although most of this research has been pitched at regional or metropolitan levels, Hanson and Pratt (1988, 1990, 1991) have shown that labor-market segmentation by gender can be observed at a very fine spatial scale within urban areas. Just as firms have relocated part or all of their functions to the "periphery" to employ women as cheap, "green" labor, it would seem that the same process is operating at the intraurban level. Suburban women are presented as an attractive labor supply because they place a premium on their domestic roles and are secondary wage earners by choice, viewing their husbands as the "breadwinner." Given this situation, suburban women are willing to forgo well-paid jobs in favor of locally available but less well-paid positions that allow them to attend to their domestic obligations. In other words, they need to work close to home and, therefore, have a spatially limited job-search area. Essentially suburban women, especially if they are married, White, and have young children, are viewed as being *spatially entrapped* in their place of residence. If firms wish to accrue savings from employing this spatially entrapped labor force, they must locate near these suburban areas (Baran 1985, 1987; Blumen and Kellerman 1990; Fortuijn and Karsten 1989; Gordon et al. 1989; Hanson and Pratt 1988; Villeneuve and Rose 1988; Wekerle and Rutherford 1989).

This viewpoint is most clearly seen in the work of Howe and O'Conner (1982), White (1976, 1988), and, especially, Nelson (1986). Until the Second World War, most offices were downtown, employing mainly young, White, native-born, relatively well-educated women who worked until they got married. Subsequently, women's employment patterns changed quite dramatically. Downtown employers have become increasingly reliant upon people of color for their clerical labor supply. This is largely due to "White flight" and the tendency for young, educated women to pursue professional careers rather than clerical

jobs. Together these factors have helped reduce the central-city supply of young, White, single women content to stay with low paid, dead-end pink collar work. But this labor shortage is relative, as women of color and women householders (including lone mothers), who reside in the downtown area in disproportionate numbers, continue to have relatively high rates of unemployment. To some extent, this apparent disinterest is because many of these women are the chief economic supporters of their families. Thus it is not surprising that employers have found an increase in militancy among downtown women workers and a substantial labor turnover, as these women attempt to stabilize and improve their economic positions.

By way of contrast, suburban women possess a combination of characteristics that make them a preferred pink collar labor supply. They are relatively well-educated, nonunionized, married, White women with dependent children, who consider their wages to be a "secondary" source of family income and, therefore, will accept lower wages than central city women. In addition, suburban women have the language skills that are important in customer interfacing, while the class structure and related home-ownership characteristics of suburban women are believed to enhance worker stability and productivity, and to limit feelings of militancy.

Such explanations for the changing geography of female clerical labor markets are based on two interrelated suppositions: *first*, firms employing clerical workers may choose to relocate to the suburbs to employ spatially entrapped women who possess certain desirable characteristics as employees, and *second*, because of their commitment to domestic roles, suburban women can only support short commutes to work, so are spatially entrapped in their residential neighborhoods. Both suppositions hinge on the notion of the spatial entrapment of women, which is one of the most prevalent explanations for gender divisions of labor within urban labor markets.

This paper presents an empirical and theoretical investigation of the widely accepted and, I argue, "taken-for-granted" concept of the spatial entrapment of women. Columbus, Ohio is used as a case study, and the empirical portions of the paper employ "triangulation" by layering various overlapping datasets and types

of analyses. I selected this approach to facilitate the investigation of the spatial-entrapment thesis from two directions: the labor demand-side (focusing on the work-place and employers) and the labor supply-side (examining characteristics of the female clerical workers within particular communities). Specifically, this research design involves analysis of interviews at firms that employ large numbers of clerical workers, the results of a set of commuting studies developed from both work-place and residential-based data, and an interpretation of interviews with women clerical workers who live, but do not necessarily work, in the suburbs. This discussion is followed by an examination of the implications of the empirical findings and the theoretical underpinning of the study, resulting in a reconceptualization of the spatial-entrapment thesis.

Data and Methods

To thoroughly explore questions surrounding the spatial entrapment of women requires individual-level data at an extremely fine spatial resolution. This virtually necessitates the use of primary data. Individual-level data from the U.S. Census are rarely available below the metropolitan level. A variety of primary data were collected in 1987 and 1988 based on questionnaires (a combination of closed-ended, fixed-alternative and open-ended questions), and lengthy, in-depth, interactive interviews with personnel managers and women clerical workers. The relative strengths and weaknesses of these techniques as research methods in geography have been clearly outlined elsewhere (Eyles and Smith 1988; Schoenberger 1991). Within sociology there have been excellent discussions on qualitative and interpretive methods, especially on interviewing women: for example, Fonow and Cook (1991); Silverman (1985); Stanley (1990).

I adopted a triangulation approach because a diversity of methods and overlapping datasets were employed in the study (other terms to describe this process include multiple strategies and combined operations). Triangulation served three major purposes. It provided a vehicle for cross-checking the various results, the respective weakness of each method and dataset could be counterbalanced by appealing to the strengths of the others, and the interplay

between the findings often provided insights that would have not been available had only one technique been employed (Burgess 1982; Silverman 1985).

Clearly my samples are not "representative" of all suburban firms or suburban women clerical workers. But the central purpose of my research is not to obtain empirical generalizations; rather it is to develop an in-depth understanding of a particular local intersection of the changing geography of office locations, gender divisions of labor, and urban labor markets, grounded in an acceptance of people as knowledgeable agents. The interviews, in particular, allowed me to develop an understanding based on the interviewees' frame of reference and to explore specific issues within the context of the interviewees' sets of meanings. This enabled me to identify the particular circumstances and contingent conditions of the firms and women, which give specific empirical expression to wider socioeconomic factors that structure their practices (Dyck 1989; Eyles and Smith 1988; Eyles 1989; Sayer 1992). The majority of the interviews with the women took place in their homes; all the interviews with the personnel managers took place in their offices. The interviews with the women lasted approximately three to five hours, while those with the managers lasted sixty to ninety minutes.

Study Area

Columbus, with a population of 630,000, is located in Franklin County, where 70 percent of the 1.4-million Columbus MSA residents live. It has been described as the "second most average U.S. city" (Johnston 1984). While this label is not especially flattering, it means that Columbus reflects numerous national trends, and, arguably, makes it a good case study for the local manifestations of those trends. For example, Columbus has become increasingly identified with service industries, with 64 percent of its labor force employed in finance-insurance-real estate (F.I.R.E.), public administration, retail trade, and services. These are the very industries that exemplify the concept of pink collar ghettos. Nationally they employ the largest shares of all clerical workers and/or have clerical work-intensive labor forces (Hunt and Hunt 1987). The importance of office-

work is also reflected in Columbus's occupational profile, which is dominated by managers, professional and technical specialties, and administrative support occupations (51 percent). Columbus has two important characteristics that should be noted. Unemployment is consistently the lowest in Ohio and usually lower than the national average, even during recessions. And, given that Columbus's distinctive industries are heavily reliant upon pink collar workers, it has an unusually large clerical labor force (22 percent compared to the national average of 16 percent). But this segment of the labor force mirrors national trends, in that approximately 80 percent are female, and one-third of employed women are clerical workers.

