The impact of job-related mobility and migration intentions on union dissolution

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Abstract

Long-distance commuting to work likely exhausts physical and financial resources and it may shorten the time-spans that can be spent with the partner and the family considerably. Therefore, long-distance commuting may increase the risk of separation for a couple. Migration might be perceived as an alternative to long-distance commuting, but it bears risks for the partnership, too. To make things even more complicated, the impact of commuting and migration decision-making may vary with the spatial living arrangement of the couple, that is to say, whether they live together or apart. In this contribution the influence of both forms of spatial mobility on the risk of separation for cohabiting and not cohabiting couples are analyzed within a longitudinal framework. As former research often found a negative influence of female labour-force participation as such on partnership stability – at least if women work full-time – one may ask whether *female* commuting additionally increases the risk of separation or whether commuting is *generally* a threat for couples. Furthermore, different gender-role beliefs may shape the impact of female labour-force participation on the risk of separation, as was found for Eastern and Western Germany. The data for the analysis of these questions comes from the panel study "Migration Decisions in the Life Course", which was relatively short but especially rich in spatial information for both, the respondent and his or her partner. As the data was gathered randomly in two different cities, one located in Eastern and the other in Western Germany, influences of gender-role beliefs can be accounted for at least approximately. The findings based on a sample of 890 respondents suggest that long-term commuting indeed increases the risk of separation for couples under certain conditions. Early stages of migration decision-making increase the risk of separation additionally but to a lower extent.

1. Introduction

Research on job-related spatial mobility shows that commuting to work often exhausts resources in terms of time, money, and health, at least if the one-way commute exceeds a certain distance. Commuters take this burden because they strive for both realizing career chances offered across the boundaries of the home town and staying embedded in close relationships at the place of living, above all in family life. It was shown that great shares of commuters are married or partnered and often live with small children (Schneider et al. 2008: 129). These findings raise the question whether and under which circumstances commuting to work might enhance the risk of separation for couples.

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To analyse this question properly the range of possible living arrangements has to be considered carefully because these arrangements have a spatial component, too. This article focuses not only on married and cohabiting couples but includes couples with separate homes and with second domiciles. Being married and living together can be understood as characteristics of the partnership which have to be additionally considered, besides of having children and the length of being together. Therefore the terms "union dissolution" and "separation" are used interchangeably; both refer to the self reported end of a marriage or an unmarried partnership. Job-related spatial mobility refers to commuting to a workplace outside the boundaries of the home town; additionally job-mobility may also mean moving home, a competing strategy to commuting that may disrupt partnerships, too. As separation goes hand in hand with at least one partner's moving out of the commonly occupied home, the causal order of separation and moving home is difficult to disentangle. Controlling for the influence of decision-making stages preceding migration behaviour on the risk of separation may therefore help to get a more complete picture of the impact of job-mobility on separation. Lastly, one should keep in mind that having separate homes might also result from the perceived necessity to live close to one's workplace.

All these issues are challenges for the research design, which must be organised as panel study providing detailed spatial information and that include prospectively gathered information about moving intentions. The German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP) is rich at information about places of work and home, and it holds information given form all members of a household. Having direct information from both partners, based on a nationwide random sample with a proper number of cases can be seen as an advantage. The downside of this data for the analysis of my question is that it does not include occupational information about partners who did not move in with the respondent, and no proper information about migration intentions. Therefore I use data from the relatively small and short panel study of the project "Migration Decisions in the Life Course" (Kley/Huinink 2010). It was based on random samples drawn in two German cities among persons aged 18 to 50 years and covers an observation window of three years. Apart from prospectively gathered migration intentions it includes information about the job histories of the respondent and his or her partner as well as information about the places of residence and work for both partners. On the basis of data from 890 respondents the relative risk of separation is analyzed using discrete-time event history models on the basis of about 26.000 person-months.

