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Abstract

Recent research on social inequality and the family has pointed out that partners provide an important social context for individuals' decisions, behaviour and resulting social outcomes. Unemployment is a particularly interesting issue to be studied in the context of partnership, as unemployment and the ensuing loss of income of one partner might affect the whole family, and fast re-employment reduces the risks of economic uncertainty and deprivation of the family. However, the particular effects of the partner and his or her resources on unemployment of the other and its duration have not yet been fully explored.

In our paper we examine how couples deal with each other's unemployment, i.e. whether and how quickly re-integration into the labour market occurs. We look at the effects of different kinds of partner's resources, in particular financial assets and social capital. Applying job search theory, one would expect that the more financial support the partner can provide, the longer an unemployment episode would last, whereas the higher the partner's social capital, the more likely a job offer is to occur. Economic theories assume negative effects of both the partner's financial resources and social capital on the other's re-employment chances, either due to specialisation gains in the joint household or due to individual maximising of bargaining power that keeps the better-off partner from sharing resources. Whereas these theories are gender-neutral, gender role theories predict differential effects of the partner's resources for women and men. If a male partner provides a high income during his wife's unemployment this could prevent her from taking up work again. In the opposite case, this relationship of available resources and unemployment duration could be weak or non-existent. This 'gender asymmetry' should be modified by two characteristics: first, the birth cohorts the partners belong to, and second, whether or not they have children.

Empirically, we test these hypotheses using data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP), a longitudinal household survey. Based on this data source we analyse the effects of the partner's resources on unemployment duration by applying event-history models. We find a partnership premium for men, whereas married women are least likely to leave unemployment. Regarding the role of different resources of the partner, men gain from their spouse's labour market resources. Surprisingly, for women the partner's income accelerates re-employment. However, this finding is mediated by the fact that in a traditional male breadwinner model the female minor earner refrains from re-entering paid work. Furthermore, we cannot detect historical changes, but strong differences for women with and without children.

1 Introduction

Previous research on unemployment and unemployment duration has pointed out that particular individual characteristics, structural conditions and welfare state arrangements affect the success of a job search. According to job search theory the duration of the search process is dependent on the utility and the costs of continuing the search: As long as the (opportunity) costs of an ongoing search are low and the unemployed individual expects a better offer to arrive in the future, the search will be continued. Thus, much of the research in economics and sociology applying this approach has focussed on the role of unemployment benefits. Since unemployment compensation reduces the costs of searching (or increases the reservation wage), recipients search a longer time than non-recipients (Mortensen 1977). The empirical evidence on this hypothesis is rather mixed, though (for a review, see Atkinson & Micklewright 1991 and Devine & Kiefer 1991).

In our paper we extend this argument in three respects: from a sociological perspective we assume that (a) other sources of income besides the individual's unemployment benefits might be important for finding a new job quickly; (b) most individuals live in households, therefore an individual's re-employment chances may depend on their partner's resources, and (c) there are gender differences in the effects of the partner's resources.

Sociological research on couples' labour market behaviour has examined partner effects of labour market participation, status attainment and job mobility (e.g. Verbakel & de Graaf 2009; Brynin & Schupp 2000, Bernardi 1999, Bernasco et al 1998). Although there is some evidence that the family and the partner play an important role in getting information and provide a network for the individual's employment career, the particular effects of the partner on unemployment duration have not yet been fully explored. In most of these studies unemployment and unemployment duration are not analysed explicitly but included in the category 'not participating in the labour market'. Thus, heterogeneous circumstances and persons with different preferences for work have been lumped together. By concentrating on unemployment, we take into account only women and men who were employed before and who are searching actively for work (at least in most cases). Besides this fact, unemployment is a particularly interesting issue to be studied in the partnership context, as the unemployment and ensuing loss of income of one partner might affect the whole family, and fast re-employment reduces the risks of economic uncertainty and deprivation of the family.

In our paper, we are interested in differences in the individual behaviour of men and women within couples. According to job search or economic household theories it should not matter which partner, the male or the female, is affected by unemployment. Sociology provides alternative theories that would predict differential

effects for women and men: taking into account traditional gender roles and the division of labour in the household, one could assume that the partner's resources affect only women's job search: If a male partner provides a high income during his wife's unemployment this could prevent her from taking up work again, in particular if children are present. In contrast, if the unemployed male partner has a strong preference for being active in the labour market and is the main breadwinner for the family, he will possibly search actively for a job regardless of his wife's resources.

In our empirical analyses we use data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP). GSOEP is a large-scale representative panel study of private households in Germany that provides longitudinal information on all household members. In particular, besides including individual attributes we can use information on the individuals' partners such as education, labour market status and income to model their effects on unemployment duration. To test our hypotheses, we analyse the effects of partners' resources on unemployment duration by applying event-history models.

2 Theoretical background and empirical evidence

2.1 Economic approaches: Job search theory and family economics

Job search theory

A common theoretical approach in economic and sociological research on unemployment is job search theory. The theory assumes that the process of the job search is dependent on the utility and the costs of continuing with the search. As long as the (opportunity) costs of an ongoing search are low and the unemployed person expects a better offer to arrive in the future, the search will continue. According to this theory, financial resources such as unemployment compensation benefits, wealth or other sources of monetary support reduce the direct and indirect costs of searching. Besides, available financial resources compensate for income losses due to unemployment and they imply a smaller utility difference between unemployment and employment. Accordingly, workers who have relatively more financial means will experience longer unemployment than those with fewer resources.

Assuming that partners living in a joint household share their resources at least partly, mutual financial support reduces costs in the same way as unemployment compensation benefits and wealth do. Job seekers with affluent partners have fewer financial constraints when engaging in an active job search.

Job search theory also allows prediction of negative partner effects on unemployment duration: partners may not only share financial resources but also information, and support each other in many other practical ways during unemployment. In terms of job search theory, this is reflected in higher job arrival

rates that accelerate re-employment. The same argument is made by theories of (spouse's) social capital and labour market outcomes (Coleman 1990). Spouses provide e.g. information on job vacancies, network resources, support in work-related matters, and personal and emotional encouragement to the unemployed. Granovetter (1974) has found that in particular the 'weak' ties, i.e. network members with whom there is less contact, are helpful for finding a new job as they provide information that is not already known to the individual. Nevertheless, according to Bernasco et al (1998) and Bernardi (1999), the partners are supposed to be important by supporting the job search and success in many other ways, e.g. provision of effective information, advice on career development, and attainment-conducive attitudes. Bernardi (1999) even assumes that husbands may directly transfer human and cultural capital and exert personal influence on the job-matching process of their wives.

Family economics

There are several theories linking the labour market behaviour of couples that can be applied to unemployment. The central argument of these household theories is that partners jointly decide on family issues. These encompass labour market participation for the provision of financial means for the household's needs as well as arrangements about non-market-related domestic tasks.