Like many U.S. metropolitan areas, urban land-uses in Columbus have undergone suburbanization over the last thirty years. The most notable growth has occurred within the northern segment of Franklin County. These two trends are also true of office functions (Hajicek 1990; Smith and Selwood 1983). Smith and Selwood (1983) found that faster rates of suburbanization occurred among offices representing F.I.R.E. and business services (industries heavily dependent on clerical workers). Hajicek (1990) noted that the suburban growth in office space and office employment has been particularly substantial in the two northern suburbs of Westerville and Worthington. In addition, these two suburbs have experienced especially rapid rates of growth in the labor force participation of women. According to both Census data and locally generated data (for example, the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce), these suburbs are two of the most prestigious. They have among the highest median household incomes, median house values, and proportion of owner-occupied housing and of residents in high-status occupations in Franklin County. For all these reasons, attention will particularly focus on these two suburbs.

Interviews with Personnel Managers

In 1987 and 1988, interviews were conducted with the personnel managers of ten relatively large private firms with extensive

clerical labor forces (either in absolute numbers or as a proportion of their total labor force). The interviews with the personnel managers were conducted mainly to explore the first supposition: viz., that firms employing large numbers of clerical workers may choose to relocate to the suburbs to employ spatially entrapped women who possess certain desirable characteristics as employees. Among the issues raised during the interviews were questions related to spatial structures, such as the reasons behind their firm's relocation decision and the characteristics of their clerical labor market area; the nature of their hiring and promotion practices with regard to clerical workers; and what policies were in place that specifically dealt with the multiple roles of their female employees (for example: maternity leave, child-care facilities, sick-leave, and vacation time used to deal with family problems).

The firms were selected from a list compiled from various publicly available Columbus business directories. Criteria for selection included location in either Westerville or Worthington, the industrial category of the firm, and the size of their respective clerical labor forces. Nine of the firms had located in Westerville or Worthington within the decade prior to my interview, six within the preceding five years. Seven had relocated from downtown Columbus, two had moved from cities outside central Ohio, and one had always been located at its present site. The ten firms largely represent the F.I.R.E. and business services industries, which, as noted above, tend to employ the largest shares of all clerical workers and/or have clerical work-intensive labor forces. The size of the total labor forces range from 109–1,700, with a mean of 532 employees. In the case of multi-branch firms, only those employees at the specific site where the interview took place were considered. The proportion of their labor forces categorized as clerical ranged from 17 percent to 92 percent, with a mean of 55 percent. The clerical labor forces of these firms were also highly feminized; in no instance did the female proportion fall below 70 percent.

Only three of the ten personnel managers agreed that the demand for a spatially entrapped female clerical labor supply was one of the more important reasons in their firm's relocation decision. It was not said to be an

important aspect of the relocation decision of the other seven. Indeed this suggestion even provoked some unexpected comments:

Well, that could have been true maybe ten or fifteen years ago, but not now [Firm J], employs 200 people].

We moved about fifteen or sixteen miles (from downtown Columbus to Worthington), but I'd say about 80 percent (of the clerical labor force) stayed with us. We hired the extra 20 percent from around here. The demographics of who we lost were mostly those people who hadn't been with us for that long, less than five years [Firm A, employs 742 people].

We used to be located (downtown) five years ago. At that time there was a close relation between work and home. We still employ many of those same people, which is why many of our employees are not from Worthington, even though the company is [Firm G, employs 109 people].

It's real interesting if you look at where we draw from, I don't think we have one single person in clerical from Worthington or Dublin (another wealthy northern suburb), too rich. Now we have a fair few from Westerville and the eastside, they come around on the outer-belt. The rest come from Columbus or the rural areas away from the city [Firm D, employs 1,355 people].

Among the most frequently cited reasons for locating in the northern suburbs of Columbus were some traditional location-theory explanations: lower rent, cheaper land, adjacent land for future expansions, and affordable space in an office park with the infrastructure already in place. Some of the major reasons given were more surprising: new land that the firm could "make its mark on" (by way of architectural design or highly visible and distinctive signposting), and, ironically, given the fixation in the literature on the spatial entrapment of women, proximity to the home of the owner or president of the firm.

On the other hand, it could be argued that an implicit acceptance of the spatial-entrapment-of-women thesis underpins many of the hiring techniques that the ten firms utilized when extending their employee search to the external labor market. Although seven of the firms use Columbus newspapers to advertise openings, three of the personnel managers said that their firms had begun to advertise only in the local suburban newspapers, and two firms also advertise in the papers of the surrounding rural areas, *specifically* to attract a

particular type of employee. In addition, five of the firms said that they obtained many of their employees through referrals, whereby present employees encourage their friends, relatives, and neighbors to apply for a position that they know is available. Thirteen of the thirty women interviewed found their jobs in this manner. One personnel manager explained why this technique was especially attractive to his firm.

We do advertise in the paper, and that's how we get a lot of applicants, but we've found that the word-of-mouth referrals have a much higher staying rate. I think about 30 percent of our new employees are referred through word-of-mouth, but they represent 70 percent of the employees who stay with us for more than one year. The opposite is true where we have about 60 percent come in to us from the newspaper ads, but they represent 80 percent of the people who leave within three months . . . it's because of the social nature of it, if their friend works here and they get positive reinforcement about it being a nice place to work, they stay longer. The newspaper people may be more wage-oriented, and that's not a strong point here, also they may feel they don't fit in [Firm I, employs 447 people].

Generally, these interviews suggest that a spatially entrapped labor supply was not a primary factor in the location decision of the firms in this case study. But it would seem that some of the firms had hiring techniques that embrace the notion of the spatial entrapment of women. Alternatively, this could simply indicate that they are sensitive to local variations in labor and housing markets.

