



Should We Stay or Should We Go? A Factorial Survey Analysis of Decisions on Regional Moves within Dual-Earner Partnerships

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(January 2009)

LASER Discussion Papers - Paper No. 28

(edited by A. Abele-Brehm, R.T. Riphahn, K. Moser and C. Schnabel)

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the problems faced by dual-career partnerships arising from the regional coordination of both partners' employment careers. Although it is well known that couples are less mobile than singles, we do not know whether this is due to homogenous preferences within couples or to a process of balancing conflicting interests. Consequently, we analyze the influences on potential conflicts caused by work-related migration incentives. Hypotheses derived from bargaining theory are tested using quasi-experimental data from a factorial survey of 280 couples. Our results support the bargaining approach and confirm that the potential for conflict is driven by asymmetrical shifts in bargaining power. There is only weak evidence for gender-related patterns.

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Version 16/1/ 2009

It is well known that in modern societies, changing employment patterns affect couples and families in various ways. In particular, the increasing labor market participation of women leads to new challenges for people living in marriages as well as cohabitations. One of these challenges arises from the necessity to coordinate two employment careers in time and space. For example, the probability of migration drops significantly when people enter a private partnership (McHugh, Gober, & Reid, 1990; Quigley & Weinberg, 1977). The migration literature offers a wide range of empirical findings as well as theoretical explanations regarding the determinants of household migration (Bartel, 1979, 1982; Bielby & Bielby, 1992, Long, 1974; Shauman & Noonan, 2007). Previous findings in this literature are limited due to the focus on actual migration and not on the decision for or against a household move. As a consequence, there is scarce knowledge regarding conflicts and decision processes within couples. Moreover, migration research based on “classic” survey data is usually biased towards the traditional case of men as the main breadwinners. Women that receive a job offer with a considerably higher salary than their male spouses are still relatively rare (see e.g. Cooke, 2006, p. 467 for Germany and the USA). It is, therefore, difficult to disentangle gender and structural effects.

Looking at household migration from a theoretical point of view, most researchers stress the necessity of considering the conflicting interests of both partners in an analysis. Especially in dual-career couples, new job opportunities for one partner may correspond with decreasing opportunities for her or his mate. In line with this argument, one of the dominant theoretical models for analyzing dual-career households is bargaining theory. Within this frame, the partners have to bargain over (a) the decision for or against migration and (b) the

arrangements that may follow after the household move to a new destination. Although this theoretical model seems appropriate for the research problem at hand, there are generally astonishingly few empirical tests of this theory. One reason may be the lack of paired data for couples, which are necessary to observe the diverging interests of partners. Another problem arises by focusing only on the allocation that results from the bargaining process. Bargaining theorists have tried to derive hypotheses regarding the shift of resources allocated to each partner and the consequences of that shift (e.g. Bernasco & Giesen, 2000; Klasen, 1998; Lundberg & Pollack, 1996). One of the main problems within this literature is, however, the difficulty in empirically measuring the allocation of resources within the partnership.

In this paper, we fill these gaps by applying factorial analysis. Factorial analysis is, in our opinion, an innovative research design for combining survey research with an experiment. In collecting data, we asked couples to evaluate hypothetical descriptions of better employment opportunities in a distant location for one partner. The partners independently evaluated the same set of situations. This design gives us the opportunity to analyze to what extent moving preferences conflict within a partnership. By varying the hypothetical situations in a systematic, experimental way, we are able to identify factors that influence the extent of potential conflicts that arise from differing migration incentives. Given this empirical framework, the current paper aims to complement the existing empirical knowledge on migration decisions by couples and to provide a direct test of bargaining models in family research.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, we discuss bargaining theory, the theoretical background for our analysis. We present a general version of this theory for the purpose of analyzing the problem of dual-career household moves, and also discuss the potential effect of gender roles on the migration decision. We also present four main hypotheses.

Bargaining Models

In family research, bargaining models are often used to analyze allocation problems among household members, and especially among spouses or cohabitation partners (e.g. Lundberg & Pollak, 1996; Phipps & Burton 1998; Wolley, 2000; for the allocation of housework see Bitman, England, Folbre, Sayer, & Matheson, 2003; Breen & Cooke, 2005; Cooke, 2006; Youm & Laumann, 2003). At the core of this theoretical framework is the situation in which two actors have to decide on the allocation of certain resources. Resources can refer to material resources like household income, as well as immaterial resources such as the rights to make decisions, enjoy leisure time, and avoid unpleasant household tasks. The result of this allocation decision depends on the relative bargaining power of each actor within the partnership.

This conceptual core can be found in different theoretical frameworks like classical exchange theory (Blood & Wolfe, 1960), social psychology (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), and rational choice theory (Bergstrom, 1993, 1996; Horney & McElroy, 1981; Manser & Brown, 1980). The crucial question within all these approaches is the definition of relative power within the bargaining process. Although there are some differences, most researchers agree that, to a large extent, the available alternatives to the current partnership determine each actor's bargaining power (see e.g. England & Farkas, 1986, p. 56). The partner with better "outside options" has more power in the bargaining relationship because she or he can credibly threaten to leave the relationship. The more powerful partner does not necessarily have to make this threat explicit. The bargaining process itself can stay implicit (i.e., without any discussion between the partners), but it is assumed that both partners are aware of the power imbalance caused by different outside options.

Although available alternatives may include the presence of other attractive partners (see e.g. Bergstrom, 1996, pp. 1929-1930; South & Lloyd, 1992), in modern societies a person's economic standing is probably the most decisive determinant of structural bargaining power in relationships. Labor market participation and an independent source of income make it possible for one partner to dissolve an unsatisfactory marriage or cohabitation. The next best alternative is often not the move into another relationship, but rather into a single household. Moreover, the higher a person's income, the more attractive they are in the marriage market. Thus, most research focuses on labor market opportunities and income possibilities for measuring bargaining power in partnerships (Blau, Ferber, & Winkler, 2001, p. 43; Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Ott, 1992).

