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Shall i help you my dear? Examining variations in social support for career advancement within partnerships

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Shall I help you my dear? Examining variations in social support for career advancement within partnerships

Katrin Golsch

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Shall I Help You My Dear?

Examining Variations in Social Support
for Career Advancement within Partnerships

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Abstract

Strong gender inequalities persist in the career advancement of men and women. Vertical and horizontal dimensions of segregation, gender role beliefs, and the public provision of welfare services all provide explanations for gender inequalities. Much less is known about the social mechanisms at work within couples, however. Following the notion of linked lives, the present study investigates the provision of social support for career advancement within partnerships. Using data from wave 23 (2006) of the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP) and considering couples as units of analysis, this study focuses on individual resources and aspirations, intra-couple bargaining as well as on educational and occupational homogamy between spouses. The empirical analysis controls for individual qualifications, characteristics of career development and current job of both partners. Family-specific variables and regional differences are also taken into account. The results of the analysis, although cross-sectional, give some initial insights into patterns of social support within couples.

Keywords: social support, partnership, gender

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1 Introduction

Significant gender inequalities persist in the career advancement of men and women, even among the highly qualified. This becomes particularly evident in women's underrepresentation in managerial positions in both the private and the public sector of the economy (Holst and Busch, 2010). Vertical and horizontal dimensions of segregation, gender role beliefs, and the public provision of welfare services all provide explanations for gender inequalities in the labor market. However, much less is known about the social mechanisms at work within couples (Rusconi and Solga, 2008). Following the notion of "linked lives" (Elder, 1994) and "coupled career" (Han and Moen, 1999), the present study investigates the provision of social support for career advancement within partnerships. More particularly, it is still unclear to what extent individual resources and aspirations, intra-couple bargaining, and educational and occupational homogamy between spouses affects social support for career advancement provided by one partner for the other.

There are various studies that have examined the effects of *partner's resources* on upward occupational moves (see, for instance, Baerts et al., 2010; Bröckel et al., 2012; Verbakel and de Graaf, 2008; Róbert and Bukodi, 2002; Holst and Busch, 2010). These studies have provided evidence on the significant and gender-specific role of the partner's resources and the relation between partners' resources in occupational careers. Financial resources of the partner show a negative impact on individual opportunities for upward career mobility, while the social capital of the partner increases opportunities for moving upward. Yet, men and women do not profit equally from the partner's resources. Rather, the partner's resources appear to be more relevant for women, particularly in non-traditional partnerships. Moreover, a partner's stock of resources and resource allocation within partnerships is shaped by *shared restrictions* determined by external factors affecting the couple (Solga and Rusconi, 2011; Rusconi and Solga, 2008). Examples of these include a lack of child care provision, prevailing traditional gender roles, or high unemployment rates (Bröckel et al., 2012).

It cannot be inferred from the study of partner's resources and shared restrictions *why* these resources and restrictions affect men's and women's occupational mobility differently. One rationale behind the above findings is that partners' resources do not automatically initiate supportive behavior due to status competition between spouses or stereotypical gender-role bargaining. Another supposition is that external shared restrictions affecting the couple are disproportionately mediated through models of gender-specific negotiation within the couple.

Yet, the mechanisms at work within the couple and their interdependence with the external restrictions have not been systematically unfolded using large-scale survey datasets. Under what circumstances will the partner's resources lead to instrumental support for an individual? Or whose partner is more likely to withhold social support? The goal of this study is to examine social support for career advancement, a valued resource, particularly for career-oriented men and women (Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2008). To date, there is no study that fully explores this issue in Germany. This may be partially explained by the scarcity of data and information on social support within partnerships. Considering individuals living in a partnership as units of analysis, the present study attempts to derive information on social support within partnerships from the network generator provided in wave 23 (2006) of the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP) (Diewald et al., 2006).