Commuting, Gender and Clerical Workers

Most commuting studies examining gender differentials in work-trip patterns conclude that, regardless of the place or time period studied, women generally have shorter mean journeys-to-work than men (Brooker-Gross and Maraffa 1985; Hanson and Johnston 1985; Hanson and Pratt 1988, 1991; Johnston-Anumonwo 1992; McLafferty and Preston 1991; Rutherford and Wekerle 1988; Villeneuve and Rose 1988; Wekerle and Rutherford 1989). These studies estimate that the mean commute for women is between 6–9 miles, and between 8–13 miles for men. There are two sets of explanations for this spatial entrapment of

women relative to men. First, the domestic division of labor usually means that women have greater domestic responsibilities than men, and are more likely to trade off commuting time to accommodate their domestic roles. Second, the segregation of women into low-paid, low-status waged work means that they are not sufficiently well paid to "justify" lengthy commutes.

As McLafferty and Preston (1991, 2) remark, although these explanations are "intuitively and theoretically appealing," empirical studies have produced contradictory results, especially when differences *among* women are considered. For instance, a quite resilient stereotype of married women and mothers is that their extensive domestic responsibilities lead them to have shorter commutes than other women (a stereotype that is central to the spatial-entrapment thesis). Numerous studies do substantiate this. For example, Ericksen (1977) found that married women had the shortest commutes and single women had the longest commutes. Fagnani (1983) and Singell and Lillydahl (1986) found that the presence of children was associated with shorter commutes by women. But other studies have found the converse to be true. Brooker-Gross and Maraffa (1985), Hanson and Johnston (1985) and Madden (1981) found that married women have longer journeys-to-work than unmarried women, while England (1990), Johnston-Anumonwo (1992), and Michelson (1985) found that women who are mothers have longer commutes than women who are not. And Gordon, et al. (1989) found negligible differences between single and married women, as well as between women who have children and those who do not.

Commuting studies that combine variables examining domestic roles (such as the presence of children, marital status, and/or the number of adults in paid employment) have tended to produce results that run counter to "conventional wisdom." Madden's (1981) study indicated that while the presence of children did decrease the commutes of mothers in two-earner households, it actually increased the work-trips in one-earner households—a finding echoed by White (1986), who noted that the presence of young children actually increased the commutes of women householders. And Hanson and Johnston (1985) found that unmarried women with no children

(supposedly the least spatially entrapped women) had the shortest work-trips and that among the other households, the presence of neither children nor another adult reduced women's work-trip length.

Similarly contradictory results can be found among studies considering both gender and occupation differentials. "Conventional wisdom" indicates that higher-status, better-paid occupations have lengthier commutes than other occupational classes, and that, within the same occupational categories, men commute further than women (Fagnani 1983; Fox 1983; Hanson and Johnston 1985; Hanson and Pratt 1988; Madden 1981; Rutherford and Wekerle 1988; Villeneuve and Rose 1988; Wekerle and Rutherford 1989). Certainly, given that women tend to be crowded into low-paid, low-status pink collar occupations, one would expect such women to have localized commutes. While some commuting studies indicate that this is the case (Cubukgil and Miller 1982; Hanson and Johnston 1985), others contend that female clerical workers have among the longest commutes (Fagnani 1983; Wheeler 1967). What has been fairly consistent is that clerical workers' average commutes are about 5.5 miles, with those working in the CBD having longer commutes than those working in the suburbs.

In this paper, the suppositions of the spatial-entrapment thesis are evaluated in three ways. First, the labor market areas of some of the case-study firms will be examined to determine whether they are drawing on a spatially entrapped clerical labor supply. Second, the journeys-to-work of female clerical workers will be compared with those of the men with whom they share their households to see whether the women are spatially entrapped relative to men. Third, the journeys-to-work of women with more demanding domestic roles will be compared to those women with less demanding domestic obligations to determine whether the former do, in fact, have shorter journeys-to-work. As no exact measure of the female clerical worker's domestic responsibilities (such as hours spent on housework and child-care) was available, domestic roles will be defined here in terms of the presence/absence of another adult and/or dependent children (aged less than 18). These analyses employ a variety of work-place and residential-based data, drawn from personnel records, a survey question-

naire, the R. L. Polk and Company's *Suburban Directory*, and in-depth interactive interviews with women clerical workers. The work-place-based commuting studies (demand-side) will be presented first, followed by the residential-based studies (supply-side).

Work-Place-Based Commuting Studies

I hoped to interview a sample of each firm's women clerical workers in order to explore the spatial-entrapment thesis from their viewpoint. Unfortunately, no firm was willing to grant me permission to do this, ostensibly for reasons of employee privacy, although I suspect that there was concern about the nature of my questions and whether I might encourage unionization (only one of the firms was unionized). But three of the firms used their personnel files to provide me with the zip-codes of residence for their female clerical workers. This at least allowed me to examine whether the firms were drawing upon a relatively spatially entrapped labor supply.¹ Five other firms were willing to let me administer a questionnaire survey to a sample of clerical workers.

The personnel files data only enabled me to calculate the *straight line* distances (in miles) between the zip-code of residence and the respective firm location (see Table 1).² So these journey-to-work distances are only approximate, and it is almost certain that the actual road distances would be greater, possibly considerably greater. As I am questioning the spatial-entrapment thesis, however, these more conservative estimates are clearly preferable to overestimates.

Firm A is one of Columbus's largest life insurance companies (measured in terms of total assets) and employs 502 women clerical workers, who form 77 percent of the firm's clerical labor force. Their mean commuting distance is 13 mi (s.d. = 9.9 mi) and the modal class is 4–8 mi. Firm B is a computer support-systems manufacturer and one of the largest employers in central Ohio. It employs 134 female clerical workers whose mean commute is 7.9 mi (s.d. = 7 mi) and modal class is less than 4 mi. Firm C is an insurance company with 79.8 percent of its total labor force in clerical work. Of these, 96 percent are women (indicating the very feminized nature of clerical work); their

Table 1. Commuting Estimates in Miles for Clerical Workers of Firms A, B, and C

	FIRM A	FIRM B	FIRM C
Summary statistics			
Mean	13.3	7.9	11.6
s.d.	9.9	7.4	8.5
N	502	134	263
Relative frequencies (4-mile intervals in percentages)			
0–3.9	0.0	48.1	17.9
4–7.9	33.8	20.3	20.1
8–11.9	10.4	6.0	22.1
12–15.9	23.1	12.7	16.7
16–19.9	9.8	3.0	6.1
20–23.9	10.8	6.7	9.1
24–27.9	4.2	0.0	1.1
28–31.9	1.5	3.0	2.3
32–35.9	3.0	0.1	2.3
36 plus	3.4	3.4	2.3

Source: Personnel files of Firms A, B, and C.

mean commute is 11.6 mi (s.d. = 8.5), with a modal class of 8–12 mi.