The decision to move the household

Within this theoretical framework, household moves can be seen as events that are likely to be affected by the relative bargaining power of exchange partners (Lundberg & Pollak, 2003). On the other side household moves which have been realized again influence the relative bargaining power within a partnership. As Mincer explains, for partners in dual-career partnerships, it is unlikely that both partners will receive optimal job offers at the same time and within the same region (Mincer, 1978). Consequently, a couple has to decide whether the migration incentive for one (the "mover") is sufficient for accepting – at least temporarily – a worse employment situation for the other partner.

Mincer uses the term "tied mover" for a partner who experiences individual disadvantages due to a move that is generally beneficial for the household. On the other hand, a "tied stayer" foregoes the better job because his / her individual gains will not be sufficient to compensate for the overall household loss. While in Mincer's classical model the actors will accept any individual loss as long as the household utility is maximized, the model fails to recognize the conflicts that result from the clash of individual interests between the

partners. From a dynamic bargaining point of view, even a higher household utility may not be sufficient for a potential tied mover to accept the migration. This is because the actors would consider how a new situation affects their relative bargaining power, which will determine the allocation of household resources and hence the individual benefit of a move. If we accept the assumption that bargaining power is mainly influenced by the employment and income possibilities of the actors, by definition a tied mover will experience a loss of relative bargaining power. If this loss is too high, the tied mover may get even a lower share of household resources at the new destination than he / she got before the move although the overall household resources have increased (Lundberg & Pollak, 2003; Ott, 1992). Thus, potential tied movers anticipating such a situation may reject the household move whereas tied stayers may use their job offer to renegotiate the allocation of resources in the relationship. The job offer can be seen as a new outside option because, theoretically, the potential tied stayer has an attractive alternative to the relationship and the possibility of moving without the partner.

Bargaining models are most often used to predict the allocation of resources within a relationship (see Lundberg & Pollak, 1996 for a review over the applications to marriage and family behavior; esp. pp. 144-145 for the problems regarding empirical testing). In our opinion, measuring only the results of the bargaining process is not the most promising strategy to test this kind of theory. First, the actual allocation of resources may be influenced by many other factors that are difficult to control in empirical analyses (e.g. individual preferences). Second, and more important, actors are trying to solve these kinds of cooperation problems using various mechanisms. These mechanisms are not captured when only results are considered. The most important mechanism is the production of trust in the relationship. In the basic model outlined above, actors will try to avoid any loss of bargaining power because it will lead immediately to a loss in resources. In intimate relationships, however, partners may (and often do) promise that, due to love, no renegotiation of power will take

place. The open question is whether this promise is credible, as we all know that love is no guarantee against conflict in marriage or cohabitation.

Bargaining models are, in principal, gender neutral. Whether it is a male or female partner who is reacting to a change in outside options should not influence the outcome of the allocation process. Of course, the decision to have children primarily changes the employment options of women to a much higher degree as compared to men (Ott, 1992; Raley, Mattingly, & Bianchi, 2006, p. 14). The application of bargaining models to the decision of how to distribute household work similarly underlines the relevance of gender relations to household decision-making. Even if women have better employment options than their male partner, they engage in a much larger share of household work than do men (Brines, 1993, 1994; Greenstein, 2000). Therefore, it is necessary to consider the possible interaction effect of gender on bargaining processes. The bargaining process is probably influenced by different income options, and also by gender roles that assign the main responsibility for the household income to the male partner (England & Farkas, 1986, p. 94; Huppe & Cyr, 1997; Szinovacz & Harpster, 1993). Because of data limitations, it is, however, difficult to decide whether residual gender disparities result from employment variables not controlled for (and therefore correspond with a gender-neutral bargaining process), or if they reflect gender-role ideologies. The controls for occupation and labor market field that are typically used in these analyses usually results in classifications that are too broad to capture the specific job and labor market characteristics that are unevenly distributed by gender (such as the geographic ubiquity and length of career ladders, see Shauman & Noonan, 2007, p. 1739). Hence the relative impact of the two alternative explanations – bargaining vs. gender role ideology – is still an unresolved empirical issue, as is an explanation for the fact that most of the tied partners are female (Blackburn & Kinley, 2006; Lichter, 1983; Maxwell, 1988; Mincer, 1978; Spitze, 1984). Many results are in line with several theoretical approaches (Jacobson & Levin, 2000; Shauman & Noonan, 2007). As will be explained in more detail below, our experimental

design provides men and women with exactly the same hypothetical employment opportunities, which may help to resolve this research gap.

Based on these considerations, we propose three steps concerning the empirical analysis. Our focus will be on the individual reaction to hypothetical incentives and the potential conflicts due to a shift in relative bargaining power within couples. As outlined above, any incentive to move will lead to a difference in interests between the partners. We call this difference “conflict potential” because the partners may be able to actually solve these conflicting interests. In the first step, we analyze how an anticipated change in bargaining power influences each actor’s willingness to move and the conflict potential within the partnership. In the second step, we look for mechanisms that mitigate the trust problem between the partners arising from these migration incentives. Finally, the third step evaluates possible gender differences in the response to the incentives.

Hypotheses

Our theoretical model allows us to derive several hypotheses regarding how actors make migration decisions in dual-career relationships. When evaluating a migration opportunity, the partners will consider the expected changes in relative bargaining power. If there is any interest in preserving the relationship and the actors do indeed anticipate the shifts in bargaining power, they will be less willing to move if one of the partners will be worse off in a new destination. H_{1a}: *Individual willingness to move will depend not only on the potential changes in one’s own situation, but also on the potential changes in the partner’s situation.*

Evidence in favor of the first hypothesis is, of course, only weak evidence for the bargaining model because the phenomenon can also be explained by altruism. Altruistic actors care about the future situation of their partners; hence, they will take potential disadvantages for their partners into account. In addition, however, the bargaining approach suggests the relevance of individual options: from the theory, we can hypothesize that no

matter which partner has the better option, the change in one's own bargaining power is a stronger predictor of the willingness to move than is the respective change in the partner's power. Any consideration of one's partner's interests will be in vain if the partnership fails in the future. The risk of a future separation, and interest in receiving a favorable position in the resource allocation, leads to a primary interest in preserving one's own bargaining power. H_{1b}: *Actors willingness to move is influenced more by their own options than those of their partner.*

The general hypothesis regarding a couple's conflict potential is straightforward. H₂: *An actor's potential increase in relative bargaining power due to a possible migration will lead to a higher "conflict potential" in the partnership* (see also Miller, Perlman, & Brehm, 2007, p. 361 et seq.). Note that (to our knowledge) this is a new hypothesis derived from the bargaining theory that has yet to be tested. As outlined above, there are many reasons why couples may differ with respect to the ways in which conflict is resolved. These differences may result from certain psychological characteristics of the partners. As sociologists, we are more interested in the structural determinants of these differences among couples.