Classical economic theories of the family assume that individuals living in a household act as a unitary actor maximising a joint utility function (Becker 1981). In that case, the resources of all individuals are pooled to carry out joint maximisation. Assuming that individuals are not equally productive in the labour market, the household's utility can be maximised by specialisation: The partner with higher market productivity specialises in market work, whereas the other partner specialises in housework and other domains of joint utility. Even small initial productivity differences lead to increasing specialisation over the life course, as each partner gains different human capital, thus reinforcing the productivity divide. When unemployment occurs, labour market productivity decreases markedly due to immediate income losses, due to losses of specific human capital or because unemployment sends negative signals to potential future employers, who will then pay less. As a result, specialisation of the unemployed person in only domestic tasks might be initiated or intensified. This will be particularly salient if the partner's income is sufficient for the household's needs or if the partner can extend his/her labour market activity to compensate for the income losses.

Bargaining theories (Ott 1992, Lundberg & Pollak 1996) dismiss the assumption of joint utility maximisation within couples. Instead, these theories assume that individuals want to maximise individual utility. In an extreme case where there are no

links between the two partners, i.e. no economies of scale, no liabilities etc., the partner's income would have no effect on the other's unemployment. However, bargaining theories usually assume that there are common tasks of the household such as maintaining the standard of living via paid market work on the one hand and the provision of domestic tasks on the other hand, and that partners bargain on the distribution of these tasks. Domestic work is considered to be annoying work that individuals want to avoid, so the partner with the higher resources is able to buy his/her way out. In response, he/she shares monetary resources from gainful employment, at least partly. In the case of unemployment – similar to the argument of classical economic theory of the family – resources and bargaining power are lost and the partner who still grants financial resources from paid work shares these resources with the unemployed partner, who in turn increases the contribution to the provision of non-market household goods.

Empirical evidence

There is extensive empirical research on the effect of several monetary sources on the unemployed. In particular, the effects of unemployment insurance and unemployment assistance have been examined in many studies (for a review see Atkinson and Micklewright 1991 and Devine and Kiefer 1991). The empirical evidence is mixed: for example, Card & Levine (2000) show that extended duration of unemployment insurance receipt increases unemployment duration in the US. In contrast, Lalive (2007) finds that extending benefits does not affect unemployment duration but rather affects the post-unemployment job's quality (see also Gangl 2003, Jacob 2008). Some recent studies have also taken into account measures of other financial resources like severance payments, precautionary savings, and wealth (e.g. Card, Chetty & Weber 2007, Bloemen & Stanca 2001, Algan et al 2003, Lentz & Tranaes 2005a). Cash-on-hand such as a lump-sum severance payment increases unemployment duration considerably (Card, Chetty & Weber 2007). Studies on wealth show a positive impact on reservation wages and unemployment duration (Bloemen & Stanca 2001, Lentz & Tranaes 2005a). Regarding savings, in most cases precautionary savings do not matter, rather reduced consumption compensates for income losses (Dynarski & Gruber 1997). A major shortcoming of most of these studies on welfare state transfers and individual assets is that they apply an 'individual-centred' perspective, neglecting the fact that there are other financial resources available in a household, like monetary support and compensation by the partner.

Much of the previous research applying a 'family' or 'couple' approach to unemployment examined the so-called added worker effect, i.e. the effect of one partner's unemployment (mainly the husband's) on the other partner's (wife's) labour

supply.¹ Classical economic theory would predict that if one partner became unemployed the other partner would try to find a job in order to supplement the household income. Empirically, several studies show that the opposite is the case. They find strong complementarities in the employment status of couples: employment comes in pairs, as does unemployment or non-employment (e.g. McGinnity 2002, Giannelli & Micklewright 1995). The positive relation between partners' employment status has been explained by assortative mating, shared local labour market conditions, and welfare state regulations. For example, in Germany since the latest labour market reforms in 2005, social policy discourages individuals living with a long-term unemployed partner from entering the labour market, to prevent reduction or loss of entitlement to benefits. Salient for the paper at hand are these studies insofar as they point to the fact that the individual's behaviour is mitigated by the household's financial situation and that couples' labour supply behaviour is more than an aggregate of the partners' individual decisions.

The focus of most of the aforementioned studies on couples is the incidence of unemployment, whereas we want to examine whether and when unemployment is terminated and how this relates to the partner's characteristics. Lentz and Traaes (2005b) examine a similar question: whether the effect of the spouse's income differs from the negative effect of the spouse's wealth on unemployment duration. Whereas wealth leads to increasing unemployment duration for both men and women, the authors detect a gender asymmetry regarding the spouse's income. Prolonged unemployment duration can only be found for married women: the higher the partner's income, the more likely they will remain unemployed. For married men, the opposite is the case: if the woman provides a high income, their male partners tend to re-enter employment faster. However, the authors do not elaborate their results further but only encourage further research in both respects, theoretically and empirically. Duguet and Simonnet (2003) examine the labour market participation of both partners and also find remarkable gender differences: the labour market participation of men increases if the spouse is employed, whereas the participation of women does not depend on that of their spouse.

2.2 Sociological approaches: Gender theories and welfare state arrangements

Gender roles and Doing Gender

Whereas the theoretical approaches mentioned so far are gender-neutral in principle, gender theories differentiate the labour market behaviour of men and women.

¹ There are a few studies that relate unemployment insurance benefits and family support, but these mostly focus on the question of efficient welfare state transfers and whether familial assistance is replaced by unemployment insurance (e.g. Schoeni 2002, DiTella & MacCulloch 2002). For example, DiTella and MacCulloch (2002) discuss several scenarios by varying institutional factors and family interaction models to calculate how much public transfers might crowd out family insurance transfers.

According to these theories the labour market participation of individuals is influenced not only by labour market resources, monetary incentives and constraints, but the (joint) decisions of men and women are also dependent on cultural and social norms defining 'appropriate' behaviour with regard to paid and unpaid family work.

Sociological theories on gender roles and gender stereotypes assume that in a given society different cultural and social norms for men and women exist that reflect the expectations about appropriate female and male behaviour. In Western societies these norms include the notion that women are less committed to the labour market than men and concentrate more on reproduction, care and household labour. Gender socialisation theories (Hagemann-White 2004) explain the individual emergence and social reproduction of these norms by social learning. Childhood socialisation shapes one's attitudes about the responsibilities of women and men regarding employment, family and household chores, which are internalised later on in life. 'Doing Gender' (West & Zimmermann 1991) explains the reproduction of gender norms not by passive childhood learning but by women's and men's active behaviour in everyday interactions. Participation in paid work (or in unpaid household labour) is used to construct and reconstruct one's gender identity, showing that one behaves according to the given set of social norms defining male and female identity.

Regardless of whether gender ideology is reproduced by socialisation or interaction, the conclusions regarding decisions of unemployed women and men are the same: since child care and domestic work are regarded as female traits in Western societies, women will in general participate less in the labour market than men or even refrain from labour market participation. In contrast, male identity is expressed largely by the world of work. Thus, most men will adopt the breadwinner role. Sex-stereotypical behaviour should be more pronounced if men and women live with a partner, in particular if they have decided to institutionalise their partnership by marriage, and if they have children to care for, because female gender norms and decisions about specialisation then become more salient.