The clerical workers employed by these three firms not only commute further than women clerical workers in previous studies (5.5 mi), but, with the exception of Firm B, commute further than women in other commuting studies which do not take occupation into account (6–9 mi). Furthermore, as the journey-to-work distances in this particular sample are only approximate, and if actual distances could have been calculated, these differences would probably have been greater. But the most striking observation about these results is the variation between the three firms. The pink collar workers employed by Firm A and C commute, on average, much farther than those employed by Firm B: most of Firm A and C's clerical workers live within a 16-mi radius (67 percent and 77 percent, respectively) whereas most of Firm B's live within 8 mi (68 percent). Thus Firm B has a more spatially entrapped clerical labor force than the other two, but its clerical workers are still commuting longer distances than those reported in previous studies. Similarly, there are substantial differences in the standard deviations of the firms ranging from 7 mi for Firm B to 10 mi for Firm A. This is also reflected in the percentage of the women commuting more than the mean journey-to-work distances for their respective firms: 46 percent of Firm A's, 35 percent of Firm B's, and 40 percent of Firm C's. Clearly, these women

do not appear to be particularly trapped in their residential neighborhoods.

Part of the explanation for this interfirm variation lies in the very nature of these firms. Female clerical workers at Firm A have the longest commutes of all. This has a great deal to do with the fact that when Firm A relocated from downtown Columbus, it maintained at least 80 percent of its pink collar workers (see the quote above from Firm A's personnel manager). On the other hand, while Firm B is a very large employer in Franklin County, with a national and international reputation, its line of business—computer support systems—is not one that relies heavily on clerical work. This fact might explain why Firm B tends to draw its clerical labor from a relatively spatially limited area. Finally, Firm C is heavily reliant upon clerical work; 80 percent of its total labor force is so employed. Its extensive clerical labor market area is partly related to the tendency for a large number of its clerical labor force to travel from distant rural areas and small towns northeast of Westerville. Many of these women were referred through word-of-mouth and carpooled with other employees (a situation also described by the personnel manager of Firm I above).

The second set of work-place-based data employs the results of a questionnaire survey administered to 100 women clerical workers of five of the other case-study firms. These data provide information on the residence of the respondents, the presence and age of children, and, if they had a partner, the location of their partner's work-place. To make comparisons with previous studies, the sample was subdivided into "two-adult household," if the woman stated that she lived with her partner, and "one-adult household" if she did not live with another adult (this group was further subdivided into never-married and divorced). Actual journey-to-work distances (in miles) were computed for the three groups of women and for the partners of the women living in two-adult households. The results are reported in Table 2.

That the journeys-to-work of the men (partners) are longer and show greater variation than those of any of the three groups of women is indicated in Table 2. But the men's commutes are only slightly longer than those of the women that they live with. On the other hand, the differences among women show

Table 2. Journey-to-Work Distances (in Miles) of Respondents by Household Form

	One-adult household		Two-adult household	
	Never married	Divorced	Women	Men
Mean	7.87	11.12	14.03	14.90
s.d.	6.65	8.01	12.13	22.40
N ^a	18	17	65	55
Relative frequency (4-mile intervals in percentages)				
0–3.9	28	17	4	25
4–7.9	33	23	29	5
8–11.9	28	23	23	25
12–15.9	0	12	11	9
16–19.9	5	12	14	18
20–23.9	0	6	4	7
24–27.9	0	0	7	2
28–31.9	5	0	4	2
32 plus	0	6	4	5

^aN for partners is lower than N for women they live with because no information was provided regarding three of the partners' place of work. Seven were either retired or had jobs that involved multiple work-places.

Source: Survey questionnaire by author.

that women in two-adult households have the longest and most varied commutes, while the never-married women have the shortest and least varied commutes. The relative frequencies indicate that the most frequently traveled distance by women is 4–8 mi (note that the divorced women's modal commute is split between two categories), and the men's modal commute is split between 8–12 mi and less than 4 mi (the latter partly reflects the zero-mile commute entered for the four self-employed men who are based at home). Given that the upper limit of the women's modal class is 8 mi, it is noteworthy that a large proportion (61 percent) of never-married women live within 8 mi of their work-place, whereas a relatively small proportion (33 percent) of women in two-adult households live that close to their work-place. Indeed this percentage makes them more similar to their partners (of whom 30 percent work within 8 mi of home) than to either the never-married or divorced women living in one-adult households.

The responses to the questionnaire were retabulated to create groupings according to the presence/absence of another adult and/or dependent children in the household. These results are presented in Table 3. The results indicate that, regardless of their parental status, women living in two-adult households have

Table 3. Journey-to-Work Distances in Miles of Respondents with and without Dependent Children

	Nonparents		Parents ^a	
	One-adult household	Two-adult household	One-adult household	Two-adult household
Mean	8.46	14.60	9.93	13.85
s	8.62	14.52	5.10	9.80
N	20	31	15	34
Relative frequency (4-mile intervals in percentages)				
0-3.9	30	6	13	3
4-7.9	30	29	20	30
8-11.9	20	22	33	23
12-15.9	0	13	20	9
16-19.9	5	10	14	17
20-23.9	5	6	6	3
24-27.9	0	6	6	9
28-31.9	5	3	0	3
32 plus	0	3	0	3

^aIncludes persons with children eighteen or older.

Source: Survey questionnaire by author.

both the longest and most varied journeys-to-work, while women in one-adult households without children have the shortest commutes. The modal classes were less than 8 mi for women who were nonparents in a one-adult household, 4-8 mi for mothers in a two-adult household, and 8-12 mi for lone mothers. It is noted that lone mothers, who, "conventional wisdom" tells us, are the most spatially entrapped, not only have the highest modal class, but commute greater mean distance than do nonparents in one-adult households (supposedly the least spatially entrapped). Indeed, 60 percent of the latter group live within 8 mi of work, almost twice the rate for each of the other groups.

Residential-Based Commuting Studies

The residential-based commuting data were collected from the R. L. Polk and Company's *Suburban Directory* for Columbus which provides business listings by street address. These listings usually include the occupation and employer of each adult occupant, their housing tenure, and telephone number. From this information, it was possible (but time consuming, as the listings are not by occupation or place of employment) to create a sample of 200 randomly selected women clerical workers whose

marital status could be identified and who lived in four northern suburbs of Columbus where the growth of women's paid employment was especially rapid. The women were subdivided into "married" if they were listed as "Mrs." and had the same last name as an adult man at the same address, and "single" if there was no husband listed, or the woman clearly lived with her parents.³ The women and men's *actual* journey-to-work road distances (in miles) were computed on a shortest possible distance.