There are two types of structural differences considered here. First, couples will differ in respect to the time they have to learn about each other and the relationship. Learning about a partner's characteristics and preferences will allow actors to assess each other's future behavior. Hence, the more time a couple has spent in the relationship, the higher the probability that the partners will trust each other. This trust causes a belief that, all else being equal, a renegotiation of resources after a move will not take place. This leads to our third hypothesis: H_{3a}: *The "conflict potential" declines with the duration of the partnership.*

A second type of solution arises from the strength of each actor's commitment to the partnership (see e.g. Nock, 1995). A credible commitment in this sense increases the threshold to leave the partnership and therefore decreases an actor's bargaining power by reducing the outside options. Actors in exchange situations will usually avoid one-sided commitments

because of the asymmetric balance of bargaining power. In intimate relationships, there are three main types of mutual commitments: children, common property (especially home ownership), and marriage. We hypothesize that all three types of commitments lead to a lower level of conflict potential in partnerships when an incentive for a household move appears. *H_{3b}: The conflict potential will be lower for couples who: (a) hold real estate property, (b) have children, and (c) are married.*

Finally, we consider the effect of gender on our research question. Within the bargaining framework, gender should matter only to the extent that one gender tends to have less bargaining power due to structurally worse outside options. We test whether there is a difference in the reactions of male and female partners to incentives for a move. Even when female partners have stronger incentives to move, they may favor their male partners' careers. *H₄: Female partners are less willing to move in response to their own career chances as compared to their male partners.* That is, we hypothesize an interaction effect of gender and the career incentives on the willingness to move.

DATA AND METHODS

The insufficient empirical research on the bargaining model in the field of families and couples is mainly caused by a lack of adequate data. Existing survey data does not usually contain any information on rejected opportunities. When moves are documented, they generally consist of only the realized moves and not the underlying incentives or rejected job offers. Thus, it is impossible, using existing data, to determine the changes in threat points accurately or the loss of household gains due to forgone opportunities. Moreover, existing survey data provide little or no information on the long-term career prospects and labor market situations at potential destinations (Shauman & Noonan, 2007).

Because of the low numbers of moving households, it is difficult to observe the change in how resources are allocated after a household moves. Another problem is due to the

high selectivity of migration: persons with possible job related migrations are generally more career-orientated and professionally successful than immobile persons, so they probably would have realized similar gains in income and relative bargaining power even without a move (Antel, 1980; DaVanzo & Hosek, 1981). Furthermore, conflicts and reasons for separation are generally difficult to assess with ordinary survey data and require paired information from both partners that is often not provided. An additional problem arises from the high correlation between employment characteristics and gender. This correlation impedes an empirical separation of gender effects and structural effects that would allow a competitive testing of the bargaining approach against gender role theories. Observed asymmetric decisions and outcomes may arise only because the labor market conditions create better returns for the male partner and not because his opportunities are more heavily considered (Jacobson & Levy 2000, p. 294).

For these reasons, we adopt an innovative research approach that uses a factorial survey design (also known as a “vignette analysis”). The key idea in this design is that the respondents react to hypothetical descriptions of situations or objects (“vignettes”) instead of answering single item questions (for an introduction see Jasso, 2006 and Rossi & Anderson, 1982; for an review of the strengths, applications, and possible extension for family research see Ganong & Coleman, 2006). By independently varying a restricted number of dimensions of the vignettes in an experimental design, the impact of each dimension on respondents’ judgments or decisions can be estimated separately (in a first step, we generate all possible dimension combinations of the vignettes, whereby the dimensions are perfectly uncorrelated or “orthogonalized”). Therefore, the method is able to isolate the weight of single factors that are often confounded in reality; that is, we are able to separate the impact of gender and employment prospects by offering the same mobility incentives to female and male partners and thus eliminate the selection problems found in “conventional” migration research. By combining the advantages of surveys and experiments, vignette studies overcome many

limitations found in the existing research. This solution is especially important for the analysis of families and couples because real experimental manipulations are generally out of question for most family research (Hofferth, 2005).

In our study, we used vignettes to describe various incentives for a household move and interviewed both partners in dual-earner couples with inverse situations. Both partners were presented with the same set of situations, but one (“ego”) was given the role of a mover, the other (“alter”) was put in the position of a tied mover. The constant stimulus consisted of a job offer for ego in another geographical region that afforded the couple similar living conditions and leisure activities. The varying dimensions simulated differently attractive employment prospects in this new location for the two partners. This design allowed us to study the reactions to changing “threat points” in the relationship by varying the respective employment options. More concretely, we systematically varied (a) the increase in income and career prospects for the mover, and (b) the employment and income prospects for the tied mover. By conducting CAPI interviews, we were able to employ the percentage gain in income of the actual salary, a crucial advantage for making the situations plausible. In order to test our hypotheses, we assumed that ego’s increase in income and rising career prospects improves her or his bargaining power in the relationship, whereas the alter’s employment prospects in the new destination also affects the anticipated change in the bargaining power of her or his partner.

Concerning this assumption, two points are noteworthy: first, we manipulated the threat points of each partner separately, so it is possible that *both* actors’ outside options increased due to the move and the relative bargaining in the partnership did not change. Thereby our design has the advantage that alter may profit from the move and is not restricted to the role of the tied mover. Second, we assumed that the bargaining power is determined by the employment situations of both actors. Especially for couples in which one actor is engaged in highly specialized paid work while the other is mostly engaged in housework (for example,

the female partner is primarily responsible for caring for the children and the home while the male partner is the main breadwinner), this assumption may be problematic. Due to this problem, we restricted our sample to dual-earner couples. Figure 1 gives an example of the vignettes (the varied dimensions are underlined) and shows the answer scale employed in this study. The vignettes also described the commuting time and the commuting mode (train or car) to the new destination in order to make the situations as realistic as possible. We use these variables as controls.