The next section develops a theoretical framework for this study, and it embeds it in the wider context of social support theory as well as gender role beliefs and institutional arrangements which shape negotiation processes within couples. This is followed by a description of the data, variables, and statistical methods used in the analysis. The main section of the paper is the empirical analysis of perceived social support for career advancement. The final section summarizes the results, discusses some flaws of the data used, and expresses various proposals for future research.

2 Theoretical Perspectives

2.1 Social Support within Partnerships

Social capital can be understood as an important stock of resources for goal achievement which increases an individual's chances of finding a better job, being promoted, and receiving a high income (Lin, 2000; Burt, 2000). As such, social capital is closely associated with social inequality, channeling better opportunities for goal achievement to resource-rich individuals (Lin, 2000). To evaluate resource-richness, it is not enough to focus on the quantity and quality of resources within a personal network. The crucial question is whether individuals also gain access to these resources through social support. There is ample evidence showing that access to social networks and social network composition is gender specific (see, for instance, Ibarra, 1992; Ibarra, 1993; Moore, 1990). Less research attention has been devoted to differences in the availability of resources and transfer of resources within networks or a possible capital and return deficit for women (Lin, 2000).

Social support is a multifaceted concept and context sensitive (Diewald, 1991). While in the past many researchers employed a single measure of social support, more recent studies have revealed that it is vital to disentangle different types of social support and to distinguish between provision and receipt of social support (Xu and Burleson, 2001; Verhofstadt et al., 2007; Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2008). Following Perrewé and Carlson (2002), this study conceives social support as consisting of emotional and instrumental support from significant others. Emotional support encompasses the availability of individuals who provide encouragement and sympathy and a sounding board to speak about personal thoughts and feelings. Instrumental support refers to direct assistance received from other persons. Support for career advancement can be seen as a distinct social support dimension which is of particular importance for career-oriented individuals (Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2008; Sonnert, 2005; van der Gaag and Snijders, 2005). Social support can also be burdensome for individuals (Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2008; Verhofstadt et al., 2007). Let us take stressful arguments and conflicts as an example of unhelpful emotional support and a lack of assistance with domestic work or child-rearing as an example of unhelpful instrumental support behavior. In this study, particular attention is paid to the reported level of instrumental support for career advancement within partnerships.

Both close personal ties and weaker ones can provide social support, but exchange of information with weaker ties has been shown to be particularly fruitful for the occupational career (Granovetter, 1973). Other scholars stress the significance of interdependence with the partner's life course and posit that it is also important to take into account the resource allocation within partnerships (Bernasco et al., 1998). However, this is a complex venture since the resource richness of one partner can enhance sources for helpful emotional and instrumental support and, at the same time, it can also create an increasingly competitive situation within the couple.

On the one hand, human capital and occupational experiences are not only meaningful resources for an individual's career. If shared with a partner, they constitute an important stock of resources for the occupational advancement of the partner that significantly differs from the resources provided by weak ties. In more concrete terms, living with a resource-rich partner can create a stimulating climate in which individuals can rely on their partners to provide time-consuming, energy-sapping instrumental support behavior. Spouses can help to solve work-related problems, discover suitable career opportunities, and make career decisions, as well as giving career advice. At the same time, the more resources an individual has, the more attractive he or she is as an exchange partner for the spouse. The study by Busch et al. (2012)

demonstrates that instrumental support for career advancement within partnerships is certainly an important factor in both men's and women's career development.

On the other hand, couples often negotiate whose career will take precedence and this is also assumed to shape the resource allocation decisions spouses make. Different negotiation patterns can be observed within couples (Rusconi and Solga, 2008; Becker and Moen, 1999; Livingston, 2011). For many years, negotiation within couples has often resulted in the traditional model where the woman scales back for the benefit of the partner's occupational career. Spouses can also opt for an egalitarian model, characterized by more cooperative negotiation patterns, or an individualistic family model, marked by more competitive bargaining patterns. In the first case, both partners are involved in decision-making processes and invest in their work and family life in equal measures. Within an egalitarian partnership, men and women should benefit equally from their partner's resources. In the second case, family life plays an inferior role and spouses will try to advance their own occupational career, irrespective of their partner's career. Couples following this individualistic family model may be less willing to share their resources but concentrate on their own career advancement wholeheartedly. An important factor in determining these negotiation tactics is the bargaining power of men and women within a partnership. Furthermore, the bargaining behavior of couples is also moderated by career and family aspirations, personality traits, gender role beliefs, and transition points in the life course. Whether men and women can benefit equally from their partner's resources will depend on the prevailing negotiation model within the couple – an issue that will be discussed at greater length in the following sections.