A number of conclusions may be drawn from Table 4. First, the commuting distances for married couples indicate that the men have longer mean journey-to-work distances (12 mi) and greater variation in their commutes than do the women (10 mi) they live with. Second, the mean commuting distances for both groups of women are similar, with the mean commute for married women being slightly longer than that for unmarried women. Third, the relative frequencies indicate that the most frequently traveled distance for both groups of women and the husbands is less than 4 mi (however, in the case of the men this partly reflects the zero commuting distance entered for those whose work-place is at home). Comparing these results with the work-place-based commuting studies, it is noteworthy that a higher proportion of the unmarried women (50 percent) than of the married women (38 per-

Table 4. Commuting Distances in Miles of Female Clerical Workers and Their Husbands Who Live in Suburbs

	"Single" women	Married	
		Women	Men
Summary statistics			
mean	9.1	9.6	11.6
s.d.	6.2	6.2	8.6
N ^a	58	142	127
Relative frequencies (4-mile intervals in percentages):			
0– 3.9	27.6	26.1	21.3
4– 7.9	22.4	12.0	18.1
8–11.9	18.9	19.7	16.5
12–15.9	12.1	23.2	17.3
16–19.9	12.1	14.0	20.5
20–23.9	6.8	2.1	3.9
24–27.9	0.0	2.8	2.4

^aN for husbands is lower than that for wives because eight of the husbands had retired and seven had jobs that involved varying commuting distances. Also note that four of the husbands work from their homes; their commutes were entered as zero.

Source: *Polk's Suburban Directory, Columbus, 1987.*

cent) live less than 8 mi from their work-places. Also the married women are more evenly distributed across the frequency classes than are the single women. This difference, in addition to the similar proportion of men commuting less than 8 mi to work (39 percent), reveals that, in accord with the work-place-based questionnaire survey data, the commuting patterns of the married women are actually more similar to their husbands than they are to the single women in the sample.⁴

The second set of residential-based data utilizes in-depth interviews conducted during 1987 and 1988 with women clerical workers. Thirty women clerical workers who lived, but did not necessarily work in the suburbs, were interviewed. They were selected from the larger sample of 200 women drawn from the *Polk's Suburban Directory* data outlined above. Only those women who lived in either Westerville or Worthington were considered because, as pointed out earlier, in addition to being popular destinations for relocating firms, these suburbs have experienced especially rapid growth in the paid employment of women. Efforts were made to select women whose commutes were representative of the broader sample (the single and divorced women interviewed had a mean commute of 9.2 miles <sd = 6.35> and the married

women had a mean commute of 9.6 miles <sd = 7.11>). Furthermore, inasmuch as Glenn and Feldberg (1989) point out that 61 percent of women clerical workers are married (the proportion of women in the paid labor force who are married is 55 percent), selection was also based on obtaining a sample that reflected this figure. At the time the women were interviewed, two-thirds were married, and all but four were also mothers. Most (69 percent) had children aged less than 18 (six had children aged less than 6, seven had children aged between 6–12, and five had children aged between 13–18 years). The women ranged in age from 23–64, the majority (57 percent) were in their thirties and forties. Four worked part-time, one job-shared, another worked as a "temp," the remaining 24 worked full-time.

The purpose of the interviews was to obtain a deeper understanding of a number of important issues surrounding the question of the spatial entrapment of women. These included: (1) the role that time-space budgeting played in the negotiation of multiple roles (for example, was a short commute related to marital status and the presence of dependent children?); (2) the nature of the forces facilitating the women's entry into paid employment; (3) given that home, work-place and child-care facilities are usually in different locales, what were the coping strategies that the women adopted in order to deal with the dilemmas and stresses of multiple roles? and (4) what role (if any) their employers played in these issues.

Although a number of the women interviewed *did* have journeys-to-work that were much shorter than the means for the larger sample of 200 women, in many cases the women's short commutes were completely spurious in that they were *not* the spatial outcomes of the women's efforts to combine their various roles into a finite period of time. For instance, negotiating multiple roles did not really play a part in the short work-trip of Andrea, whose children were three (Joey) and five (Gail). Andrea was pleased to be offered a job only five miles from home, but this was not because she needed to be close to home to deal with her children. They were taken care of by their father (who worked at home) and maternal grandfather. The reason she was happy about her job was because she would be working with her mother and, if she decided to, she could go home for lunch and

spend some time with her partner, Mark, and children.

Gail starts school this year, she was in pre-school two days a week. My dad's been retired for ten years now and he watches them most of the time. Plus for the last two years my husband's office has been in our basement, so he's actually here most of the time too. Anyway, I drop her off at pre-school, and Joey's with his dad first thing, then my dad comes and gets him. It's been so helpful the way my husband's work is set up and with my dad. I don't have to take time off if the kids are sick, because Mark or my dad are around [Andrea].

In other cases, a short commute was also spurious because it was no longer an attempt to negotiate the roles of paid worker, mother, and partner. At an earlier point in the women's lives, it may have been, but because of, for example, the exit of children, it had lost the meaning it once had. This was the case for Olive, Marcia, Wanda, Marge, and Audrey, whose commutes were all less than two miles, but who no longer had dependent children living at home.

Then there were the two sets of women whose situations were entirely contradictory to "conventional wisdom" that women with dependent children are spatially entrapped. The first set were women who have both young children *and* a long journey-to-work. For instance, Liz, whose youngest child was seven, had always worked in or near the downtown area. Until her second marriage eight years before I interviewed her (she was divorced in 1976 and got custody of her older son), she lived on the near eastside with a 5-mile commute to work. When she and her second husband moved to Westerville, she kept the same job and increased her work-trip to 19 mi.

I wouldn't take a job in Westerville just because it's near home, that has no effect on me. When I married my husband and we moved to Westerville, I stayed with this job because of the job itself. I'd never change jobs just because of location, unless I was driving for over an hour. Because this job pays what I want and it's mentally stimulating. I haven't changed and won't change because of moving house [Liz].

The second set were those women whose journey-to-work had actually become *shorter* as their children got *older*. For instance, when Sally first started her job, her sons were nine and eleven, and she used to commute 18 mi from a small town north of Columbus. Then,

four years before I interviewed her, she remarried and moved in to the home of her partner (Dave) in Westerville, which decreased her journey-to-work to 4 mi. Dave did not have any children and Sally said it would have been easier for her if he had moved into her home. The decision to move to Dave's home was because he worked in downtown Columbus and his commute would be too lengthy if he had moved to her home. In other words, as with most of the interviewees, Sally's residential location vis-à-vis her work-place had been affected by a whole array of considerations.