- Figure 1 about here -

Our dependent variables are each partner's willingness to move and the conflict potential in a partnership that results from an ego's given migration incentive. The willingness to move scale ranges from 1 ("not at all") to 11 ("very much"). The "mirror-inverted" design of our study allows us to compare the alter's and ego's willingness to move for each vignette. The vignettes were completely identical except one of the partners received the job offer while the other assumed the role of a tied mover. We are, therefore, able to measure the conflict potential by taking the difference between ego's and alter's willingness to move. The resulting variable ranges from -10 (alter would very much like to move but ego does not want to move at all) to +10 (ego would very much like to move but alter does not want to move at all). Zero indicates that both partners share the same tendency for a move regardless of the strength of that preference. We treat all dependent variables as continuous, which allows us to use statistical models based on the common OLS approach. Several alternative statistical models (e.g. ordinal regressions, Poisson regressions) did not lead to different results; we therefore utilize the more straightforward interpretation of an OLS model.

The sample of 200 vignettes was a fraction of all possible combinations of the six variable dimensions (maximization of the 'D-Efficiency' according to Kuhfeld, 2005; Kuhfeld,

Randall, & Garratt, 1994 with orthogonalization of all main effects and first-order-interactions in a so called ‘resolution III’; for more details see also Dülmer, 2007). Ten vignettes were presented to each person; that is, we used ten different blocks of vignettes in 80 different questionnaires (20 blocks x 2 versions for mover vs. tied mover x 2 versions for women vs. men).

The statistical analysis takes the hierarchical structure of the data into account. Because each person evaluated up to ten different vignettes, the dependent nature of the data is an issue and the models have to correct for correlated observations, as is the case with any repeated-measures or within-subject designs (Ganong & Coleman, 2007, p. 463; Hox, Kreft & Hermkens, 1991). We employ random intercept models (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2001; Snijders & Bosker, 1999), which account for level 1 dependent observations by estimating one joint random intercept for all observations belonging to this level. The characteristics of the vignettes vary on level 1, and individual or couple characteristics are modeled as level 2 variables.

SAMPLE AND RESULTS

First, we provide a brief overview of some descriptive results for nearly 280 interviewed heterosexual couples in Germany and Switzerland. Two universities (Konstanz and Bern) collaboratively conducted the research project using the CAPI method. The sample was selected using the network contacts of our 60 interviewers. All interviews were conducted between June 2007 and February 2008. Both partners in a couple responded to the vignettes independently (which was ensured by the presence of an interviewer), and also independently provided some basic information on themselves and the partnership. Applying the CAPI technique it was possible to use a “mirror-inverted” design. Within a couple, both partners were confronted with exactly the same hypothetical situations. One (ego) responded as the partner who received a job offer, while the other (alter) responded as the partner who did not

receive the offer. All respondents are employed and worked a minimum of 19 hours per week (more information about the sample below). We over-sampled couples without children (only 12% of our couples have children living in their household) in order to get adequate variance in the dependent variables because children are often seen an obstacle to migration. On the other hand, children are also considered to be crucial to the bargaining approach because they increase the mutual commitment to the relationship. Due to this fact, we included all households with children in our effective sample.

An interesting observation is that 31.5% of all egos report zero willingness to move although the minimum gain is a 30% higher income (see Figure 2). Obviously income prospects are not the only determinant of migration decisions. This finding is in line with the general low tendency to move as reported in the migration literature (e.g. Taylor, 2007, p. 815). A further result worth noting is that in about 39% of the vignettes, alter is more willing to move than ego (the partner who actually gets the job offer). Taking the preceding two results together, we reject Mincer's assumption that the occurrence of a "tied mover" is the standard case. Given this observation, it is even more interesting to explore how people react to different migration incentives and when conflicts arise regarding possible migration.

- **Figure 2 about here** -

Table 1 presents descriptive data for the dependent variable and the sample. The vignette characteristics are all a direct result of our experimental plan, which explains why the single levels of our dimensions always occur with about the same frequency. The vast majority of our more than 550 respondents are between 20 and 45 years old. The sample consists of salaried employees living in one joint household on a daily basis (no commuting or long-distance relationships). These specifications were chosen due to the well-known fact that self-employed persons and older people are especially immobile (see Jürges, 2005 for evidence on

Germany). Moreover, we wanted to simulate a real decision dilemma and eliminate the desire to establish a joint household as an influence on the willingness to move.

- Table 1 about here -

Our first two hypotheses (1a and 1b) are tested using the analysis of ego's and alter's individual willingness to move. Table 2 shows the result of a random intercept model that controls for the individual variables. Negative coefficients indicate a lower willingness to migrate as the independent variable increases. As can be seen in models for both ego and alter, both types of actors show a higher tendency to move as the employment conditions at the destination improve. Moreover, the data support our first hypothesis; actors consider their partner's incentives in addition to their own incentives. As can be clearly seen, ego is more willing to move as alter's employment chances and income prospects improve at the new destination. Vice versa, alter shows a higher willingness to move as the gain of migration for ego increases. Because of the experimental "mirror-inverted" design we can compare the coefficients of alter and ego directly. An incentive to move for either partner carries more weight with the person who will profit from the move than the same incentive does with his / her partner. For example, "many career prospects" for ego (compared to none) increases ego's willingness to move by a factor of 0.91 whereas "many career prospects" for ego increases alter's willingness to move by a factor of only 0.76. On the other hand, the alter's willingness to move is influenced more strongly by his / her own better income prospects (1.60) as compared to the impact of alter's income prospects on ego's willingness to move (0.87). Both ego and alter take their partners' situation into account but give their own hypothetical gains more weight than they give to potential changes for their partners.