Welfare state conditions and social change

A large body of literature shows that different welfare state arrangements and social reforms affect male and female labour market attachment, typical forms of employment and working careers. Two mechanisms of influence can be distinguished: first, welfare state arrangements directly influence access to resources and opportunities by providing infrastructure and implementing social policies, and second, they have a more indirect effect on normative expectations about adequate behaviour by setting normative standards (Lewis 1992, Ostner 1995, Pfau-Effinger 2005).

Germany, the country under view here, usually is described as a conservative welfare state with relatively weak market but strong state and family elements (Esping-Andersen 1990). Regarding gender relations, it is characterised by two principles: first, strong responsibility of the family for the welfare of its members (familiarism), and second, little state support of women's labour market integration (decommodification), accompanied by strong normative expectations about the role allocation of men and women (Leitner et al. 2004). In practise, these principles were realised in recent decades by the promotion of part-time work, the long duration of parental leave, no state provision of childcare until age 3 and only half-day childcare afterwards, and (maybe most important) married couples' tax splitting, with low taxation of the major earner and high taxation of the minor earner. Tax advantages of this model are highest if the difference in partners' incomes is high. Besides, in Germany the norms of mothers' responsibility for childcare are strong, while norms involving the fathers in this sphere are just emerging in part of the (younger) population. Until the 1970s, the single male breadwinner model was prominent in West Germany. Afterwards it gradually changed to an additional earner model with a male main breadwinner and a female part-time carer (Crompton 1999).² In recent years, single instruments not following this model were introduced (e.g. a 14-month paid parental leave model with 2 months of paternity leave), but other central elements were not altered (e.g. tax splitting), leading to contradicting incentives for women and men regarding their decisions on labour market participation and family work.

Against the background of the German welfare state arrangements, we expect strong gender differences in the re-employment decisions of unemployed men and women. Besides the expected influence of absolute income provided by the partner, gender norms and tax splitting suggest to take into account the previous income distribution of a couple. Men will try to re-enter employment regardless of their spouse's income, because they feel responsible for maintaining or re-establishing the main provider role. In contrast, women will take up employment mainly if they earned the main part of the couple's income before becoming unemployed, but not if they were the minor earner anyway. Finally, we expect these gender asymmetries to be weaker in younger birth cohorts, since gender norms have become more open to unconventional ways of living and welfare state conditions have changed in favour of women's labour market attachment, at least partly. Couples with children are not only

² Welfare state conditions and gender norms were different in East Germany, characterised by a dual full-time earner model and full-time state childcare. Nevertheless, women were usually responsible for household labour. The different gender norms emerging from these conditions are still visible in the higher preferences of East German women for full-time employment. After unification, women were the main losers in the East German labour market, and despite their preferences nowadays they often only find part-time work. Since we do not distinguish between re-entries into full-time and part-time work in our empirical analysis, these normative differences should not be important for our analysis.

more exposed to the norms as stated above, but also to the concrete welfare state conditions, so the gender differences should be stronger for them.

Empirical evidence

Gender asymmetry in the labour market behaviour of spouses has been shown in several studies. Financial resources and labour-market-related resources of the partner affect men's and women's labour market participation differently. Brynin and Schupp (2000) examine whether the wife's education contributes to the husband's labour market outcomes and vice versa. They find that the wages of husbands increase with the wives' level of education, while this is true to a lesser extent for women with highly educated partners. However, there remains considerable variation by educational attainment and educational constellations, and the patterns differ between German and British couples. Verbakel and de Graaf (2008, 2009) investigate the role of the partner on career mobility in the Netherlands. They find that having a resourceful partner stimulates upward mobility for both men and women. Regarding historical development in partner effects the authors can also show that nothing has changed in how women's career mobility is influenced by the partner's resources. For men the former positive effect of a highly educated wife on their career mobility has disappeared in more recent years. In another paper the authors complement these analyses by showing that the partner's career resources have a negative influence on working hours and a positive influence on job level (Verbakel and de Graaf 2009). Similar gender differences regarding labour market careers have been found by Bernardi (1999) for Italian wives. He showed that husbands' resources have a negative effect on women's labour market participation, but a positive effect on their occupational attainment. Bernasco et al (1998) analysed re-employment of married men and women who are out of the labour force (non-employed or unemployed). Using event history analysis they find that the husband's earnings negatively affect the hazard of a woman's entering employment, whereas the husband's education as a measure of labour market related resources has positive effects. In contrast, the female partner's resources neither facilitate nor hinder her partner's re-employment after a (voluntary or involuntary) interruption – the husband's employment entry is dominated by his own characteristics. Thus, their results are comparable to those of Lentz & Traaen (2005b) regarding the negative effect of partners' income on the outcomes of women, but not on the outcomes of men – here they found a positive effect.

2.3 Unemployment duration and the partner's resources: Hypotheses

We now summarise and combine the theoretical approaches to derive hypotheses on gender asymmetries in unemployment duration. Job search theory has mostly been applied in studies that focus on unemployment compensation benefits, arguing that the provision of financial resources lengthens unemployment. On the other hand, studies on re-employment and occupational attainment have shown that partners provide other forms of support, such as information on vacancies, and emotional and practical help that facilitate finding a job quickly. This leaves us with an ambiguous effect of partnership or the lack thereof on the duration of an individual's unemployment.

Taking into account the assumptions of classical family economics (specialisation) and bargaining theories (buying one's way out of domestic tasks), complemented by traditional gender roles and expectations from Doing Gender theories, we expect that partner effects on unemployment duration differ for men and women. These will be particularly pronounced for married couples due to three reasons: first, we assume that marriage is a stronger prerequisite for sharing resources and joint decisions of labour market participation of both spouses than just cohabitating; second, we assume that married individuals hold more traditional values, and third, the regulations of the German welfare state strongly favour the traditional (male) breadwinner role model.

I. Hypotheses on husbands and wives: Married women will be most likely to stay unemployed, whereas married men will exit unemployment as quickly as possible.

This 'gender asymmetry' is now specified regarding the different resources of the partner. According to job search theory the partner's monetary resources negatively influence unemployment duration, whereas the partner's labour market resources have an accelerating effect. Gender theories come to a differentiated picture: as income has a strong male connotation, we expect differences between men and women only for the effect of the spouse's income, but not for the spouse's labour-market-related resources.

II. Hypotheses on partner's financial and labour market-related resources: The partner's labour market resources are favourable for the re-employment chances of both men and women. In contrast, financial resources have a different impact: if there is a male breadwinner providing sufficient financial resources to maintain the household's living standard, women are less likely to leave unemployment. In contrast, the female partner's earnings have no impact on her unemployed male partner.