Prior research on social support in couples has paid particular attention to emotional support and instrumental support in the form of help with the household and family members. Previous studies on emotional support have shown that women receive support from a greater number of social support sources than men (Schwarzer and Gutiérrez-Dona, 2005; Umberson et al., 1996). Yet, within partnerships, women receive less emotional support from their partner than men, a finding that is not associated with the spouses' occupations (Wallace and Jovanovic, 2011). This social support gap has been traced back to gender differences in personality (Kessler and McLeod, 1984) or to gender-role expectations (Xu and Burleson, 2001; Neff and Karney, 2005).

Examination of support in household chores and parenting reveals that women still carry out the lion's share of domestic work, even in dual-earner couples (Kroska, 2004; Treas and Drobic, 2010; Cooke, 2007; Holst and Busch, 2010). Gender inequality in domestic work appears to be related to wage penalties (Kühhirt and Ludwig, 2012) or occupational upward

mobility (Bröckel et al., 2012; Busch et al., 2012). Social support within partnerships also has an effect on social strain (DeLongis et al., 2004), marital quality (Mickelson, 2006), satisfaction, and family-to-work spillover (Ferguson et al., 2012; Stevens et al., 2007).

Due to the context specificity of social support, it is not clear whether the findings reported for other dimensions of social support are applicable to the specific setting of the present study. To date, social support for career advancement has been rarely studied (Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2008; Gordon and Whelan-Berry, 2004; Tharenou, 2001) using predominantly qualitative survey data and specific subsamples of managers. More importantly, these studies do not consider negotiation models within couples. The present study aims to fill this significant gap in existing research. The following sections are devoted to the discussion of social mechanisms in order to explain social support for career advancement within partnerships. A first set of influencing factors consists of the individual resources, the partner's resources, and the correlation between the partners' resources (Diewald and Sattler, 2010).

2.2 The Role of Resources and Aspirations

Emerging differences in investments and opportunities in the labor market career of men and women over the life course have been traced back to comparative advantages in the labor market of one partner over the other. Following the economic theory of the family (Becker, 1991), the partner with comparatively greater advantages in the labor market will concentrate on his or her occupational career while the other partner will limit him or herself to the household sphere. Although this specialization mechanism is gender neutral, in the past human capital differences between men and women have often resulted in the traditional family model. Here, the man invests in his occupational career and functions as the provider of household income through his continuous work on the labor market while the woman carries the brunt of responsibilities in domestic work and child-rearing. Such a gender division of labor creates a mutual interdependence between husband and wife and, economic theory argues, is most beneficial for both partners. Following this line of theory, one would expect that resource-rich individuals with a higher marginal productivity in the market will receive more support from their partner to pursue a career than resource-poor individuals. However, due to the specialization mechanism, this is likely to be in a different vein than in dual-earner couples, and dual-career couples in particular: emotional support and help with household chores and parenting will play a crucial role while the partner who has specialized in the household probably has less means to give instrumental support for career advancement. For the same reason, the partner with comparatively weaker labor market attachment will not receive social

support for career advancement since the expected gains are too low. From a more empirical viewpoint, estimation models not only need to control for men's and women's labor market resources, but they also have to identify who has the comparative advantage in the market – which can only be adequately captured through resource relations between partners.