- Table 2 about here -

One interesting finding is that female egos (who receive the job offer) display a lower willingness to move as compared to male egos (see for similar results Baldrige, Eddleston & Veiga, 2006; Bielby & Bielby, 1992; Long, 1974). This difference is partly explained by the absolute income level of male and female respondents. A further reason for this observation may be the fact that women are more often employed in part-time positions, prefer a shorter distance from their home to their place of employment (e.g. McLafferty & Preston, 1997), and rely on social support from relatives and other networks when they have children. As a consequence, they may be more reluctant to leave a carefully “constructed” work arrangement (Kalleberg & Rosenfield, 1990). In addition, employment opportunities for better pay may be less beneficial for females because it may be difficult to achieve the same kind of balance between household responsibilities and employment responsibilities in a new job. We return to this difference when we present models differentiated by gender.

As for the other individual determinants, results are in line with previous findings from survey research on migration: people tend to be less mobile as they get older (e.g. Rogers, 1988), when they own real estate property (e.g. Deane, 1990, p. 72), or as the time lived in one place increases (see e.g. Baldrige et al., 2006; Jürges, 2005; Long, 1974). The respondent’s actual employment characteristics, education level, and current network embeddedness do not have a significant influence on the willingness to move.

Taken together, the outcomes from the individual models are consistent with previous results based on survey research, and provide strong evidence for our first hypothesis. We next examine our hypothesis regarding the amount of conflict potential within a partnership as a result of a potential move. We first analyze the conflict potential – measured as difference between ego’s and alter’s willingness to move – at the couple level. Table 3 presents the results of a random intercept model, which now includes partnership-level variables. Negative coefficients indicate a lower conflict potential in the partnership as the values of the

independent variables increase, while positive coefficients indicate a higher conflict potential as the values of the independent variables increase (for ease of interpretation, we present the absolute values of the conflict potential – higher values always indicate a greater disagreement in interests regardless of which of the two partners is more willing to move).

Starting with ego's mobility incentives, we see that as income and employment prospects increase potential for conflicts in a partnership also increases. This result is consistent with our second hypothesis: a one-sided increase in bargaining power will increase the difference in interests and, as a result, the conflict potential. Due to the characteristics of a multivariate regression analysis, the effect in question is indeed one-sided because we include measures for alter's bargaining power in the vignettes and hold them constant in the multivariate analysis. It is also exactly this mechanism that makes sense of alter's results, which appear to be similarly counter-intuitive. Alter's increasing income and employment prospects will increase the conflict potential. Because the indicators of ego's bargaining power are kept analogously constant by the multiple regression models, we therefore can interpret *any* actor's changes in employment prospects as one-sided. Furthermore, bargaining theory is very clear on this point: if alter's outside options increase without a change in ego's position, ego will anticipate alter's higher relative bargaining power. To put it more simply: if alter's incentive to move increases and ego's incentive stays constant, we should observe a higher conflict – and this is exactly what the results show. Consequently, our core hypothesis, H₂, is clearly supported by the data.

- Table 3 about here -

For the third hypothesis we have to look at partnership characteristics. We assumed that knowledge about each other and the level of commitment might be variables that counteract the potential conflict. Models 1 through 4 in table 3 present the individual effect of the four

relevant variables – marriage, children, and real estate property as indicators for commitment, and duration of the partnership as an indicator for learning. The results support our hypotheses; the conflict potential decreases if a couple is married, has children, or owns real estate together, and decreases as the length of the relationship increases. In the full model (#5), the effects of these variables are still negative, but no longer significant. A possible explanation for this may be the use of a relatively homogenous sample where marriage, partnership duration, and children are highly correlated (e.g. marriage and partnership duration: $r = 0.45$). Even with a random sample and more cases it would be difficult to disentangle these effects because of an underlying mechanism: marriage and children make a partnership more stable, and couples with a longer common history are more likely to marry and to become parents. Due to this high correlation, we compare an “extreme group” – couples that are married, have a long relationship history (long duration), and have children – with the rest of our sample. “Long duration” is defined by more than 6.5 years and applies to about half of our sample. The results presented in model 6 support our hypothesis that these determinants, especially when in combination with each other, tend to be associated with less conflict potential in a partnership.

The variables indicating homogeneity (and, conversely, diversity) of education, income, and age in models 5 and 6 serve as controls for relationships that are differently structured. The bargaining literature shows that partners who possess more of one of these resources (education, income, and age) as compared to their partners are often considered to be more powerful (although age, on the one hand, serves as a proxy for more advanced occupational careers, see e.g. Halleröd, 2005, it also serves as a proxy for youth and beauty, and therefore possible future marital partners, see Cooke 2006, p. 459). Additionally, relationships in which the female partner earns an equal or higher income than the male partner are often considered “untraditional.” We find a significantly higher conflict potential only in those partnerships where the male partner is at least three years older than his female partner. Again, this result is

in line with the bargaining model and the existing migration research. Migrations are generally more financially rewarding for younger people (because the duration of the future career is longer), thus an increase in the age difference between partners should increase the conflict potential regarding migrations. We do not find corresponding results for the partnerships in which the female partner is older. This result is most probably due to the very few couples that fit this description (in only about 6% of our couples is the female partner more than 3 years older than her male partner, see again Table 1). Similarly, the high homogeneity of our sample of dual-earner couples and the high tendency of “positive assortative mating” yield a small variance in education and income and may explain why these variables do not have strong effects.

Finally, we focus on possible gender effects. In order to test the fourth hypothesis that male employment characteristics have a stronger effect than female employment characteristics we estimated separate models for male and female respondents with the willingness to move as the dependent variable. The hypothesis states that, according to traditional gender roles, male and female respondents place a higher value on the employment prospects of men as compared to the prospects of women. The results shown in table 4 do not provide very strong support for this proposition. Looking at the relevance of ego’s (Model 1) and alter’s employment chances (Model 2), the gender gap is, in general, in line with the hypothesis but additional tests do not reveal significant differences (i.e., we tested overall differences by Chow-tests and the difference of single variables by interaction terms with gender, estimating a joint model for male and female respondents; for these test statistics see, e.g., Wooldridge 2003). There is only one exception: the coefficients for alters’ evaluation of ego’s career prospects differs by gender. Women value the career options related to their partners’ job options higher than do men. When we focus on alter’s employment prospects, the coefficients differ less by the gender of respondents than for ego’s employment prospects. Further analyses (not presented here) demonstrate that the evaluation is not influenced by

actors' relative power within the partnership. The results are similar even when we control for differences in age, education, and income within partnerships. Only alter's willingness to move is more influenced by ego's employment opportunities when ego is the male partner. In general, a female ego's willingness to move is lower (see Table 2) but the impact of incentives does not vary much by gender.