2. Theory and findings on separation and divorce

2.1 Theoretical perspectives on intimate partnership

A meta-analysis of 42 German studies on divorce published between 1987 and 2001 (Wagner/Weiß 2003: 38) revealed that among those that made use of theoretical considerations the microeconomic theory of divorce was the most prominent approach, followed by the social exchange theory. These theories were elaborated in the 1960s and 1970s and refer to matrimony, but from a theoretical point of view this might not inhibit their use for non-marital partnerships. From an

empirical point of view one may argue that in many western societies unmarried cohabitation becomes more common. In Germany unmarried cohabitation appears to have replaced marriage as the most important reason for leaving the parental home in early adulthood (Konietzka/Huinink 2003; Kley/Huinink 2006). And as nowadays in Eastern Germany 60 percent and in Western Germany 27 percent of children are born out of wedlock, one can hardly assume that non-marital relationships are generally "less serious" than marital ones.[2]

The *social exchange theory* draws on Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) theory of interdependence that refers to the social exchange between both the partners and between members of the partnership and others (Karney/Bradbury 1995). Early applications of the theory to marriage analyzed three bundles of influences on marital stability (Levinger 1965): *Attractions of the relationship*, the *barriers to leaving the relationship*, and the *presence of attractive alternatives* outside the relationship. Lewis and Spanier (1979) suggested a causal model to explain marital stability, in which the quality of the marriage is one of the most important predictors. Marital quality is thought of as dependent on pre-marital characteristics like homogamy and material resources; on the satisfaction with the current life style, for instance with the own socio-economic position and those of the partner, and with the number of children; and, finally, on rewards through the marital interactions, for instance attention, love and care (Hill/Kopp 1999: 30).

The *microeconomic theory of marriage* is not a fundamentally different paradigm to the exchange theory (Hill/Kopp 1999: 36; Wagner 1989: 97): With regard to union dissolution and separation both theories lead to similar empirical hypotheses and also to similar ways of analysis. In microeconomic theory (Becker et al. 1977) the benefit derived from partnership is central for its stability. Important determinants of the benefit from being partnered are the *"partner match", forms of division of labour*, and *investments in couple-specific capital*. Partners invest in many different assets like possessions, skills, information, and children. Some of them loose value after the separation of the couple; they are couple-specific. This is the case, for instance, for shared home-ownership, and for children. The "partner match" is thought of as being interwoven with labour division within the couple. Optimal for marital stability would be if complementary characteristics of the partners correlated positively whereas those that substitute each other correlated negatively (Hill/Kopp 1999: 33). Complementary characteristics are, for instance, similar age and socio-economic backgrounds of the partners, because these result in similar preferences. Characteristics that substitute each other are in the first place different wage earning powers. The theory suggests that partnerships practicing the male-breadwinner model should be especially stable because both partners gain most from specialising in their roles as breadwinner and housewife respectively (Becker et al. 1977: 1145 f.). There was and is still much objection against this expectation. Most recently it was argued that in times of increasing educational levels of women the division of labour should more be seen as bargaining process between the partners (Abraham et al. 2010): The result of the couple's joint

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[2] Data from the Statistische Bundesamt; http://www.zeit.de/news/2011-08/gesellschaft-jedes-dritte-kind-wird-unehelichgeboren-12115204

decision-making about the optimal allocation of the households' resources depends then on the relative bargaining power of each partner, and the distribution of power within the couple changes with every re-adjustment of labour division. Although applying a bargaining model may lead to similar expectations as the micro-economic approach (Engelhardt 2002: 42 ff.) the explanation of underlying mechanisms is different.

How does job-related spatial mobility fit into these theoretical considerations on separation risks? Accepting a distant job is costly, because it involves either migration or commuting between home and work. Migration is a challenge for the partnership because either one partner moves and leaves the other at least temporarily behind, or the couple moves jointly what normally benefits one partner more as the other (Nisic 2010). Commuting is another form of spatial mobility that might be chosen to avoid migration. According to the social exchange theory long-term commuting can be expected to increase the risk of separation because the partners have less time to spend for social activities and with each other. Instead, commuters might spend more time in environments in that their partners are not taking part, for instance on their journeys to work and in the surroundings of their workplace, especially if they are staying over night. This might broaden their perceived alternatives to the current partnership. According to the microeconomic theory commuting can be expected to increase the risk of separation especially in couples with a female commuter because it inhibits the traditional labour division between the partners. Household tasks are still a female domain, and the combination of housekeeping responsibilities with (part-time) work leads to a double burden for women (Treas/Drobnic 2010). Dispute about the division of housework between the partners might lead to conflict and put the partnership under threat (Huinink/Röhler 2005). The double burden can be assumed to be especially exhausting if long hours have to be spent on the journey to work.