Over the past few decades, women's investment in human capital accumulation and growing career aspirations have increased their earning power and these women tend to live with equally highly educated men (Blossfeld, 1995). This has profoundly changed resources availability, power structures, and negotiation patterns within couples (Blossfeld and Buchholz, 2009; Blossfeld and Timm, 2003; Blossfeld and Drobnic, 2001). Partnerships in which both partners pursue a career are on the rise and more recently, research interest has therefore shifted from dual-earner couples to dual-career couples¹ (e.g., Solga and Wimbauer, 2005). Being on a par in terms of human capital, it is less obvious who has the comparative advantage in the market, and therefore, intra-couple bargaining becomes more challenging. With the growing equalization of resources, the economic theory of the family has reached its limits. If the comparative advantage over the partner is small, then intra-couple bargaining processes loom large (Ott, 1992). In contrast to the economic theory of the family, economic exchange theory predicts the formation of egalitarian partnerships once equalization of resources applies. Accordingly, it may be assumed that men and women in these partnerships can rely on a stock of partner's resources and both are able to receive and provide social support for career advancement.

In summary, social support for a partner's career advancement is likely to vary with a couple's level of socio-economic resources and aspirations. On the one hand, resource-rich individuals are more likely to invest their capital on their partner's behalf if the expected gains are high. On the other hand, the more socio-economic resources a partner has, the higher the quantity and quality of his capital and, thus, the greater his opportunities to support a partner's career advancement. Over and above this, if the socio-economic resources of the partner are high, individuals can rely on an economic basis that allows them to take risks in their occupational career and to strive to achieve their career objectives.

¹ The distinction between dual-earner couples and dual-career couples is by no means standardized in the literature (Solga and Rusconi, 2011). In our understanding, dual-career couples are composed of highly qualified, career-oriented men and women who are employed in positions that are in accordance with their educational qualification with good opportunities for upward career moves.

Correspondingly, the *resources hypotheses* state:

- Resource-rich individuals receive more support for career advancement from their partner than resource-poor individuals.
- Individuals with a higher level of career aspiration and career orientation receive more support for career advancement from their partner than individuals with lower levels of career aspiration.
- Cohabitation with a resource-rich partner goes hand in hand with higher levels of support for career advancement.

The measures of resource richness used for the purposes of this study will be skill level, occupational standing, and income. Career aspirations and orientations will be empirically captured on the basis of the importance of self-fulfillment, willingness to take risks in occupation, and significance of career. However, a static view of couples, their resources, aspirations, and occupational careers is not sufficient (Solga and Rusconi, 2011). The stock of individual resources and aspirations changes over a lifetime and resource allocation and negotiation within partnerships is ongoing. Of particular importance is the family cycle, often linked to a traditionalization process within partnerships (Grunow et al., 2007; Schulz and Blossfeld, 2006). Not only does this become visible through less gender equity at home; it also has long-term penalties for women's careers (e.g., Aisenbrey et al., 2009). Other studies established that social support provision and social support receipt may vary throughout the life cycle (Gordon and Whelan-Berry, 2004). Turning points such as getting married and having children may also induce stresses and strains within networks, as well as changes of network orientations and network composition. It is therefore important to control for partnership status, presence of children, and relationship duration.

2.3 The Role of Homogamy within the Couple

Previous research has convincingly shown that individuals are “more likely to develop and maintain supportive relationships with others who are similar to them on important social dimensions” (Suitor et al., 1995: 1574). Homophily of social networks often yields homogamy, that is, homophily in partnership formation, and an important feature of many partnerships is therefore status homophily and value homophily (McPherson et al., 2001; Blossfeld and Timm, 2003; Kalmijn, 1998; Liao and Stevens, 1994). With regard to status homophily, spouses should be more likely to provide access to career networks and they may be better able to provide instrumental support in everyday, job-related problems on the basis of their

own career experiences. As far as value homophily is concerned, spouses share similar values and opinions. Similarity of knowledge and experiences also creates a basis for mutual understanding and appreciation of the spouse's work experiences. However, one might expect significant differences between well-educated couples and low-educated couples. Highly educated couples are perhaps more often egalitarian-minded and more likely to identify with the ideal of companionship in marriage than less educated spouses. Moreover, in dual-earner couples, men and women are more likely to have similar career aspirations and share career experiences. By contrast, the positive effect of value homophily may be less visible for spouses who hold strong beliefs in traditional gender roles.