Finally, we expect these gender differences to be modified by two characteristics: birth cohort and children. As gender roles have become less traditional and welfare

state conditions have changed accordingly in recent years, at least partly, we expect that gender asymmetries have decreased over birth cohorts. Having children should have a contrary effect: for couples who have children, gender norms are much more salient than for childless couples due to the added aspect of what defines a good mother (or a good father). The German welfare state arrangements aggravate these norms; due to the lack of state-provided full-day childcare and to tax regulations mothers are often forced into housework and/or part-time employment.

III. Hypotheses on birth cohorts and children: For older birth cohorts and for couples with children the contrary effects of marriage for women and men are stronger and the negative effect of the partner's income on a woman's re-employment chances intensifies.

3 Data and methods

Empirically, we test our hypotheses using data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP), a longitudinal household survey conducted yearly since 1984 in a large sample of German resident households.³ This data source is particularly suited for our research questions due to two characteristics: first, it provides not only longitudinal information on the (un-)employment history of the panel participants and their individual attributes, but also the same information on their cohabiting partners. Second, the participants' (and partners') income is captured in great detail in the GSOEP by asking separately for all possible personal and household sources of income. Thus, labour earnings and the personal income of each individual in the sample and of his or her partner can be distinguished.

In order to analyse women's and men's transitions from unemployment into (re-)employment and the influence of their own and their partner's resources in these transitions, we constructed an analysis dataset that contains only episodes of registered unemployment (measured monthly in the data). By using information of all the GSOEP sub-samples except for the high income sample (sample G, started in 2002) and the survey waves 1984-2006, we could identify 16,277 unemployment episodes of 7,337 persons.⁴ Whereas 4,459 persons (27.4 percent) only had a single phase of unemployment while participating in the GSOEP, the majority had up to 19 repeated episodes.⁵ Due to the large set of time-variant covariate information, we

³ The data used in this paper was extracted using the Add-On package PanelWhiz for Stata®. PanelWhiz (<http://www.PanelWhiz.eu>) was written by Dr. John P. Haisken-DeNew (john@PanelWhiz.eu). See Haisken-DeNew and Hahn (2006) for details. Any data or computational errors in this paper are our own.

⁴ Episodes when persons were under 16 or over 64 years of age at the start of unemployment, as well as left-censored episodes and episodes with missing covariate information were excluded from the analysis sample.

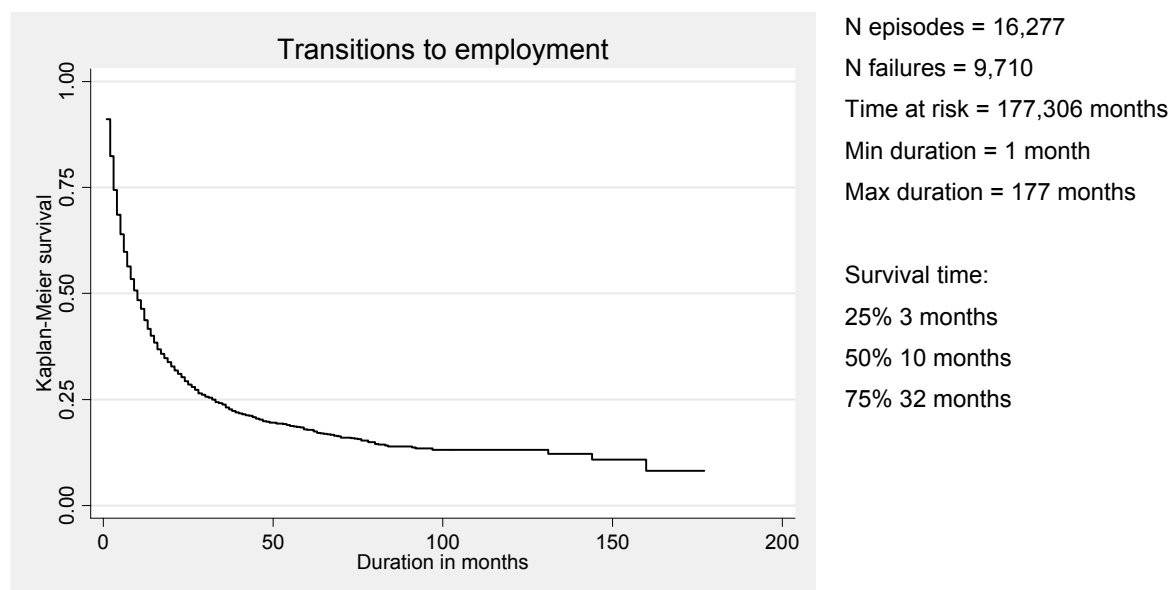
⁵ Due to the panel structure of the GSOEP, our analysis sample may not be representative of the whole array of unemployment phases of the German population in the respective years: since in very long unemployment periods covariate information was missing more often, many of these spells had to be excluded. We assume,

transformed the analysis data into monthly spells, covering in sum 177,306 person-months for our multivariate analyses.

Analysis time starts with the first month of registered unemployment and ends either with making a successful transition into full- or part-time employment, with leaving unemployment by entering another state, e.g. education, training or inactivity, or with being still unemployed at the end of observation time. For our analyses we regard only transitions into employment as a successful pathway out of unemployment, whereas we regard transitions into all other states as right-censored.⁶

Figure 1 shows the cumulated transition rate to employment for all unemployment episodes. The curve has the typical shape of transitions from unemployment: most successful transitions to employment happen after a very brief period of unemployment, while after a longer time, fewer and fewer persons are able to find work.

Figure 1: Transitions into employment (Kaplan-Meier survival function)



Source: GSOEP 1984-2006, own estimations

Since we focus on the temporal order of events and the time-dependence of several resources and constraints, we include information as time-dependent variables in our models whenever possible. In this context a constraint of the GSOEP has to be

however, that the causal effects of the variables of interest in this article are the same for short- and long-term unemployment.

⁶ Alternatively, it would be possible to take into account only transitions into full-time employment. We refrained from doing so, because only very few men, but many women work part-time in Germany. Thus, transitions into full-time employment are still rare events for women, in particular for mothers. Empirical tests showed similar (but often non-significant) effects in our models for men and women when taking into account only transitions into full-time work.

noted, though: most information (except for employment status and marital status) is recorded only once a year, usually at the time of the interview. Thus most covariates gather the characteristics of an unemployed individual and his or her partner only roughly; in particular, information is missing on the exact timing of changes during a phase of unemployment. In this case we had to decide which information was more adequate: information measured in the same year as the unemployment episode or in the previous year. For all information with only few intra-personal changes (such as educational level or region of living) we decided to use the same year, while time-sensitive information, in particular earnings and income, was included for the previous year.⁷

Central dimensions of comparison in our article are the respondents' sex and their partner status, i.e. whether they are living together with a partner in the same household or not.⁸ The latter information is again only recorded once a year (at the date of the interview), thus we have to assume in our models that the partner status does not change within a calendar year. To control further for the family structure, we include dummies for being married (monthly time-variant) and for the number of children younger than 18 years in the household (yearly time-variant).