2.2 Findings from former research

There are rather few findings on the impact of job-related mobility on the risk of separation. Viry et al. (2010) investigated the impact of job-related spatial mobility on the perceived quality of the partnership. They did not found a net effect because two opposite influences were at work: If becoming mobile was perceived as enforced by the job market, it was connected to an increase of partnership quality. But if the social network induced job-related mobility the effect on the perceived quality of the partnership was negative. As the analysis was based on cross-sectional data the causality of these effects remains questionable.

In her dissertation Sandow (2010) found on the basis of Swedish register data that long-distance commuters (at least 30 kilometres one way) run a significantly higher risk of separating than other couples do. She examined a ten-year period and analyzed married and cohabiting couples. The risk of separation was found to be enhanced for commuting men if the commuting was on a temporary basis. For commuting women it was found, that they separate to a lower extent if they commuted for a period of five year or more. If both spouses are long-distance commuters, the rate of separation was found to be low. Apart from these temporal

and gender effects geographical characteristics were found to be important. Long-distance commuters who live in a rural area run a higher risk that the relationship will end compared to those who live in urban areas.

Job-related spatial mobility can also occur in the form of moving home. Frequent moving was found to increase the risk of union dissolution for cohabiting women who were either married or unmarried with their partners (Boyle et al. 2008). But the "mechanisms" behind that finding remain rather unclear. Having suitable data at hand it might be enlightening to analyze the process of migration decision-making instead of treating migration as an event that occurred in one point in time. One can expect especially the early stages of the migration process to increase the risk of separation, whereas the actual move is the execution of the decision to separate (Kley 2009, 2011): Considering and planning migration were found to be highly influenced by (1) the perceived opportunities at the current place of residence, especially those of partnership, family life and career; (2) by life course events that scatter daily routines, e.g. completing studies or getting a job; and (3) by the wish or necessity of the partner to migrate.

Research on the gender specific impact of mobility demands found that women more often refuse commuting compared to men because of the perceived burden that comes with a mobile lifestyle, especially if children were in the household (Kalter 1994; Limmer 2005; Schneider et al. 2008). Moreover, it appears that women refrain from moving in order to enhance their career prospects once they have bound themselves to a partner and children (Becker et al. 2011). In light of these findings one may expect that the risk of separation is increased in couples with a female commuter compared to couples with a male commuter.

As these gender differences are likely based on gender role beliefs the impact of female labour force participation may vary between Eastern and Western Germany. Schmitt and Trappe (2010) found an increased risk of separation for married and cohabiting couples with a more egalitarian labour market participation compared to those practising a "solely male-breadwinner-model" (man is working fulltime, woman does not work), but exclusively in Western Germany. If the woman was instead working part-time, no effect was found in Western Germany, but in Eastern Germany the risk of separation was cut in half compared to "solely male-breadwinner" couples. Hence, one can expect that female labour force participation might increases the risk of separation for couples more in Western Germany as in Eastern Germany.

With regard to the predictors of divorce there is a bunch of findings, but only few of them were found of significant influence reliably across studies. I concentrate on findings based on the social exchange and the micro-economic theory. Major sources of the following short report are a meta-analysis of German studies, which were publicized between 1987 and 2001 (Wagner/Weiß 2003), and literature reviews of studies on divorce published in Europe and the United States in the past two decades (Amato 2010; Lyngstaad/Jalovaara 2010):

a) *Indicators for the "partner match" or attractions to the partnership.* Marrying at an early age was found to strongly enhance the risk of divorce, whereas additional years of age at marriage were found to diminish this risk. In this article the age at forming the partnership is considered. Educational

homogamy and having the same religious background were not found to be of significant influence across German and Nordic studies. But as data on more direct measures such as conflict, infidelity, and the number of perceived relationship problems are not available in the data set, educational homogamy is used nevertheless as an indicator for the "partner match". Additionally, information about the prestige of the current occupation is used as an indicator for attractions to the partnership for each of the partners.