In summary, it can be assumed that homogamous couples provide particularly valuable sources of mutual support and accordingly, the *homogamy hypotheses* assume:

- Educational homogamy increases support for a partner's career advancement.
- Occupational homogamy enhances support for a partner's career advancement.

In the present study, educational homogamy will be measured in terms of having the same skill level as the partner and occupational in terms of working in the same occupational field as the partner. The impact of occupational homogamy on gender differences in social support receipt has only been tested in a few studies to date (Janning, 2006; Wallace and Jovanovic, 2011; de Grood and Wallace, 2011). These provided some evidence that occupational homogamy increases opportunities to pursue a dual career (Rusconi & Solga, 2007; Wallace & Jovanovic, 2011). Other researchers have convincingly shown that social support is also associated with a spouse's integration in the partner's social network (Cornwell, 2012).

2.4 The Role of External Restrictions on the Couple

For the explanation of social support, the regional context in which individuals live also has to be taken into account (Diewald and Sattler, 2010). With respect to coupled careers, some authors have argued that various external factors shape intra-couple bargaining processes (Rusconi and Solga, 2008). In more concrete terms, disparities in perceived career prospects may result from living in areas with a higher (or lower) rate of childcare supply, unemployment rate, or proportion of jobs as well as remuneration in specific sectors and segments of the labor market. Other studies have demonstrated that the individual perception of such restrictions on the macro level does play a role in making job decisions. The present study goes one step further, examining whether external restrictions on the couple also have an impact on support behaviors within partnerships. Not only do spouses evaluate their own career pro-

spects but also those of their partner. Following Lin (2000), one theoretical assumption behind a return deficit is that the expected payoff of one partner's supportive behavior may be lower in regions where opportunities for career advancement of the other partner are perceived to be low. Various structural indicators can help to grasp such variations in perceived external restrictions on the couple. Seen in the light of the theoretical considerations on the role of resources and aspirations, this study assumes that gross income per working hour by gender and region can serve as a tool to measure such restrictions. Living in regions characterized by higher income levels is expected to increase the partner's support for career advancement.

The effect of this indicator may be mediated by more egalitarian (or traditional) internalized gender role beliefs (Mickelson et al., 2006). For instance, it can be assumed that spouses with more traditional gender role attitudes tend to consider housework to be the woman's responsibility and a career outside the home to be the man's domain, making gender-role-congruent support behaviors more likely than in more egalitarian couples. Gender role beliefs become visible in everyday interactions with other individuals such as relatives, peers, neighbors, or colleagues, and in the course of these interactions an individual's own gender role beliefs are shaped and modified. Compared to individuals in regions where traditional gender roles prevail, individuals living in regions where egalitarian gender roles predominate can be expected to receive more support from their partners. The theoretical background to this will be further developed below in a discussion of the "doing gender" approach.

2.5 Bargaining Power and Support Gap

The above explanations of social support behavior within partnerships probably fall too short since they focus only on resources available and are gender neutral. The "support gap" hypothesis postulates that women receive less support and less beneficial support from their partners than men, and social support types also differ (Bell, 1982). Many studies confirm this hypothesis (Neff and Karney, 2005; Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2008), while others provide contradictory evidence (Xu and Burleson, 2001; Verhofstadt et al., 2007).