Theoretically, we are interested mostly in effects of the partners' resources on transitions into employment. The labour market resources of the partner are measured by the educational level of the partner and his or her employment status. Education is operationalised by three categories: without vocational training (the reference category), vocational training and higher education. These variables are again yearly time-variant. Second, a (monthly time-variant) term indicates if the partner is unemployed him- or herself to control for the fact that unemployment often is pooled in couples.

Regarding the partner's financial resources, we include the partner's personal income level. Since the precise monthly income of persons is unknown in the GSOEP, we use the logarithm of the partner's mean monthly personal income in the year previous to the calendar year of the unemployment episode. While job search theory only assumes that the partner's income height affects unemployment outcomes, family economics, bargaining and gender theories also assume that the income distribution of couples plays a role in re-employment decisions. Therefore, we are also interested in the partner's relative income because it indicates the couple's breadwinning model. Thus, we include the partner's income share in the couple's joint income in the previous year. Both variables are yearly time-variant.

⁷ An additional argument for this decision is the timing of the interviews in the GSOEP: the majority of the interviews takes place in spring, thus we can assume that for most unemployment episodes covariate information is from an earlier date.

⁸ Partners who live in another household are not recorded in the GSOEP.

In order to control for the labour market resources of the unemployed him- or herself, we include several more detailed indicators: first, the individual's educational attainment, again with two dummy variables for training, respectively university. Second, employment experience (in years, plus a quadratic term) and unemployment experience (in years) are controlled for, both measured at the start of each unemployment episode. Third, we consider age at the start of the unemployment episode (in years, plus a quadratic term), since in the German labour market the re-employment chances for older workers are considerably lower than for younger workers. Finally, the logarithm of the mean monthly labour earnings of the previous year is included.⁹ Regarding one's own financial resources, we include a dummy variable for whether the unemployed person received unemployment benefits in the respective year or not. Since only yearly-cumulated measures are available regarding the amount of benefits, we refrained from including more detailed information.¹⁰

Finally, we add several control variables to account for additional heterogeneity of our sample: two dummy variables indicate whether the respondent immigrated to Germany after 1949 (time-invariant), respectively whether he does not have German nationality (yearly time-variant). Both variables are included to indicate the sample structure of the GSOEP. To account for differing labour market chances by region and year, we include the yearly unemployment rate in the federal state (Bundesland) in which the respondent lives (yearly time-variant).

The characteristics of the variables described above are shown in Table 2, in the left column for all observed unemployed episodes (used in model 1), and in the right column only for episodes of individuals who were living together with a partner during the whole length of the unemployment episode (used in model 2).

We analyse the transition process from unemployment to (re-)employment by estimating a random intercept complementary log-logistic model. This discrete-time event-history model is better suited for the measurement of unemployment episodes in months (as is the case in our data) than models for continuous time. A good indicator of the need for a discrete-time model is the large number of ties we observe in our data – events that happen at the same recorded time (Allison 2010).

⁹ In our view, the previous wage level controls less for one's own financial resources than for the labour market value of the previous job. Once included, other measures such as occupational status or job prestige do not add to the explanation of transitions into employment anymore.

¹⁰ An effect similar (negative) to that for unemployment benefits could be expected for one's own wealth, because it also enables persons to search for a longer time. However, information on wealth is not recorded regularly in the GSOEP.

The log-logistic link function follows a proportional hazards model in continuous time (Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal 2008: 356).¹¹ Thus, the exponentiated coefficients can be interpreted as hazard ratios. Unlike either the logit or probit model, the complementary log-log model is asymmetric (Long 1997: 51).

The inclusion of the random intercept accounts for the dependence of repeated unemployment episodes of one single person (shared frailty) (Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal 2008: 360ff). Despite controlling for age, experience and the previous unemployment experience in the models, and thus capturing some dependence among repeated unemployment episodes in the fixed part of the model, the estimated residual correlation (ρ) among two unemployment episodes of the same person is highly significantly different from zero in all estimated models. Thus this model seems to be more appropriate than a model without shared frailty.

Due to the long duration of some unemployment episodes and the strongly declining risk of entering employment in later phases of the observed unemployment episodes, we chose a piecewise-constant specification of the baseline hazard function, splitting observation time into larger pieces for longer unemployment durations.

The specification of the models and their adequacy were tested for robustness by using alternative estimators: simple complementary log-log, random intercept logit, and also random intercept regression, the latter because it is more robust to omitted variables (Mood 2010). The coefficients turned out to be comparable in all specifications, only standard errors and significances differed in the random effects regression models in some cases. Results of these robustness checks are available on request from the authors.

¹¹ The predicted probabilities of the complementary log-log and logit models are very close in the case of small transition rates (Singer & Willett 2003: 420). To test our results for robustness we also applied random intercept logit models to our data, with nearly identical results.

Table 2: Means and standard deviations of the variables in the models

Variable	Model 1 (all episodes)				Model 2 (with partner only)			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Transition to employment	.065	.247	.044	.205	.063	.244	.041	.198
Partner in household	.660	.474	.680	.466				
Married	.590	.492	.623	.485	.871	.336	.885	.319
1-2 children in household	.314	.464	.397	.489	.386	.487	.412	.492
3+ children in household	.072	.259	.067	.251	.097	.297	.073	.260
Partner training					.481	.500	.680	.466
Partner university					.113	.316	.131	.338
Partner unemployed					.155	.362	.158	.365
P. income previous year (ln)					5.112	2.908	7.093	1.309
P. income share prev. year					.368	.287	.704	.208
Training	.576	.494	.593	.491	.595	.491	.631	.482
University	.092	.289	.092	.289	.111	.315	.097	.296
Experience (in years)	19.814	13.461	16.812	12.135	24.865	11.881	19.055	11.693
Unempl. exper. (in years)	2.528	3.247	2.382	2.934	2.485	3.061	2.285	2.784
Age (in years, 0=15 yrs.)	24.775	13.224	23.848	12.269	29.682	11.164	26.234	11.178
Labour earnings prev. yr (ln)	4.282	3.311	3.477	3.166	4.440	3.384	3.498	3.192
Unemployment benefits	.768	.422	.708	.455	.823	.382	.746	.435
Immigrant	.275	.447	.187	.390	.340	.474	.207	.405
Foreign nationality	.252	.434	.153	.360	.289	.453	.158	.365
Regional unempl. rate (0=3.7)	9.034	4.997	9.770	5.050	8.914	4.946	10.032	5.067
N	87,700		87,771		55,202		56,500	

Source: GSOEP 1984-2006, own estimations

4 Results

In the first part of this section, we analyse whether living together with a partner matters for the transition from unemployment to employment, and whether this plays a particular role for married men and women. In the second and third parts, we concentrate on unemployment among cohabiting and married couples. Here, we are interested first in the specific effects of the partner's resources on the other's risk of entering employment, and second in the changes of these effects over birth cohorts and for couples with and without children.