Finally, consider the case of Kathy who has two children and had worked for the same firm for 13 years. During her first year of employment, Kathy and her partner lived about 3 mi from her downtown work-place. Then they bought their house in Westerville, which increased the length of her work-trip to 18.5 mi, but given her child-care arrangements, the move actually attenuated her multiple roles, something which would not be apparent by simply looking at her change of address:

When I first started my job thirteen years ago, we lived about ten minutes away (from where she works). But it took me an hour because I had to take the kids to the sitter and she lived up in (a neighborhood between downtown and Westerville). So I was getting up very early because I began work at seven. After a year we moved to Westerville, so the sitter was actually on my way then, that made things much easier [Kathy].

A number of summary remarks can be made about the results of these various commuting studies. First, the work-place-based studies indicated that although a sizeable portion of the firms' pink collar workers did live nearby, large numbers traveled from all over the city and even from surrounding towns and remote rural areas. Second, the residential-based studies also pointed to extensive journeys-to-work for clerical workers. Third, the residential-based studies consistently produced shorter means than the work-place based commuting data, presumably because when some of the firms relocated, many of their clerical workers stayed with the firm and extended their journeys-to-work (see quotes above of the personnel managers in Firms A and G). Fourth, the interviews with suburban women showed that a short journey-to-work is not always tied to a woman's negotiation of her multiple roles; nor, on the other hand, is a long journey-to-work

necessarily characterized by the absence of such a negotiation. Finally, all of the studies produced findings that indicated longer commutes than women clerical workers in previous studies (5.5 mi). And the mean commutes of all the categories of women in my studies were either within or greater than the range associated with previous commuting studies which do not take occupation into account (6–9 mi). In short, it would seem that, at least for the northern Columbus area, the evidence is not especially strong with regard to women being trapped in their place of residence, waiting for employment opportunities to come their way.

Discussion: Reevaluating the Spatial-Entrapment Thesis

My findings indicate that clerical workers have relatively lengthy commutes (although not necessarily longer than their partners) and corroborate those studies that suggest that the presence of neither another adult nor children decreases a woman's work-trip. In fact, it may even increase the length. These results run counter to the theoretically and intuitively appealing entrapment thesis. Generally, men have longer commutes than women and the most "common sense" explanations for this generalization are related to occupational segregation by gender and the domestic division of labor. But the evidence supporting limited commutes for clerical workers is mixed, implying that the emphasis on the spatial entrapment of clerical workers is exaggerated. The explanations focusing on the domestic division of labor are based on the expectation that the greater a woman's household responsibilities, the shorter that woman's work-trip would be. While most previous studies do indicate that women work closer to home than men, studies examining differences among women often produce results which contradict "conventional wisdom."

Part of the explanation for the mixed results of previous studies might be related to the nature of the variable chosen to measure a particular relationship (for example, employing marital status versus presence of another working adult as one measure of domestic responsibilities). Alternatively, it might be due to the

particularities of the spatial context of the study, or that city's place in the urban hierarchy.⁵ I would also argue that an additional explanation can be developed by extending Bowlby, et al.'s (1989) critique of radical research on the industrial and regional geography of women's paid employment. They argue that much of this research reworks stereotypes which are actually historically contingent and tends to be "somewhat stuck in a time-warp more concerned with the changes which took place in the 1960s than with the changes currently taking place in rather different economic conditions" (1989, 166). A close inspection of previous commuting studies (and those studies which explicitly support the spatial entrapment of women as pivotal in the suburbanization of office work) reveals that many are based on data collected during the 1970s or the 1980 U.S. Census (or the 1981 Canadian Census). This observation partly reflects data constraints, but it also means that these studies capture the particular conditions of women's paid employment during the 1970s rather than the different circumstances of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The 1970s were an important period in terms of women's paid employment: equal employment opportunity legislation came into effect, the number of women (especially married women and women with young children) in paid employment exploded, and more women were working full-time and moving into traditionally "male" occupations. I suspect that the varied results of previous commuting studies reflect the transitional patterns of women's paid employment in the 1970s, as women (especially those who were married with young children) began to fit less easily into the stereotype of being spatially entrapped.

Yet the notion that women, whether pink collar workers or not, are spatially entrapped has become a widely accepted assumption in the literature. It would certainly seem that this "taken-for-granted" viewpoint is ripe for reexamination. The spatial-entrapment thesis is based on an empirical regularity, or on the assertion of an empirical regularity, which relates women's gender roles to spatial limitations, particularly in terms of women's commuting distances and job-search areas. While this is an appealing argument, empirical studies increasingly offer limited support for it. Indeed, I agree with Sayer's (1992) contention that empirical regularities are not always useful explanations

of human activities, given the indeterminate relation between social structures (and hence gender roles and relations) and concrete events like spatial patterns.

A number of human geographers have called for an alternative approach to explanation, one which explores the links between "biographies of individuals" (Eyles 1989, 103) and the sociospatial structures that are enmeshed in everyday life and experience (see Barnes 1987; Eyles 1989; Eyles and Smith 1988). This approach is based on the argument that everyday life is not separate from, but rather integral to the processes of economic, social and spatial (re)structuring. By putting human agency center stage, emphasis is placed on the reproductive and the transformative capacities of people as they engage in the mundane, routine practices of everyday life.

Dyck (1989, 1990) adopts this viewpoint in her detailed study of the daily lives of women in a Vancouver suburb. She presents an account of the suburbs as contextualizing how women define and reconstruct their identities and their neighborhood to facilitate the integration of their various roles. At the same time, these practices are clearly locally embedded, and the local context shapes the meaning and diversity of those practices. Dyck emphasizes the centrality of local social networks as one of women's coping strategies. For instance, "street relationships" with other women are important in making child-care arrangements. Some of these aspects of women's daily lives were captured by my interview with Sally:

I work on a schedule where I don't need to be at work until 8:45. The school bus comes at 8:15, I drop [her two sons] off there or at school. They get home at 4:15, and it's 45 minutes before I get home. But there is a neighbor who doesn't go out to work, and I've made arrangements with her where she'll fetch the boys if they get sick. You need to make arrangements. We all work together on this, we trade off. Sometimes the neighbors want to go out, so I watch their kids [Sally].

All of this suggests that women's journeys-to-work should be reconceptualized as an effort to juggle a multiplicity of overlapping and often contradictory roles and spatial factors. Essentially, the sociospatial system in which a woman in the paid labor force operates is not a closed one. Her work-place location is affected by more than just her place of residence and vice versa. There are other important spa-

tial factors and these may be manipulated so as to realize all her roles, but a short journey-to-work is not necessarily the only possible spatial outcome of this. People are agents, they are not passive victims of spatial structures and while a suburban environment may impede women's efforts to combine their roles, they do have the distinct ability to plan and learn new ways of acting.