One supposition of the present study is that men and women with similar aspirations and socio-economic resources do not necessarily benefit equally from their spouses' resources. Rather, on the basis of various sociological perspectives, asymmetrical support behaviors within partnerships can be expected. A helpful explanation for gender-specific variance in supportive behaviors within partnerships is provided by the "doing gender" approach (West and Zimmerman, 1989), according to which gender is a socially constructed category. Gender

categorization is replicated in everyday interactions of people and invokes gender stereotypes, such as gender status belief (Ridgeway, 2001; Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin, 1999). One expansion of the “doing gender” approach is based on the “compensation hypothesis” (Brines, 1994). According to this hypothesis, equalization of men’s and women’s resources and the growing departure from the traditional family model has significant ramifications for men by calling their gender identity into question. In such situations, men will probably abstain from giving additional instrumental support for their wife’s career advancement. Instead, as a reaction to a loss of gender identity, men may want to opt for a (re-)traditionalization of their partnership, furthering their own occupational career.

In a similar vein, the identity formation model proposed by Bielby and Bielby (1989) also suggests a support deficit of women. Prevailing gender roles in society reinforce men’s career identity and women’s family identity – no matter what the spouses’ level of socio-economic resources. Negotiation within a couple is therefore likely to result in a more traditional family model, since both men and women are less prone to transgress prevalent gender norms. The role congruity theory is yet another perspective for explaining a support gap within partnerships. According to this theory, one would expect men and women to use gender-role-congruent negotiation tactics (Eagly and Karau, 2002).

Even if both partners invest in their occupational careers and share household and childcare tasks, one partner may have more bargaining power due to a higher earnings capacity, and thus, more financial resources. Keeping in mind the well-documented gender pay gap (Holst and Busch, 2010; Blau and Kahn, 2006; Kunze, 2008), it is clear that women will often have less bargaining power than their spouses. Moreover, men will then expect fewer returns from the market. In the long run, this will again result in gender specialization by the partners, limiting women’s opportunities for receiving instrumental support for career advancement.

From the main arguments of these theories, the following *support gap hypothesis* can be derived:

- Women receive less support for career advancement from their partners than men.

It becomes obvious from the above discussion that the bargaining power of men and women is likely to play a crucial role in social support receipt within partnerships. To empirically capture gender differences in bargaining power, this study uses an indicator variable identifying who has the last word on financial decisions. This decision is based on prior research showing that pivotal decisions are most often made by the partner with more bargaining power, even if the intra-couple coordination follows the egalitarian model (Bartely et al., 2005).

Gender division of labor will also play a significant role here. A focus on dual-earner couples is particularly promising for analyzing the social support gap hypothesis. From the perspective of social capital theory, dual-earner couples should possess an optimal stock of instrumental support resources for career advancement. This is based on the implicit understanding that both partners are career oriented, possess resources, and are willing to share. Since the first two conditions are often fulfilled in dual-earner couples, particular attention should be paid to couples where the third condition is not fulfilled.

3 Data, Variables, and Methods

The data analyzed come from interview waves 21-23 of the SOEP, version 27 (2004-2006), using a subsample of couples. The SOEP is a general household panel survey which started with approximately 6,000 households and about 12,000 individuals in 1984. Since then, the survey has been repeated annually (Wagner et al., 2007). It provides a rich set of detailed labor market and household-related information collected prospectively on a yearly basis as well as retrospective information on the occupational, family, and marital biography; social origin and first job as well as migration biography are also included. There are specific topic modules which are replicated every five to ten years.

Of special interest for this study is a specific set of questions on family and social networks, for which interview data has only been provided once to date (Diewald et al., 2006). In 2006, all respondents were asked to specify up to three persons from their strong and weak ties who provide positive or negative emotional support as well as instrumental support. The dependent variable in the current analysis stems from the following question: “Who supports your advancement in your career or educational training and fosters your progress?” The dependent variable differentiates individuals who receive support for career advancement from their partner from those who do not receive any support at all and those who only receive support from persons other than their partner.²

The above discussion has highlighted that systematic analysis of social support for career advancement provided within partnerships, and the associated intra-couple processes are still lacking. The present paper therefore focuses on individuals living in partnerships who gave full interviews and were aged 20-65 at the date of interview in 2006. Table 1 presents some summary statistics on the subsample used in the analysis.

² One important aspect to be kept in mind when discussing the results of this study is the fact that the analysis deals with perceived social support rather than observed or self-reported social support behavior.