4.1 Effects of having a partner

Effects of having a partner, family status and personal resources on the risk of entering employment are shown in Table 3. By estimating separate models for men and women we find a strong gender asymmetry for married men and women, supporting hypothesis I: while for men cohabiting with a partner and being married

both have positive effects on the transition to work, for women having a partner is neutral and being married has a negative effect.¹²

In contrast, children and one's own resources have similar effects for males and females: having children younger than 18 years in the household lowers the hazard rate to enter employment, in particular for women if the number of children is high. Persons with training, and even more so those with a higher education, are more likely to enter employment than are persons without training. Previous labour market experience has a positive effect on successful transitions from unemployment, previous unemployment experience a negative effect. Whereas rising age is no problem in younger age groups, at a higher age the hazard to enter employment decreases. The higher the wage level in the previous year, the more likely men and women are to take up employment. Finally, receiving unemployment benefits has a negative effect on entering work.

In sum, the effects of the unemployed individual's own resources are consistent with those found by previous research and most of them are similar for unemployed females and males, at least in tendency. But re-employment chances of unemployed men and women differ in another aspect, according to marital status: while regarding employment entry men profit from having a partner and being married, women do not. For them, cohabitating with a partner is neutral, and being married even lowers their chance to re-enter work.

¹² To account for possible bias caused by omitted variables, sex interactions with family status and own resources were tested with random intercept complementary log-log and random-intercept regression models. All reported sex differences are based on significant interaction terms in both models; reported gender similarities do not show significant sex interactions (at least not consistently).

*Table 3: Effects of family status and personal resources (random intercept complementary log-logistic models, hazard ratios, t-statistics in parentheses)**

	Men	Women
Partner in household	1.233 *** (3.83)	1.028 (0.51)
Married	1.259 *** (4.13)	0.843 ** (-3.07)
1-2 children in household	0.906 * (-2.38)	0.756 *** (-6.24)
3+ children in household	0.778 *** (-3.29)	0.536 *** (-6.43)
Training	1.511 *** (8.74)	1.225 *** (3.97)
University	2.262 *** (10.28)	2.045 *** (9.66)
Experience	1.057 *** (4.88)	1.077 *** (6.93)
Experience ²	1.000 (-0.50)	0.999 *** (-4.98)
Unemployment experience	0.977 *** (-3.38)	0.970 *** (-3.54)
Age (ref. 15 years)	1.005 (0.39)	0.989 (-0.90)
Age ²	0.998 *** (-8.48)	0.999 *** (-4.95)
Labour earnings prev. year (ln)	1.059 *** (7.77)	1.070 *** (9.10)
Unemployment benefits	0.772 *** (-6.72)	0.821 *** (-4.54)
N	87,700	87,771
AIC	37,996	29,403
BIC	38,221	29,628
rho	0.256 ***	0.196 ***

* Effects of control variables and time are not shown. p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Source: GSOEP 1984-2006, own estimations

4.2 Effects of partners' resources

In Table 4 two models for cohabiting and married partners are shown: first, the same model that was estimated in the previous section for all unemployed individuals in the sample (left two columns), and second, with additional indicators for their partner's resources (right two columns), again separately for men and women.

The directions and sizes of the coefficients in the first model are in general very similar to the results for the whole sample. Thus, for unemployed individuals who live with a partner during the whole phase of unemployment, the mechanisms underlying decisions about the transition from unemployment to employment are similar to those of singles or persons living apart together. We also replicate the finding that married spouses differ from cohabiting couples (hypothesis I): Husbands are significantly

more likely to re-enter employment than are cohabiting men, whereas wives are less likely than cohabiting women to leave unemployment.

*Table 4: Effects of family status, personal and partner resources for cohabiting couples (random intercept complementary log-logistic models, hazard ratios, t-statistics in parentheses)**

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Married	1.233 ** (3.04)	0.767 *** (-3.74)	1.238 ** (3.10)	0.765 *** (-3.78)
1-2 children in household	0.912 (-1.64)	0.725 *** (-5.37)	0.923 (-1.43)	0.733 *** (-5.17)
3+ children in household	0.735 ** (-3.28)	0.543 *** (-5.18)	0.773 ** (-2.71)	0.570 *** (-4.78)
Partner training			1.200 ** (2.87)	1.023 (0.31)
Partner university			1.240 * (2.22)	1.088 (0.83)
Partner unemployed			0.772 *** (-4.07)	0.759 *** (-3.47)
Partner income prev. year (ln)			1.022 (1.57)	1.135 *** (3.84)
P. relative income prev. year			0.942 (-0.40)	0.590 ** (-2.64)
Training	1.335 *** (4.27)	1.289 *** (3.61)	1.277 *** (3.55)	1.239 ** (2.98)
University	1.920 *** (6.39)	2.131 *** (7.99)	1.779 *** (5.44)	1.938 *** (6.58)
Experience	1.019 (1.20)	1.077 *** (5.49)	1.018 (1.14)	1.074 *** (5.26)
Experience ²	1.001 (1.72)	0.999 *** (-3.75)	1.001 (1.90)	0.999 *** (-3.62)
Unempl. experience	0.986 (-1.60)	0.981 (-1.80)	0.990 (-1.13)	0.987 (-1.24)
Age (ref. 15)	1.049 * (2.40)	1.024 (1.34)	1.046 * (2.23)	1.017 (0.93)
Age ²	0.997 *** (-8.14)	0.998 *** (-5.60)	0.997 *** (-8.05)	0.998 *** (-5.17)
Labour earnings prev. year (ln)	1.057 *** (5.59)	1.069 *** (7.14)	1.053 *** (4.61)	1.052 *** (4.53)
Unemployment benefits	0.704 *** (-6.64)	0.738 *** (-5.32)	0.704 *** (-6.58)	0.701 *** (-6.09)
N	55,202	56,500	55,202	56,500
AIC	22,957	17,938	22,934	17,911
BIC	23,162	18,144	23,184	18,162
rho	0.282 ***	0.174 ***	0.279 ***	0.168 ***

* Effects of control variables and time are not shown. p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Source: GSOEP 1984-2006, own estimations

In the second model different resources of the partner were introduced: educational background, unemployment and his or her absolute and relative income in the previous year. The results show that unemployed men can profit from the educational resources of their female partner, while for unemployed women the education of their partner has no significant effect on their risk of (re-)entering employment (but the coefficients have positive signs as well). Both sexes are less likely to leave unemployment successfully as long as their partner is unemployed as well. Thus, the data confirm only parts of the hypotheses in II. For unemployed men, only the female partner's labour market resources have a positive effect on their hazard to re-enter employment. For unemployed women, only the employment status of their male partners seems to play a role regarding a successful way out of unemployment.