Journeys-to-work should be viewed as part of a much larger time-space budgeting problem in which adjustments can be made to better suit needs of both individual women and those with whom they share their homes. This juggling and adjustment, however, takes place within a *pre-existing and evolving web of localized relations*. For instance, rather than move to a neighborhood closer to work, Sheila commuted 10 mi to a low-paid job because she and her children (aged eighteen, fifteen, and twelve) would rather live in the family home that she was awarded following her divorce:

I'm determined to hold on to the house, if we moved it would disrupt the children's lives, they'd have to change schools, they'd lose their friends, I couldn't do that to them, I'd hate myself. So many divorced women end up having to sell the family home and move into apartments, that's not going to happen to me [Sheila].

The women also talked of finding themselves tied by other sociospatial relations, particularly good child-care arrangements, the local school system, and low mortgage payments. In addition, women who live with their partners have to make residential, and, to some degree, employment decisions, that take account of their partner's work-place as well as the needs of their children. These all serve to spatially limit the women's options. This situatedness means that the women have evolving sociospatial relationships that become both difficult to find substitutes for, and virtually impossible to replicate in another place. Thus a particular web of localized sociospatial relations may *bind* her to a particular neighborhood, effectively negating the possibility of moving closer to her work-place. For example, Julie and her partner chose to buy their home because it was located 3 mi from her parent's home:

I'm pretty close to my mom, but she's not one of those nosy mothers who always pops in, but I wanted to be nearby her . . . I'd rather be happy in the area I live than in work. I'd rather be com-

fortable where I live. I would like to think that I don't have to live in the worst part of the city just because it's close to my job [Julie].

At the same time, the job itself is often a source of relations for which it is difficult for the women to find substitutes. Many women I interviewed considered their jobs to be at least as important as their domestic roles. Traditionally, women have had shorter job tenures than their partners, and so residential location was often selected on the basis of the specific work-place of the men and the spatial distribution of potential work-places for the women. But as women have begun to place more emphasis on their jobs, changing jobs has become less attractive, even when it might be a more satisfactory spatial solution. Increasingly, both partners' jobs are important, and this serves to make the household's web of sociospatial relations even more complex.

Some of the women interviewed talked of being reluctant to change jobs because their relatively high salaries and promotion prospects were linked to a well-established employment history with their current employer. Indeed, most personnel managers remarked that for clerical positions salaries, benefits, vacation time, and sick leave were all tied to seniority and length of service. As one personnel manager remarked:

We really believe in rewarding people who choose to make a career with us. So, for example, our profit-sharing is based on the number of years of service with the firm. Pension, pay, vacations, sick pay, they all depend on years of service. While other things, like life insurance, are tied to your salary, it goes up as your salary goes up, so there's some incentive to advance yourself [Firm H, employs 727 people].

Recently, U.S. firms have begun to utilize internal career ladders among their clerical labor forces, and to give priority to internal labor markets in the search to fill positions by considering present employees before an external search is conducted (Doeringer and Piore 1971; Gordon et al. 1982; Hartmann 1987). It is significant that all ten firms in this case-study had some sort of career ladder and internal labor-market structure for their clerical workers. In all but two cases, the firms had introduced internal career ladders during the 1980s. Also most of the personnel managers believed that the creation of career ladders for clerical workers was directly linked to a decline in their

turnover and an increase in their productivity. Related are many of the firms' attempts to engender loyalty by introducing such innovations as firm outings for the employees and their families, and what one personnel manager referred to as "recognition."

We started recognizing people for making a career with the firm. In my department I make a big deal about their anniversaries (of when they began working for the firm), I take them out to lunch and make a fuss about changing their plaques (each person has a desk plaque with their name and length of service on it). It really means something to us, you can recognize people for doing a good job, for going another year with the firm. You can give them praise, pat them on the back [Firm E, employs 130 people].

So it appears that internal career ladders, along with women's career aspirations, tend to bind the women to the firms. This seems to prevail even when the women's various roles change in such a way as to indicate that switching jobs might be an appropriate response. At the same time, however, the women are also situated within a particular web of localized sociospatial relations which tend to bind them to a particular neighborhood. Thus many of the women in the various samples employed for my research appear to have maintained their present jobs *and* homes despite, for example, becoming first-time mothers, children leaving home, and remarriage. This retention also helps to explain why, when a firm relocates to a less accessible location (as with some of the firms in this case study) some women clerical workers "choose" to extend their journey-to-work, rather than move closer to their workplace. Also, it is clear that the women living alone, especially if they have no children, seem to be more able to exercise the option of moving closer to work than those living with their partners and/or children. Perhaps the reason the single women had shorter commutes is precisely because they have fewer domestic responsibilities and a less complex web of localized relations.

A possible implication of this analysis is that there are no limits to the stretchability of spatial relations. If a woman's particular job is as necessary as her residential location, then no matter how much the distance between the two increases, she will still maintain the connection and simply elongate her journey-to-work. This is obviously not always the case as there are limits to spatial stretchability. How can these

dilemmas be resolved? Presumably, depending on the individual and her circumstances, some sociospatial relations are more necessary than others. A job which initially was unnecessary may acquire a certain necessity over time. Some women continue to work close to home, even though they no longer "need" to (for instance, they get divorced and/or their children have grown up), while others have long journeys-to-work even though (theoretically) they should only be able to support short commutes (such as those people who fit the suburban-woman stereotype of being married with young dependent children). At the same time, it could be argued that a lone mother's job is, arguably, relatively more economically necessary than that of a married woman without children, whose partner is employed. Clearly, spatial fixity *does* lie at the heart of women's (and men's) experiences of paid employment, but the spatial-entrapment-of-women thesis, as it presently stands, is an overgeneralization and over-simplification.

Conclusion

I have presented an investigation of the spatial entrapment of suburban women as an explanation for the relationship between office relocation decisions, gender divisions of labor, and urban labor markets. I proposed that the spatial-entrapment thesis is based on two widely accepted suppositions: first, firms employing clerical workers may choose to relocate to the suburbs to employ spatially entrapped women who possess certain desirable characteristics as employees (demand-side explanation), and, second, because of their commitment to domestic roles, suburban women can only support short commutes to work and are spatially entrapped in their residential neighborhoods (supply-side explanation).