Table 1

Analysis subsample: summary statistics

	Men	Women
Individuals with a working partner	3,008	3,621
Employment status (column %)		
Full-time employed	74.37	27.48
Part-time employed	2.09	28.80
Marginally employed	1.43	7.95
Not employed	22.11	35.76
Partnership status (column %)		
Cohabiting	13.70	11.13
Married	86.30	88.87
Support for career advancement (column %)		
No support	45.55	47.33
Partner supports	46.18	46.51
Other persons support	8.28	6.16

Source: SOEP, wave 23 (2006).

The empirical analysis controls for individual characteristics such as career aspirations, educational qualification, characteristics of career development, and current job. Information on external restrictions on the couple is derived from two different sources, namely, the Allbus (2004) (Blohm et al., 2004) and the Gender Index (2006) (Meyer and Milbert, 2007). Particular attention is paid to variables describing the intra-couple level, namely, educational and occupational homogamy as well as power relations. Family-related variables, migration background, and survey sample membership are also taken into account. All measures of interest are described in more detail in Table 2.

Using multinomial logistic regression models (Long and Freese, 2006; Wooldridge, 2010), the analysis first examines determinants of social support receipt of men and women with a partner in gainful employment. Separate models are estimated for men and women and the explanatory variables are introduced step by step. The analysis begins with an estimation model which only includes individual-level variables, adds variables describing the external couple level and ends with a full model controlling for the intra-couple level.

Table 2

Measures used in the analysis

Individual level	Skill level	Three dummies for: low (ISCED 1+2), middle (ISCED 3), and high educational qualification (ISCED 4-6); based on ISCED 1997 classification
	Occupational standing	One dummy variable for being in a managerial position
	Financial resources	Gross labor income in Euro (z-score transformation of mean scores) and imputation flag
	Labor force experience	Metric variable of time spent in full-time employment (z-score transformation of mean scores)
	Risk propensity	Willingness to take risk in occupation; measured on a 10-point rating scale from 0: risk averse to 10: fully prepared to take risks, observed in 2004 (z-score transformation of mean scores)
	Self-fulfillment	Importance to fulfill one's own potential; measured on a 1-to-4 rating scale where 1=not at all important and 4=very important, observed in 2004 (z-score transformation of mean scores)
	Career orientation vs. family orientation	Difference between importance to have a happy marriage and importance to have success in the job where -3=family is important and +3=job is important; based on two items measured on a 1-to-4 rating scale where 1: very important and 4: not at all important, observed in 2004
Inner couple level	Educational homogamy	Four dummies for: both with low educational qualification, partner with high and person with lower educational qualification, person with high and partner with lower educational qualification, and both with high educational qualification
	Occupational homogamy	One dummy variable for occupational homogamy
	Gender organization of paid work	Five dummies for: traditional family, modified family, dual-earner family, modern family, other
	Power relation	Three dummies for: person has last word on financial decisions, partner has last word on financial decisions, and both equally, observed in 2005
External couple level	Income	Mean gross income per working hour in Euro, by gender and region (z-score transformation of mean scores), Gender Index (2006)
	Gender roles	Metric variable varying between 0 and 1 where 0=traditional and 1=egalitarian, by federal state; sum score based on six items from the Allbus (2004)
Controls	Age	Age measured in years (z-score transformation of mean scores)
	Partnership status	Two dummies for: cohabiting and being married
	Marital duration	Relationship duration measured in years (z-score transformation of mean scores)
	Presence of children	Two variables for: number of children under 6, number of children between 7 and 16
	Migration background	One dummy variable for having a migration background
	Sample	Dummy for high-income sample G

Notes: Information on risk propensity, self-fulfillment, career orientation and power relations is not provided in the year 2006 and has to be extracted from other survey years.

Source: SOEP, waves 21-23 (2004-2006).