- Table 4 about here -

CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this paper is twofold: we attempt to shed light on the mechanisms behind the migration decision in households, and we propose a new way to test bargaining theory in family research. Based on a factorial survey of about 280 couples, we demonstrate that there is a substantial potential for conflicts in a partnership when work-related incentives for a move arise. As predicted, the conflict potential within a couple varies according to each partner's potential change in relative bargaining power. Moreover, there is clear evidence that couples are able to minimize this conflict through trust and commitments. Hence, the bargaining model is supported by our data. On the other hand, there is little evidence for the relevance of gender regarding the influence of bargaining power on the individual willingness to move.

We also want to address important limitations of our study. First of all, we observed only hypothetical decisions and no real actions. Social desirability effects typically bias such survey research. Our study, however, did not ask very sensitive questions. It is unlikely that social desirability affect our data to any large extent. Nevertheless, the validity of factorial surveys is questionable. Methodological research on factorial surveys is still rare (Eifler, 2007), but a lot of research evaluating similar methods used in marketing research, transport, health and environmental economics does exist (i.e., conjoint analysis and stated choice

experiments). This research shows – with few exceptions – an astonishingly high correspondence between the data resulting from hypothetical and experimental decisions and real market observations (e.g. Blamey & Bennett, 2001; for a general overview and studies in transportation economics focusing on work trip modes see Louviere, Hensher, & Swait, 2000, pp. 354-382). In addition, existing empirical evidence shows that the willingness to move is a feasible predictor of actual relocation behavior (Brett & Reilly, 1988). Thus, we do not have any major reasons to doubt the overall validity of our results.

Another limitation to the study might be the high correlation between some variables in our sample. For this data, it is impossible to completely disentangle the effects of the duration of a partnership, a marriage contract, children, and other investments like joint real estate property. Again, this seems to be a minor problem because the expected and detected effects of all these variables coincide and move in the same direction. In order to obtain more sophisticated results, one might increase the samples size; an alternative strategy would be to over-sample households with atypical structures – e.g. non-married couples with a long duration of acquaintance. Nevertheless, the use of factorial survey analyses seems to be a promising way to gain additional insights into the decision strategies of families and couples.

In general, the results of our study underline the relevance of a couple- or household-oriented approach when labor market processes are studied. Individual career mobility is often directly linked to regional mobility, and we have shown that new individual career options for one partner create potential conflicts within the relationship. Cooperative solutions like “efficient” locations require balanced power shifts within the household or, at least, credible commitments to the partnership. The scope of this finding is probably not restricted to migration decisions, since the same theoretical mechanism can be assumed for other issues such as fertility decisions. Without solutions to trust problems that are connected to one-sided specializations in market work and family work, suboptimal levels of fertility have to be assumed (Jürges, 2005, 302; Ott, 1992). Efforts to promote greater gender equality in the

labor market and within families go hand in hand; better career prospects for women should, at the same time, lead to more balanced bargaining processes within families. At least in our sample of dual-earner couples, the incentives for regional moves do not work differently by gender. Apart from the fact that women tend to be more immobile compared to their male partners, gender roles are not as obviously important as is often stated. The high prevalence of tied women seems to result primarily from their inferior labor market positions than from discrimination within the household. Both male and female partners take their partner's perspective into account, and they do it in the same way.

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Figure 1. Example of a Vignette (Version for a Men, Own Job Offer)

Assume, ...
You are offered a net salary of 1400,- EUR at the new location. In the long run, the new job will provide you with no advancement opportunities. If you don't move, commuting to the new job will take 1 ½ hours each way. It is reachable only by car.
Your partner's chances of finding a job at the new location are small and her income prospects are higher there compared to the local labor market.
 How much would you like to take the job and move to the new location?
 Not at all 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very much

Note: The inverse situation for the female partner in this example would read: Assume, your partner is offered a net salary of 1400,- EUR at the new location. [...]. Your own chances of finding [...]. How much would you like to move to the new location?