b) *Indicators for the division of labour.* Findings about the influence of division of labour between the partners give some support for the hypothesis that female labour market participation enhances the risk of divorce, although more recent evidence is mixed about the strength and even the direction of this association for subgroups. In the following analysis the job-status is analyzed jointly with commuting, part-time work is considered additionally.

c) *Indicators for couple-specific capital or barriers to end the partnership.* The birth of a first child, the presence of a common child, home-ownership, being catholic and being religious were all found to diminish the risk of separation, whereas living in a big city where social control is possibly lower compared to the countryside was found to enhance this risk. Due to restrictions of the data-set, exclusively home-ownership and children can be considered, and area-characteristics will be controlled for. Additionally one may argue that living together in a joint household for many couples is the first step of institutionalizing the partnership and may therefore be seen as investment in couple-specific capital. Marriage is often the next step, and the findings suggest that it is a strong barrier to ending the partnership: The rates of dissolution are generally higher for cohabitants than for married couples.

In light of these findings the two aims of this paper are: firstly to replicate former findings about the impact of female labour-force participation on the risk of separation in Germany; secondly to analyze whether commuting between the place of residence and the place of work additionally put couples at risk of union dissolution.

3. Data, key figures and method of analysis

For the analysis event-history data is used which was gathered on a monthly basis in the third and last wave of the study "Migration decisions in the life course" (Kley/Huinink 2010). The observation period covers the duration of the panel study and runs from January 2006 to December 2008, which is 36 months. To avoid left-censoring information about the beginning of the first episodes was also collected. The data were gathered randomly among persons aged 18 to 50 years in two German cities, Magdeburg and Freiburg, by carrying out computer assisted telephone interviews. Apart from different economic conditions due to their location in East- (Magdeburg) versus West-Germany (Freiburg) the two cities are quite similar. They both have about 200,000 inhabitants, both have universities, and both are not located near to another important city within short commuting distance. With regard to the finding that the influence of long-distance commuting on the risk of separation varies between rural and urban regions it might be an advantage that the data restricts the analysis to urban areas. With regard to the

"partner market" the two cities might nevertheless be different because of discrepancies in the educational distribution and the prevalence of marriage between Eastern and Western Germany. Therefore the city of residence at the beginning of the survey is controlled for in the analysis.

Because persons who considered leaving the city in the first wave were over-sampled the descriptive analysis must take the stratification of the sample into account by applying frequency weights. As the selective panel attrition among those who considered moving likely yields an under-representation of actual movers (Kley 2009, 2011) longitudinal design weights were constructed that correct also for the probability of staying in the survey.[3] The longitudinal analyses are not weighted because the variables of stratification are uncorrelated with the dependent variable (Winship/Radbill 1994). Furthermore, these items are included as predictors.

Starting with the beginning of the observation window in January 2006, the hazard of separation from the first partner is estimated. After data clearing there is a pool of 890 persons out of 944 respondents who are at least once partnered during the observation window, who were no longer enrolled in school, and who were not married and living separated from their partners at the beginning of the survey. The information about the partners comes from the reports of the respondents. In order not to loose more cases due to incomplete information with regard to the job histories of the partners, missing values were imputed using mean values of the partner's job start or end if one of these dates were missing. The gender of the partner was not asked. In the following heterosexual couples are assumed, what is a simplification that should be kept in mind. Within the period of 36 months 141 separations were observed; that is to say, separation occurred within 16 percent of the couples (not weighted). Calculated with regard to the dataset this is an extremely rare event that occurred in 0.5 percent of the observed 26,014 person months.

For the analysis of my questions methods for discrete-time event history analysis are suitable. A logit transformation is used because the antilog of the estimated coefficient (e^{coeff}) can be interpreted as change in the relative risk of the dependent event by a one-unit change in the predictor, holding all other predictors constant (Long 1997).