An empirical and theoretical exploration of the spatial entrapment of women was presented, using Columbus, Ohio as a case study. Triangulation enabled me to interweave the findings of a variety of overlapping work-place and residential-based commuting data and in-depth, interactive interviews to explore both the demand and supply sides of the spatial-entrapment thesis. By comparing the different findings, I gained a more complete picture. For example, the interviews provided insight into

the interpretation of my statistical findings and triangulation helped me to unravel issues that would not have been fully understood by utilizing just one method or dataset.

The interviews with personnel managers indicated that a spatially entrapped labor supply was not a primary factor in their firm's location decision. Some of the firms had hiring techniques which seemed to be predicated upon the assumption of spatially entrapped women, but could equally have been a reflection of the employer's knowledge of local variations in labor and housing markets.

Commuting studies explored whether the case-study firms drew on a spatially entrapped clerical labor supply, whether women clerical workers were spatially entrapped relative to the men they live with, and whether women with more demanding domestic roles were more spatially entrapped than other categories of women. The work-place-based studies, utilizing personnel files and a questionnaire survey, indicated that while many clerical workers lived near their work-places, many others had extensive journeys-to-work, often commuting from all over the city or the surrounding small towns and remote rural areas. This finding, along with my interviews with the personnel managers, suggested that the firms were not really drawing upon a spatially entrapped clerical labor supply.

The residential-based commuting studies, which employed data collected from the Polk Directory, and the work-place-based studies using the questionnaire survey data, showed that the women were somewhat spatially entrapped relative to the men. But contrary to conventional wisdom, this was less true of the women in two-adult households, including those where there were dependent children. These findings were further supported by in-depth interviews with suburban women, which highlighted the spuriousness of linking women's short commutes to heavy domestic responsibilities.

My exploration of the spatial-entrapment thesis considered a certain amount of theorizing alongside the presentation of empirical results, including the development of an alternative conceptualization of the spatial-entrapment thesis grounded in the acceptance of people as knowledgeable agents. The crux of this discussion was to explore the links between women's commutes and the extent to

which they are enmeshed in a pre-existing and evolving web of localized relations. Essentially women have varied reasons for their choices of paid work-place and residence, such that multiple roles need not imply a short journey-to-work.

In general my findings indicate that women conventionally viewed as being the most spatially entrapped (married women with dependent children) actually had longer commutes than categories of women who, theoretically at least, should have been the least spatially entrapped (never-married women without children). These results run counter to expectations set up by the spatial-entrapment thesis. While this thesis is widely accepted, it does not receive unequivocal empirical support. Numerous studies suggest that neither marriage nor parenthood actually reduce a woman's commute, and others question whether clerical workers have short work-trips. I suggest that part of the reason that this thesis has become so entrenched in the literature is the tendency to rework a typology of working women which is actually historically contingent. Also the assumptions underlying the spatial-entrapment thesis better describe the patterns of women's paid employment in the 1970s than the late 1980s and early 1990s. Indeed, I would go as far as to suggest that my research indicates that a new typology of working women could be emerging whereby married women with or without children may actually have the longest commutes, followed by lone mothers (especially if they are divorced), with single women without dependent children commuting the shortest distances.

The spatial context of my study may have influenced the outcome of my research and, despite the changing trends in women's employment, it is feasible that women are more (or less) spatially entrapped elsewhere. Metropolitan Columbus is a service-oriented, medium-sized city that is relatively compact, with a well-developed highway system but a poor public transportation network. I would like to see other studies explore similar issues to those raised here. It would be especially interesting to see research examining the spatial-entrapment thesis in cities with spatial, economic, and social structures different from Columbus. For example, are women more spatially entrapped in horizontal Sunbelt cities, but less so in vertical Frostbelt cities? What difference does a more efficient public transportation sys-

tem make? Are women more spatially entrapped in manufacturing cities or small towns, which often have a limited history of women's paid employment and may lack ancillary support service such as child-care facilities? How might the spatial-entrapment thesis apply in more ethnically diverse cities, and, more poignantly, what role do race and ethnicity play in the spatial-entrapment thesis?

My research strongly suggests that in the future we should approach the spatial-entrapment thesis with caution. We should be more aware of the dynamic nature of women's paid employment and need to accept women as knowledgeable agents with transformative capacities. And as geographers we must be wary of reworking typologies that might be presenting historically contingent circumstances as universal truths. Clearly there needs to be a greater sensitivity to the complexities of women's lives as we move towards a more critical, less taken-for-granted, exploration of the links between space and the daily lives of women.

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Notes

1. The employment records did contain some male clerical workers, but they were not included because of their small number. These data indicate that male clerical workers generally have shorter, less varied journeys-to-work than the women clerical workers in the samples. Given that relatively few men are clerical workers, it could be argued that female clerical workers are still spatially entrapped relative to the majority of men. Thus it is probably more meaningful to compare women clerical workers with the male members of their households to determine whether women have shorter commutes.
2. I chose to employ commuting distances rather than time for two reasons. First, data constraints meant that commuting times were not usually available, and when they were (the questionnaire survey), there was some confusion as to whether they also included the journey-to-child care. As one of my main purposes was to compare different sets of results, only the distance variables were

used. Second, as Johnston-Anumonwo (1992) has remarked, clearer patterns appear to emerge when distance rather than time is used. Where possible, I did analyze the time variables; this resulted in similar rankings to the distance analyses, but the differences among the categories were less distinct.

3. This method is not without its weaknesses. I am assuming that two adults sharing the same last name (with the woman listed as Mrs.) are a married couple, and not, for example, a divorced or widowed woman living with her adult son or father-in-law. I excluded ambiguous cases to increase the likelihood that my sample consisted only of married couples. Furthermore, the nature of these data allowed little disaggregation of the "single" category. For example, some of the women were identified as "Mrs." although there was no adult man at the same address; presumably they were divorced, separated, or widowed.
4. It was possible to disaggregate the "single" category to some degree. 46 of the 58 "single" women did not identify themselves as "Mrs." The mean commuting distance of these women was 8.9 mi (sd = 6.16) and 39 percent of them lived less than 8 mi from work. Twelve others were listed as "Mrs.," but there was no adult man listed at the same address (presumably they were divorced, separated, or widowed). These women had a mean commute of 9.9 mi (sd = 6.35 mi), and one third had a commute of less than 8 mi.
5. The contradictory results do not seem to be related to city size, in that similar results are not associated with similarly sized cities. Furthermore, virtually all commuting studies considering gender differentials have used either U.S. national samples, cities in the northeast U.S., or Toronto and Montreal. So it would seem that the varied results cannot be related to Sunbelt-Snowbelt differences. That these studies tended to focus only on cities in the northeast U.S. points to a need for comparative studies with cities in other regions.

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