Figure 2a. Willingness to Move of Ego and Alter

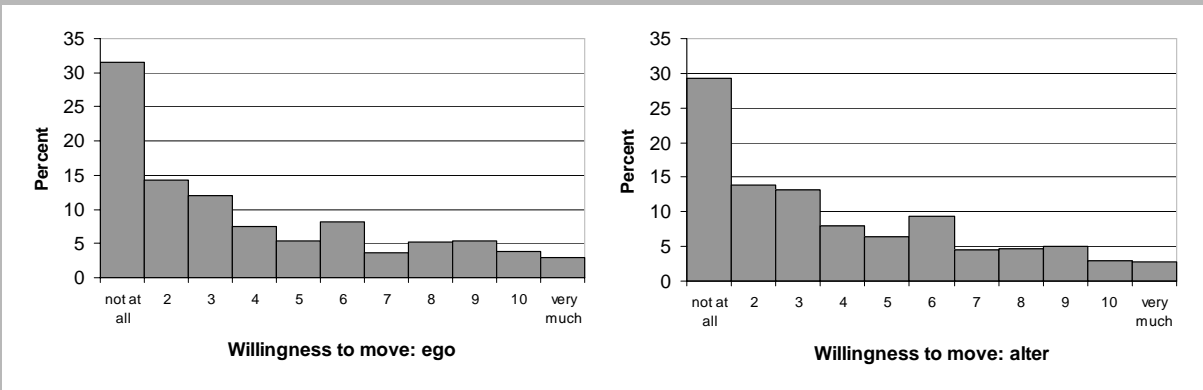
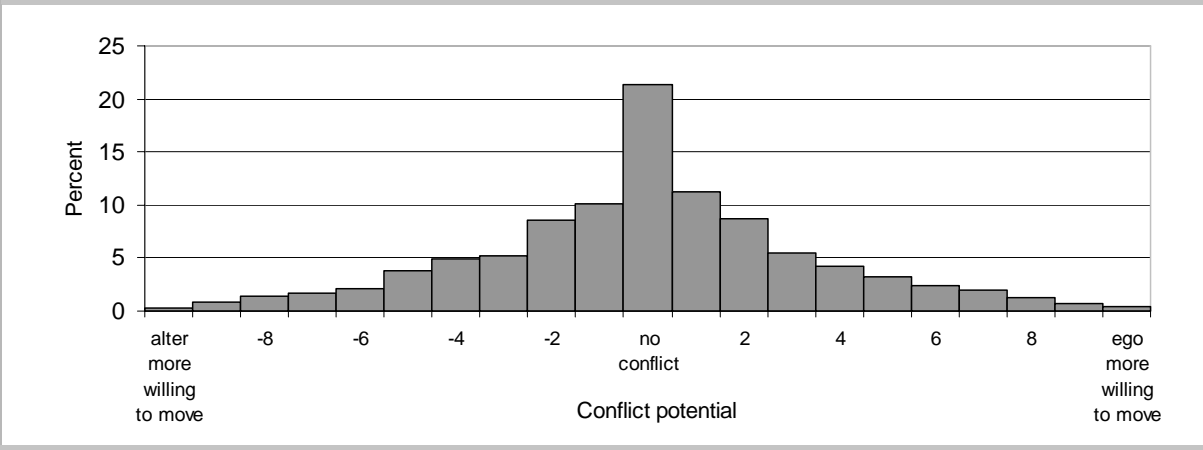


Figure 2b. Conflict potential (Willingness to Move of Ego Minus Willingness to Move of Alter)



Note: In the regression analysis we employ the absolute values of the conflict potential (for explanations: see the chapter “Sample and Results”).

Table 1
Sample description

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Median
<i>Dependent variables</i>						
Willingness to move						
- Ego	2772	1.0	11.0	3.90	3.04	3.0
- Alter	2770	1.0	11.0	3.91	2.93	3.0
Potential for conflicts	2762	0.0	10.0	2.55	2.38	2.0
<i>Vignettes' characteristics</i>						
Gain of income for ego [percent]	2780	30.0	70.0	49.82	14.07	50.0
Career prospects for ego ^a						
- some	2780	.0	1.0	.34	-	-
- many	2780	.0	1.0	.32	-	-
Commuting time [hours]	2780	.75	3.0	1.62	.79	1.5
Only reachable by car ^b	2780	.0	1.0	.48	-	-
Employment prospects for alter ^c						
- moderate	2780	.0	1.0	.32	-	-
- good	2780	.0	1.0	.33	-	-
Income prospects for alter at destination ^d						
- equal	2780	.0	1.0	.33	-	-
- better	2780	.0	1.0	.33	-	-
<i>Respondents' characteristics</i>						
Female respondent ^e	556	.0	1.0	.50	-	-
Age	547	20.0	50.0	30.93	4.97	30.0
Duration of employment [months]	551	.0	360.0	61.96	58.03	45.0
Duration of residence [years]	552	.0	45.0	20.33	11.70	24.0
Net income [euros] ^f	555	360.0	5013.7	1935.61	865.32	1750.0
Propensity to lose the actual job ^g	555	1.0	11.0	3.15	2.49	2.0
University graduate ^h	556	.0	1.0	.44	-	-
<i>Households' characteristics</i>						
Living in Switzerland ⁱ	278	.0	1.0	.23	-	-
Real estate property ^j	278	.0	1.0	.25	-	-
Married couple ^k	278	.0	1.0	.35	-	-
Duration of partnership [months]	278	2.0	325.0	88.03	56.79	78.0
Children living in household ^l	277	.0	1.0	.12	-	-
Married, long duration of partnership and children in household ^m	277	.0	1.0	.08	-	-
Education ⁿ						
- male partner has higher education	278	.0	1.0	.32	-	-
- female partner has higher education	278	.0	1.0	.29	-	-
Income ^o						
- male partner has higher income	277	.0	1.0	.77	-	-
- female partner has higher income	277	.0	1.0	.17	-	-
Age ^p						
- male partner is older	269	.0	1.0	.43	-	-
- female partner is older	269	.0	1.0	.05	-	-

^aCareer prospects for ego: 0 = none, 1 = some / many. ^bOnly reachable by car: 0 = no, also by train, 1 = yes.

^cEmployment prospects for alter at destination: 0 = little, 1 = moderate / good. ^dIncome prospects for alter at destination: 0 = smaller in comparison with actual destination, 1 = some / many. ^eFemale respondent: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^fNet / Mean income: adjusted for the different purchasing power in Switzerland and Germany. ^gPropensity to lose the actual job: 1 = very unlikely, 11 = very likely. ^hUniversity graduate: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ⁱLiving in Switzerland: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^jReal estate property: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^kMarried couple: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^lChildren living in household: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ^mMarried, long duration of partnership and children in household: 0 = no, 1 = yes. ⁿEducation: 0 = spouses have the same education, 1 = male / female spouse has higher education (at least one year more schooling). ^oIncome: 0 = the monthly net income of the two spouses differs by less than 100,-Euros, 1 = male / female partner has at least higher income. ^pAge: 0 = the age difference is no more than two years, 1 = male / female partner is at least three years older than his/her spouse.