The dependent variable refers to the self-reported end of the partnership. The job status refers to both employees and self-employed persons and is measured time-dependently with four categories: woman employed full-time, woman employed part-time, man employed fulltime, and a reference category including women and man currently not in work and men who are employed part-time. The category "not working" includes being enrolled in apprenticeship or in studies, being at home for care giving, being unemployed and else.

Preliminary analysis showed that exclusively long-distance commuting of at least one hour travel time between home and work each way enhances the risk of separation compared to working in one's home town but not short-distance commuting. Therefore, whether the woman or the man is a long-distance commuter is included in the analysis.

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[3]   Information on the design of the longitudinal weights is given on request.

Migration intentions were measured longitudinally among the respondents only; therefore migration intentions of the partners can not be considered in the analysis. In each of the three waves and two short contact-interviews which took place between the first and second wave the respondents were firstly asked whether they had recently considered leaving their place of residence to live somewhere else. Those who answered affirmatively were then asked whether they are planning to migrate within the following 12 months. Hence, the information about migration decision-making and moving can be considered time dependently in the analysis. If a respondent had not been reached in a particular wave the information from the preceding interview was carried forward for the analysis. Part of the actually occurred moves is a small number of inner-city moves.[4]

The duration of the partnership at the time of the first interview is carried forward each month the respondent participated in the survey to account for unobserved heterogeneity in the models. Missing information for partnerships that were formed after the beginning of the survey is controlled for by the dummy-variable for "late entries". Additionally, the age of the respondent when the current partnership began is considered. The age of the partner is not included due to strong correlation with the age of the respondent and the duration of the partnership.

Whether the respondent has a second home was measured time dependently. This other home can be officially registered or not, and it can be registered as first or second residence.

The educational level of the respondent and his or her partner was coded in three categories according to the ISCED[5] classification (Schroedter et al. 2006/08). A lower secondary level of schooling comprises all respondents who completed at most nine years of schooling (*Hauptschulabschluss, Realschulabschluss*). An upper secondary level comprises all respondents who reached a certificate that allows them to study (e.g. *Fachhochschulreife, Abitur*) and those who completed an apprenticeship (e.g. *Ausbildung im Dualen System, Berufsschule*). A tertiary level of schooling comprises respondents who completed studies (e.g. *Fachschulabschluss, Meister, Techniker, Bachelor, Master, Diplom, Magister).*

Whether the respondents moved together to share a home and whether eventually one of the partners moved out again was measured time dependently. As marriage is strongly confounded with main predictors, it is not considered additionally in the analysis.[6]

To capture the influence of children on the risk of separation the age of the youngest child living in the household is considered with three categories: no child, at least one child below three years of age, and at least one child three years

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4   The inner-city moves had no different impact on the risk of separation compared to other moves.

5   ISCED is the shorthand for International Standard Classification of Education that comes from the UNESCO.

6   Among the couples who live together 61 percent are married, among those who live separately only 2 percent are married. Furthermore, female labour-force participation and commuting is confounded with marriage: among the married women 38 percent work full-time compared to 44 percent among the not married, and the percentage of female commuting is cut in half with marriage (5 to 2 percent).

of age and older. The categories include very few stepchildren. If a birth occurred during the observation window, the information about children below three years was updated.[7] Table 1 provides an overview about the distribution of the variables in the sample.

Table 1 about here

4. Results

Whether job-related spatial mobility and migration intentions increase the risk of separation for couples was analyzed in three steps. In the first model, the impact of labour market participation and commuting between home and work of for men and women is analyzed, whereas migration intentions and migration behaviour of the respondent is also considered. In the second model, time and area characteristics are additionally controlled for. In the third model additional information about the educational homogamy of the couple is added. In the forth model indicators for couple-specific capital are added to analyze the influence of certain kinds of barriers to end the partnership on the risk of separation.