Finally, the partner's financial resources only affect unemployed women, but not unemployed men. However, the signs of the two effects are somewhat different than expected: the higher the relative share of their male partner's previous income, the lower is their hazard to enter employment. Thus, large differences in spouses' previous income lead to either specialisation, bargaining advantages or gender-conform behaviour. Controlled for a couple's income differences, the absolute income of the male partner does not have a negative effect on the female partner's hazard to take up work, but rather a positive effect. This result clearly contradicts our expectations in the hypothesis of increasing unemployment duration of women with increasing income of their partners. For men, both effects are insignificant, but the signs are the same as those for women.

We can only speculate on explanations for this surprising result: maybe other labour market-related correlates of high income that we also discussed in our theoretical considerations, e.g. high occupational status, access to efficient information flows and labour-oriented attitudes shared by the couple help in applying appropriate search methods and in successful applications. Perhaps in a dual breadwinner model a higher male income helps women to outsource childcare and/or domestic work by paying private services, enabling them to take up paid employment easier and faster. Both mechanisms lead to the same effect, though: couples' resources in terms of higher education, secure employment and higher income lead to an accumulation of advantages regarding quick labour market re-attachment, while shared low resources lead to a higher risk of (dual) unemployment.

4.3 Gender differences by cohort and children

In Table 5, two different interaction effects on the partner's resources are tested as hypothesised: first, differential effects of the birth cohort in which the unemployed individuals were born, and second, differential effects of unemployed men and women with and without children.

*Table 5: Interaction effects of partner resources for cohabiting couples by birth cohort, children and age (random intercept complementary log-logistic models, hazard ratios, t-statistics in parentheses)**

	Model 3 (cohort)		Model 4 (children)		Model 5 (age)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Partner training	1.171 (1.33)	1.033 (0.19)	1.086 (0.91)	1.155 (1.39)	1.047 (0.34)	0.834 (-1.20)
Partner university	1.574* (2.45)	1.282 (1.15)	1.310* (2.16)	1.251 (1.68)	0.726 (-1.33)	0.801 (-0.95)
Partner unemployed	0.726* (-2.35)	0.834 (-1.00)	0.717** (-3.18)	0.707** (-3.03)	0.900 (-0.68)	0.713 (-1.86)
Partner income prev. y. (ln)	1.101*** (3.74)	1.007 (0.10)	1.048* (2.08)	1.077 (1.84)	0.916** (-2.82)	1.139 (1.94)
P. relative income prev. y. (ln)	0.526* (-2.35)	0.974 (-0.07)	1.028 (0.14)	0.579* (-2.24)	1.944* (2.19)	0.630 (-1.21)
Cohort	0.878* (-2.19)	0.780 (-1.45)				
Partner training*cohort	1.023 (0.49)	0.996 (-0.07)				
Partner university*cohort	0.895 (-1.41)	0.924 (-0.94)				
Partner unemployed*cohort	1.020 (0.37)	0.965 (-0.51)				
Partner income*cohort	0.968** (-3.07)	1.052 (1.89)				
P. relative income*children	1.266* (2.32)	0.802 (-1.62)				
Children in household			1.072 (0.53)	0.356** (-2.78)		
Partner training*children			1.180 (1.52)	0.795 (-1.69)		
Partner university*children			0.864 (-0.91)	0.758 (-1.56)		
Partner unemployed*children			1.128 (0.93)	1.170 (1.00)		
Partner income*children			0.969 (-1.23)	1.130* (2.11)		
P. relative income*children			0.857 (-0.64)	0.987 (-0.04)		
Age					1.043* (2.02)	1.015 (0.62)
Partner training*age					1.006 (1.19)	1.011 (1.55)
Partner university*age					1.022* (2.48)	1.015 (1.54)
Partner unemployed*age					0.993 (-1.10)	1.003 (0.35)
Partner income*age					1.005*** (3.90)	1.000 (-0.07)
P. relative income*age					0.968** (-2.77)	0.997 (-0.21)
N	55,202	56,500	55,202	56,500	55,202	56,500
AIC	229,034	17,917	22,934	17,916	22,918	17,918
BIC	23,207	18,221	23,219	18,202	23,212	18,213
rho	0.273***	0.168***	0.278***	0.165***	0.284***	0.167***

* Effects of family status, one's own resources, control variables and time are not shown. p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Source: GSOEP 1984-2006, own estimations

Cohort main and interaction effects are in general weak and significant only for men: in this group, younger cohorts are less likely to enter employment (in the reference group with partners with low education, no current unemployment and no previous income). One of the two variables indicating the educational background of the partner loses significance, and the same is the case with unemployment of the partner.¹³ Interaction effects of these variables with the cohort are insignificant as well. Thus, the small positive effect of the partner's education and the negative effect of the partner's unemployment did not change systematically by birth cohort. In contrast, in the reference group of males the partner's income variables show the same effects as those for women now: the partner's relative income has a negative effect on a successful way out of unemployment for unemployed men in the reference cohort; the absolute income has a positive effect. Both coefficients lose their influence in younger cohorts (positive interaction effects).

Thus, only men in early birth cohorts are affected by their female partner's income and income share, while the transitions to work for younger men are independent of their partner's financial resources. Again we find the surprising positive effect of partner's absolute income, whereas we assumed no effect of the partner's income and income share for men (in older and younger birth cohorts), and a negative effect for women in older birth cohorts. Empirically, for women no cohort main and interaction effects of any of the partners' resources are visible, though. Thus, our hypothesis on changes over time cannot be confirmed by our results, since the data do not support the expected mechanism of a declining importance of gender roles for both sexes.

A household with children under 18 years has explanatory power for the partner's differential resources, but in this case mainly for women. In general, having children has no effect for men in the reference group (with partners with low education, no current unemployment and low income), while it has a strong negative effect on transitions to employment for women in this group. This null-finding for men implies that fathers' re-employment is not accelerated compared to that of childless men, as the male-breadwinner model may suggest.

The partner's educational and labour market resources seem to work independent of whether children are present or not. For women, the income of the partner changes the coefficients remarkably: for childless women, the partner's absolute income is non-significant and his relative income has a negative effect. For women with children, the influence of their partner's relative income does not change, while the effect of his absolute income becomes positive. That is, once there are children in the family, women re-enter employment dependent on their spouse's financial resources.

¹³ A possible reason for this could be that the reference category for cohort (1922) only has a few cases in the data.

For men, the main effect of the partner's absolute income is now positively significant, too, while its interaction effect with children is negative, but non-significant. The relative income of their partner does not play a role in men's return to the labour market, neither for men with children nor for childless men.

Thus, hypothesis 5 is confirmed only partly: gender asymmetry regarding the partner's financial resources is indeed intensified by having children, but only with respect to their absolute number. Childless women decide on their labour market re-entry regardless of their spouse's income, but women with children show dependencies on their spouses' financial resources (and childless men also tend to do so).¹⁴ While for men the distribution of joint income does not play a role regarding their chances to re-enter the labour market, for women it does, regardless of whether they have children or not.