Table 2
*Summary of Linear Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting the Willingness to Move
 (Random Intercept Models)*

Variable	Model 1: Own job offer (EGO)		Model 2: Partner gets job offer (ALTER)	
	β	$SE \beta$	β	$SE \beta$
Vignettes' characteristics				
Gain of income for ego [10 percent]	.302***	.029	.234***	.029
Career prospects for ego (ref. none)				
- some	.742***	.101	.449***	.102
- many	.907***	.097	.761***	.099
Commuting time [hours]	-.028	.050	-.167**	.050
Only reachable by car (ref.: also by train)	.001	.080	-.070	.081
Employment prospects for alter at destination (ref.: little)				
- moderate	.445***	.097	.837***	.099
- good	1.027***	.097	1.978***	.098
Income prospects for alter at destination (ref.: smaller in comparison with the actual destination)				
- equal	.520***	.095	.674***	.096
- better	.869***	.097	1.603***	.098
Respondents' characteristics				
Interview conducted in Switzerland	-.014	.383	.025	.325
Female respondent	-.799**	.286	.109	.249
Age	-.059†	.032	-.042	.029
Duration of residence	-.020†	.012	-.026*	.011
Real estate property	-1.129**	.334	-.645*	.289
University graduate	0.414	.306	.230	.279
Duration of employment [years]	0.002	.003	-.001	.002
Net income [1.000 Euros] ^a	0.281	.201	-.104	.179
Propensity to lose the actual job	0.139**	.052	.114*	.045
Constant	2.563**	1.014	2.721**	.891
Observations	2704 (271 interviewees)		2671 (268 interviewees)	
Variance				
- σ_v	2.023***	.095	1.690***	.083
- σ_e	1.950	.028	1.966	.028

Note: Grey highlighted fields mark vignette variables directly concerning the employment prospects of the respondent (instead of those of his or her partner).

^a adjusted for the different purchasing power in Switzerland and Germany.

†p < .1. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 3

Summary of Linear Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting the Potential of Conflicts (Random Intercept Models)

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	β	SE β	β	SE β	β	SE β	β	SE β	β	SE β	β	SE β
Vignettes' characteristics												
Gain of income for ego [10 percent]	.142***	.029	.143***	.029	.144***	.029	.142***	.029	.148***	.030	.146***	.030
Career prospects for ego (ref. none)												
- some	.112	.101	.117	.101	.109	.101	.112	.101	.119	.102	.119	.102
- many	.316**	.098	.309**	.098	.313**	.098	.314**	.098	.339**	.100	.340**	.100
Commuting time [hours]	-.065	.050	-.063	.050	-.065	.050	-.065	.050	-.067	.051	-.068	.051
Only reachable by car (ref.: also by train)	.053	.080	.053	.080	.057	.080	.055	.080	.052	.082	.052	.082
Employment prospects for alter at destination (ref.: little)												
- moderate	.102	.098	.109	.098	.099	.098	.103	.098	.124	.100	.126	.100
- good	.507***	.098	.519***	.098	.506***	.097	.508***	.097	.515***	.100	.514***	.100
Income prospects for alter (ref.: smaller in comp. with actual location)												
- equal	.230*	.096	.242*	.096	.232*	.096	.232*	.096	.241*	.098	.241*	.098
- better	.639***	.098	.645***	.098	.639***	.097	.640***	.097	.654***	.100	.656***	.100
Couples' characteristics												
Married couple	-.310†	.172							.033	.210	-.004	.198
Children living in household			-.482†	.250					-.492†	.279		
Duration of partnership [months]					-.004**	.001			-.002	.002		
Real estate property							-.512**	.187	-.422*	.213	-.493*	.205
Married, long duration of part. & children in household											-.759*	.333
Education (ref.: same education)												
- male partner has higher education									-.188	.204	-.140	.201
- female partner has higher education									-.254	.205	-.224	.204
Income (ref.: same income)^a												
- male partner has higher income									.311	.368	.296	.366
- female partner has higher income									.488	.411	.469	.410
Age (ref.: same age)^b												
- male partner is older									.336†	.180	.355*	.173
- female partner is older									.305	.380	.314	.371
Interview conducted in Switzerland									-.236	.210	-.246	.209
Constant	1.349***	.249	1.281***	.243	1.580***	.272	1.370***	.246	1.453**	.534	1.319*	.522
Observations (couples)	2762 (278)		2752 (277)		2762 (278)		2762 (278)		2658 (267)		2658 (267)	
Variance												
- σ_v	1.207***	.066	1.209***	.066	1.195***	.065	1.196***	.065	1.171***	.066	1.170***	.066
- σ_e	2.002	.028	2.001	.028	2.002	.028	2.001	.028	2.005	.029	2.005	.029

^aCases are counted as 'same income' if the monthly net income of the two partners differs by less than 100,- Euros. ^bCases are counted as 'same age' if the age difference is no more than two years.

†p < .10. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 4

Summary of Linear Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting the Willingness to Move of Men and the Willingness to Move of Women (Random Intercept Models)

Variable	Model 1: Own job offer (EGO)				Model 2: Partner gets job offer (ALTER)			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
	β	$SE \beta$	β	$SE \beta$	β	$SE \beta$	β	$SE \beta$
Gain of income for ego [10 percent]	.347***	.041	.254***	.041	.220***	.040	.271***	.042
Career prospects for ego (ref. none)								
- some	.846***	.142	.573***	.141	.197	.139	.662***	.145
- many	.896***	.136	.840***	.137	.672***	.135	.846***	.140
Commuting time [hours]	.081	.070	-.139*	.069	-.210**	.068	-.146*	.072
Only reachable by car (ref.: also by train)	.082	.112	-.122	.111	-.025	.110	-.088	.115
Employment prospects for alter at destination (ref.: little)								
- moderate	.508***	.137	.327*	.136	.819***	.134	.781***	.141
- good	1.086***	.135	.857***	.136	1.832***	.134	2.063***	.139
Income prospects for alter (ref.: smaller in comp. with actual location)								
- equal	.530***	.134	.555***	.132	.620***	.131	.619***	.137
- better	.918***	.135	.900***	.136	1.611***	.135	1.515***	.139
Constant	0.682†	.374	1.350***	.365	1.172**	.355	0.919*	.360
Observations (Interviewees)	1438 (144)		1334 (134)		1336 (134)		1434 (144)	
Variance								
- σ_v	2.361***	.149	1.987***	.133	1.820***	.123	1.835***	.122
- σ_e	1.986	.039	1.918	.039	1.897	.039	2.047	.040

Note: In this regression analysis only vignettes' characteristics are included. Grey highlighted fields mark variables concerning the male partner. Coefficients in bold indicate significant differences between men and women.

†p < .1. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.