The effects estimated in Model 1 (Table 2) generally meet the expectations: full-time work of women increases the risk of separation for the couple, although not significantly, whereas full-time employment of men strongly decreases this risk. For female part-time work virtually no effect is estimated. The main question of this paper, whether long-distance commuting enhances the risk of separation for couples, can be answered with "it depends". If the commuter is female and is working full-time, the risk of separation is estimated to be more than five times higher (1.27 x 4.27 = 5.43) compared to couples with a not working woman. It the commuter is male an even negative but not significant effect on the risk of separation is estimated. It appears that the burden of commuting does significantly add to the risk of separation which comes in the first place with a full-time labour participation of women. These findings take into account that the respondent may consider or plan moving. Each of the migration decision-making stages additionally doubles the risk of separation. Actually moving has also a significant but slightly lower effect. The move is the last step that finally executes the decision formed earlier. Further analyses reveal that the influence of female long-distance commuting would be overestimated if migration intentions were not considered. Among those who consider migration the share of long-distance commuters is higher compared to those who do not consider it (6 to 4 percent); and the same picture is observed according to planning migration (8 to 5 percent) and actually moving (7 to 5 percent).

In Model 2 (Table 2) the duration of the partnership, the age at the beginning of the partnership, the city of residence in the first wave and whether the couple has a second home are considered. It appears that the influence of commuting and of

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[7]   For the sake of parsimony, additional variables that were found to influence the risk of separation in the literature were not included because they did not show sizeable and significant results: The subjective importance of career and income, the amount of children, whether the respondent was born in the city of residence, and home-ownership. Home-ownership, for instance, is correlated with living together. 37 percent of the cohabiters own their flat or house, but only 8 percent of those who live separately.

migration decision-making and behaviour on the risk of separation is diminished once the duration of the partnership is considered. The partnership duration is intertwined with both commuting and migration decision-making, which can be displayed in form of differences between mean partnership durations (T-tests, all statistically significant). Long-term commuters are on average 7.1 years in their current partnership compared with 9.3 years for persons who do not commute. Female long-distance commuters have an even shorter mean duration of partnership: 6.0 years. Therefore the estimated impact of female long-distance commuting on the risk of separation is somewhat diminished, but an odds ratio of 2.94 is nevertheless sizeable, and the estimated probability of error of 18 percent is not that high. A similar picture can be observed for the migration predictors. Those respondents who consider migration have been in their current partnership for 6.5 years on average, whereas those who do not consider it have been partnered for 10 years. The respective figures for those who plan migration are 4 years of partnership and for those who actually move 3.5 years. Nevertheless, considering migration is still estimated to increase the risk of separation by 40 percent (probability of error: 10 percent). Migration decision-making appears to be especially a threat for recently formed partnerships. With every year the partnership has already lasted the risk of separation is estimated to be diminished by about 10 percent. But the decrease of the separation risk becomes more flat as the duration of the partnership increases. Furthermore, it is estimated that with every year the respondent was older as he or she formed his partnership the risk of separation is significantly diminished, but to a rather low amount.

Considering the city of residence in the analysis reveals a sizeable and statistically significant interaction effect with the full-time labour market participation of women. For women living in Freiburg, the West German city, full-time employment is estimated to double the risk of separation (1.05 x 1.87 = 1.96), whereas it has no effect for women living in the East German city. This result confirms recent findings of a study on the basis of the German Socio-Economic Panel (Schmitt/Trappe 2010), in which the place of residence in 1991 was used as the basis for distinction between East and West German couples.

Whether the couple has a second home seems to have no sizeable influence. Further analysis reveal that for long-distance commuters a second home diminishes the risk of separation more strongly compared to other groups. This contradicts the hypotheses that having a second home may increase the risk of separation because it provides extra room for one of the partners. It seems to have more the character of a resource that helps decreasing the stress that comes with long distance commuting.

In Model 3 (Table 2) the educational homogamy of the couple is considered. Having the same educational background is estimated to exert no effect on the risk of separation for a couple but the educational level does. If both partners have a lower secondary degree of schooling the risk of separation is estimated to be three times as high as if both partners have a tertiary level of education (probability of error: 14 percent). All other predictors remain virtually unchanged.