In general, it is difficult to disentangle the effects of cohort, age and children empirically in the GSOEP data: we observe only unemployment episodes in between 1984 and 2006, and in this time frame the likelihood to have children younger than 18 years in the household and accordingly to be of younger age decreases systematically by birth cohort.¹⁵ Thus, the cohort interaction effects which are visible only for men may also point at partner's effects in certain life circumstances: unemployment at a higher age, when it is very difficult to find a way back into the German labour market, particularly into a 'good' full-time job. Thus, unemployment at a higher age bears a high risk of a permanent state until retirement with hard cuts into pension entitlements. This risk is higher for men than for women, because usually they have adopted the main breadwinner role in the family, which is more dependent on their full-time employment than on their spouse's.

To test this alternative (ad hoc) hypothesis, we introduced a third model with age interaction effects (the last two columns of Table 5). The results show that for men, interaction effects of the partner's financial resources with age are indeed highly significant. Older men's reactions to unemployment are comparable to those of women regarding their partner's financial resources, in particular to those of women with children: the higher the relative amount of the partner's income compared to the joint income, the lower the chance to re-enter employment. Apart from the couple's income distribution, the absolute amount of the partner's income again has a positive effect on the likelihood to take up work again.

¹⁴ Even for women, interaction effects of partners' resources with children are small and significant only on the 5%-level. Thus, these differences should not be interpreted with care.

¹⁵ This problem is aggravated by the development of unemployment rates in Germany: we observe many more unemployment episodes in the 1990s and afterwards than in the 1980s. Thus, unemployment becomes more seldom for earlier birth cohort and in accordance, also for those of higher age and for couples without children under 18 in the household.

Women with a partner, in particular women with children, and older men with a partner are comparable in an important respect: they both are in life situations where they are highly dependent on their partners – older men, due to the high risk of their unemployment for both partners' future, women with children, due to the difficulty to juggle paid work with childcare and housework responsibilities. And in both cases, the joint decision 'mechanics' are similar: if their partner provided the main part of the family income before, they tend to stay out of the labour force longer or permanently, while they tend to re-enter work quickly if they were the sole earner in the family before becoming unemployed. The amount of the partner's income helps both groups to re-enter work: for older men, possibly due to the labour market resources of their female partner, which are coupled with high income. For women with children, a high income of the male partner may additionally allow money to be spent on public full-day childcare that usually is rather costly in Germany, so the female partner can search for a job more efficiently and have better re-employment chances.

5 Summary and conclusion

In our paper we have examined whether the partner's resources matter for leaving unemployment to enter employment. According to job search theory, financial support of the partner might lead to longer unemployment duration, as it serves as a search subsidy. Job search theory also predicts that labour market-related resources of the partner improve one's own re-employment chances by increasing the job arrival rate. The classical family economics as well as bargaining theory come to similar conclusions regarding the effect of financial resources: the household member with a high income intensifies paid work, whereas the unemployed partner increases non-paid domestic tasks. We extend these theories by assuming gender asymmetries in the role of partners' resources: gender role and Doing Gender theories assume that the labour market commitment of men and women differs. Women are less attached to the labour market and therefore they are less likely to re-enter employment. This gender-specific labour market behaviour is further strengthened by the German welfare system. We expect prolonged unemployment to be particularly salient for married women living with a male breadwinner. In contrast, men will not be influenced by their wives' income and will re-enter employment as quickly as possible, supported by their wives' labour market-related resources.

In our empirical analysis we found support for a 'partnership' premium for men – for both marriage and cohabitation – whereas married women have the least incentives to leave unemployment. All other individual factors that influence unemployment duration are, at least in tendency, similar for men and women. Thus, our analysis revealed that marriage is one of the most important factors generating differences in re-employment chances. Taking into account the scarring effects of unemployment,

being out of work implies long-term consequences for inequalities between married and single women.

Looking at couples only we examined gender differences in the role of financial and labour market-related resources. We find that men profit from their partner's labour market-related resources, but re-enter work regardless of their partner's income. In contrast, women's unemployment is not influenced by their partner's labour market resources but by the partner's income – however not in the way we expected. Surprisingly, the higher the male partner's income is, the more likely women are to leave unemployment. Hence, women obviously also profit from their partner. Thus, there is no partner penalty for women per se. However, an important complementary finding is that differences in previous earnings decelerate women's re-employment. Women who were the minor wage earner are less likely to return to work. A couple may easily compensate this small loss of income contribution by reduced consumption or other financial compensations. Besides, in contrast to men, female gender roles allow women to stay unemployed even if they were attached to paid work before. This finding has several implications, for example, in the long run prolonged unemployment of the partner with lower earnings may lead to increasing inequalities within the couple due to scarring effects. As a consequence, the rationale for a traditional male breadwinner model intensifies – with all the negative consequences for women in the long run (entitlement to unemployment benefits, pensions, high economic risk in the case of divorce). If there are policy regulations that foster such a traditional division of labour as that in Germany, the risks for women to give up work are comparatively small. In a comparative study, such country-level characteristics could be elaborated further to show whether men and women react differently to welfare state provisions if one member of the household becomes unemployed. There is an alternative explanation for poor re-employment chances of the (female) secondary wage earner: as these women often were marginally or part-time employed before they became unemployed, it might be more complicated to find such a job that in many cases has also to allow for work-family balance if there are children present in the household. A similar observation occurred when we looked at age: older men, who are assumed to have rather poor employment prospects, are more likely to remain unemployed, the lower their contribution is to the household's total income.

The analysis of trends over time revealed that there are no consistent historical changes in the influence of the partner. Only in the older cohorts did men profit from their spouse's income. In these cohorts women's labour market participation perhaps was rather due to the particular characteristics of these women working in paid employment or to those of these couples, who were in need of the wife's earnings for the household's survival. For women, the influence of the partner's resources did not change at all, despite major societal changes of family and work, including expansion

of women's educational attainment, labour market participation and commitment. Having children or not particularly decelerates the employment transition for women, and the main partner effects are intensified for those who have children.

Summing up, the main finding of our paper is that unemployment is a major source of the increasing inequalities between and within households: as the partner's resources matter for re-employment, assortative mating and complementarities of the partner's labour market participation increase inequalities between households. People whose partners have many resources support their partner's career: women with high labour market potential increase the labour market performance of their partners and in an earnings-egalitarian partnership, they gain from their partner's income while finding a job. However, the most disadvantaged individuals in terms of unemployment duration are (married) women with children who are secondary earners: although their partner's absolute income helps in finding a job, they are less likely to re-enter the labour market. This in turn may have additional scarring effects for their future working career.

In our paper we treated the unemployment of one partner as an exogenous 'shock' that implies different possibilities of men and women (and their partner) about whether and when to re-enter paid work. Implicitly we assumed that the observed outcome is the result of a collective decision process. To further understand the processes of joint labour market decisions by partners and the interrelations of spouses' labour market careers, further research is necessary that elaborates on the question whether more generally labour market careers are realised sequentially or simultaneously.

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