Model 4 (Table 2) shows that the effects of female labour force participation and commuting on the risk of separation are robust against influences of barriers to end the partnership. If the couple lives together the odds of getting separated

are estimated to be decreased significantly by 80 percent. Having children deters partners from separating additionally, especially if the youngest child is below three years of age. This result seems remarkable because having children is confounded with both the job status and living together.[8]

Furthermore, the effects of partnership duration and age at the beginning of the partnership loose significance. Obviously, the partnership duration is strongly confounded with living together: Those who do not share a home are in their partnership for 1.7 years on average, whereas those who live together are partnered for 11.9 years. Furthermore, the respondents who do not share a home with their partners were significantly younger as they formed their partnership compared to those who live with their partners (20.3 compared to 24.9 years).

Table 2 about here

5. Discussion

In this article, the hazard for union dissolution of cohabiting and not cohabiting couples was estimated with a focus on job-related spatial mobility, taking migration intentions and behaviour, and the living arrangements of the partners into account. From the social exchange theory and the microeconomic theory of marital stability and based on a literature review predictors for separation were derived, which were then empirically tested with discrete time event history analyses, using data from the German panel study "Migration Decisions in the Life Course".

Female full-time work was found to increase the risk of separation exclusively in Western but not in Eastern Germany compared to couples in that the woman is not working. For couples with a female long-distance commuter, additionally a significantly increased risk of separation was found. Correspondingly, the risk of separation for the couple was found to be significantly reduced if the man works full-time compared to couples with a part-time or not working man. Male long-distance commuting rather diminishes the separation risk further, although not to a significant extent. Whether the couple has a second home at the place of work does *not* play an important part according to the estimations. These findings appear to be robust against additional influences of migration intentions and behaviour; especially the early stages of migration decision-making were found to enhance the risk of separation additionally.

The investment in couple-specific capital that may act as barrier to end the partnership was found to be influential, too, as was expected from the literature. Whether the couple shares at least one home or whether it lives completely separately was found to be most important. As the duration of the partnership lost significance once the joint history of residence for both partners was considered one may conclude that sharing a home indeed is a good predictor for investment in couple-specific capital. Having a child was found to decrease the risk of

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[8] Compared to childless respondents, those with at least one child are much more often sharing a home with their partners (95 to 57 percent). With regard to long-distance commuting, significant differences in opposite directions for men and women are observed: women who have at least one child are more seldom long-distance commuters (5 to 3 percent), whereas their mal counterparts commute more often (6 to 11 percent).

separation additionally, especially if the youngest child is below the age of three years.

One may conclude that the evidence for both the exchange and the micro-economic theory of divorce is mixed. The idea of a beneficial influence of gender specific labour division on partnership stability, as proposed by the microeconomic theory, was supported exclusively in the western part of Germany, where more traditional gender roles are present. The idea of a negative influence of spatial mobility on partnership stability due to a more broad partner market, as was deducted from the exchange theory, was also not generally supported: The effects of commuting were found to be opposite for men and women, and having a second home was found to be hardly influential, moreover in the other direction as expected.

One may conclude that my findings support more an explanation of the basis of bargaining between the couples, whereas gender role beliefs and perceived stress play a prominent part. In couples with more egalitarian gender role beliefs, female full-time employment is generally no threat for the partnership. But it becomes a risk if it puts too much burden on women, i.e. in form of long-distance commutes, because women perceive commuting on average as more stressful. This perception is rooted in the fact that women are or feel (still) mainly responsible for the housekeeping and childrearing. A full-time working man therefore is a stabilizing factor in today's partnerships, and whether he has to commute or not is of minor importance.

In this paper spatial mobility was analyzed in a more comprehensive way because the whole range of living arrangements of couples were taken into account. Couples with separate homes should not be neglected in this branch of research, as they were found to have a share of 25 percent in this survey. It is remarkable that the above findings were found to be robust when cohabitation was controlled for. The findings were based on random samples of 890 respondents aged 18 to 50 years, and longitudinal methods of analysis were used. Still, some features of the data may inhibit the generalizability of the results. The samples were drawn in two cities and not nation wide, and the observation window was with three years rather short. Lastly, heterosexual couples had to be assumed in the analysis because the gender of the partner was not asked in the survey. Until the results were not replicated with other data the findings should therefore be interpreted with caution.

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Tables

Table 1:
Distribution of variables (weighted) and number of exposures and occurrences

	% (Mean)	Std.Dev.	Min	Max	Exposures	Occurrences (O/E in %)
Dependent variable						
Separation	0.5		0	1	26,014	141
Work and spatial mobility						
♀ full-time	40.5		0	1	10,278	60 (0.6)
♀ part-time	32.4		0	1	8,562	38 (0.4)
♀ not working	27.0		0	1	7,174	43 (0.6)
♂ full-time	69.6		0	1	17,907	64 (0.3)
♂ part-time	11.5		0	1	3,023	21 (0.7)
♂ not working	18.9		0	1	5,084	56 (1.1)
♀ long-distance commuter	4.0		0	1	1,251	12 (0.9)
♂ long-distance commuter	8.7		0	1	2,502	8 (0.3)
Migration: not at all	69.2		0	1	15,904	61 (0.4)
considering	16.6		0	1	5,323	42 (0.8)
planning	7.9		0	1	2,688	23 (0.9)
move	6.2		0	1	2,099	15 (0.7)
Time and place						
Partnership duration (years)	10.8	8.9	0	36.7		
Age at begin of partnership,c	25.6	7.0	15	50		
Residence: Magdeburg, c	51.6		0	1	12,488	56 (0.4)
Freiburg, c	48.4		0	1	13,526	85 (0.6)
Second residence	8.4		0	1	2,389	15 (0.6)
Homogamy: Educ. Level						
Both tertiary, c	32.2		0	1	9,356	31 (0.3)
Both upper secondary, c	26.4		0	1	6,165	40 (0.6)
Both lower secondary, c	0.9		0	1	162	2 (1.2)
♂ higher, c	19.5		0	1	4,934	34 (0.7)
♀ higher, c	21.0		0	1	5,397	34 (0.6)
Couple-specific capital						
Living together	75.1		0	1	19,017	33 (0.2)
Youngest child: no child	51.5		0	1	13,646	120 (0.9)
less 3 years	12.7		0	1	3,253	2 (0.06)
3 years and older	35.8		0	1	9,115	19 (0.2)

c = constant, all other variables are time dependent

Table 2: Relative risks of separation due to job-related spatial mobility

Binomial Logistic Regression	Model 1 Exp(b)	Model 2 Exp(b)	Model 3 Exp(b)	Model 4 Exp(b)
Work and spatial mobility				
♀ not working, ♂ part-time or not working	1	1	1	1
♀ full-time	1.27	1.05	1.10	1.08
♀ part-time	0.98	1.24	1.28	1.31
♂ full-time	0.40***	0.59***	0.62**	0.72*
♀ long-distance commuter	0.56	0.81	0.86	0.91
♂ long-distance commuter	0.73	0.86	0.81	0.83
♀ full-time x ♀ long-distance commuter	4.27*	2.94	2.67	2.75
Migration: not at all	1	1	1	1
considering	1.83***	1.40	1.41*	1.31
planning	1.81**	1.22	1.27	1.09
move	1.58	1.05	1.05	1.15
Time and place				
Partnership duration (years)		0.90***	0.90***	0.98
Partnership duration (years) squared		1.30*	1.30*	0.93
Age at begin of partnership		0.99*	0.99*	0.99
Residence: Freiburg (Ref. Magdeburg)		0.96	1.00	0.99
Residence: Freiburg x ♀ full-time		1.87*	1.83*	1.71
Second residence		0.94	0.95	0.87
Homogamy				
Educational level: Both tertiary			1	1
Both upper secondary			1.26	1.23
Both lower secondary			3.05	3.71*
♂ higher			1.37	1.37
♀ higher			1.15	1.05
Couple-specific capital				
Living together				0.20***
Youngest child: no child				1
less 3 years				0.28*
3 years and older				0.81
Constant	0.01***	0.01***	0.01***	0.02***
Number of person-months	26,014	26,014	26,014	26,014
LR Chi2 (degrees of freedom)	55.6(9)	127.0(15)	129.8(19)	188.1(22)
Model significance	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
McFadden's Pseudo R-squared	0.032	0.072	0.074	0.107

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01