One crucial question is whether there is also evidence to suggest a support gap. As explained in more detail in Mood (2010), it is not possible to compare the results from separate multinomial regression models for men and women.³ It is therefore not possible to test the support gap hypothesis using separate regression models. To solve this problem, the present study also reports the estimates derived from models for couples where the same explanatory variables are included as in the separate estimation models, plus interaction effects of gender, resources, homogamy, external restrictions on the couple, and power relations. To simplify matters, logistic regression models are specified, where the dependent variable differentiates individuals who receive support from their partner from those who do not receive any support at all.⁴ Average marginal effects are calculated at specified values of covariates and the results plotted for all couples and for couples in which both partners are employed full-time, respectively.⁵

4 Empirical Evidence

4.1 Determinants of Social Support for Career Advancement

Estimates of multinomial logistic regression models for social support for career advancement by gender are reported in Table 3. The results reveal that resources and aspirations, homogamy as well as external restrictions determine the social support behavior of couples.

The role of resources and aspirations: The first two resources hypotheses gain support. Resource-rich men and women receive support for career advancement from their partner significantly more frequently than resource-poor spouses. More particularly, higher educational qualification increases the probability of receiving support for career advancement (although insignificant for men under model 3). The occupational standing of men and women also has a clear effect: social support from the partner is significantly higher for individuals in managerial positions. Yet, both male and female managers are also more likely to receive support from persons other than their partner. Men in managerial positions appear to be in a particularly advantageous position. By contrast, the positive effect of being in managerial position on

³ Note that it is also not feasible to compare log-odds ratios across the hierarchically nested models. Bias may also result from omitting variables, even if these are uncorrelated with the explanatory variables in the multinomial regression model. Further explanation is provided in Mood (2010), Allison (1999), and Auspurg and Hinz (2011).

⁴ These results diverge only insignificantly from those generated by multinomial logistic regression (see Begg and Gray, 1984).

⁵ The marginal effects of change in the interacted variables and the corresponding standard errors have also been calculated using the method described by Norton and Wang (2004). Results are available on request.

partner's support for women under model 1 and 2 loses some significance after controlling for variables describing the intra-couple level. Rather, female managers appear more likely to receive support from other ties. The higher a woman's income, the more likely it is that she receives support for career advancement from her partner. At the same time, high-earning women are also more likely to receive support from other persons. For men, higher incomes are not associated with their spouse's support behavior, however. Men's and women's time spent in full-time employment does not play a role in social support behavior. Yet, the higher men's and women's level of risk propensity, the higher their chances of receiving support for career advancement. Self-fulfillment matters for women only: women who emphasize the importance of self-fulfillment are more likely to receive support from their partner (although only significant at the 10% level). Men who are more career oriented significantly more frequently report support from their spouse as well as from other persons. For women, if their career is more important than family life, this will increase support for career advancement from other persons but not from the partner.

The role of homogamy within the couple: The expectation was that educational and occupational homogamy would increase social support for career advancement. The skill level of the partner matters but in gender-specific ways. Men with an equally highly skilled woman seem to profit from this homogamous partnership. Yet, this positive impact of homogamy is not evident for lower-skilled couples. This result suggests that educational homogamy only plays a positive role for men living with resource-rich, highly qualified women. By contrast, support receipt is more likely for women living with more highly skilled men. At the same time, women in homogamous partnerships are not more likely to receive support for career advancement from their partners. Hence, women benefit from cohabitation with a resource-rich partner only if they are lower skilled than the man. In summary, the results support the educational homogamy hypothesis only for highly skilled men but not for women. The third resources hypothesis that cohabitation with a resource-rich partner goes hand in hand with higher levels of support for career advancement is only partially supported by the results and only holds true for women in heterogamous partnerships and men in homogamous partnerships. At the same time, the occupational homogamy hypothesis must be rejected because men and women working in the same occupational field is not associated with social support for career advancement. One possible explanation of this unexpected finding is that men and women working in the same occupational field also have similar resources, show similar aspirations, and adhere to more egalitarian beliefs. The influence of these mediating factors is partially controlled in the estimation models shown in Table 3. Another assumption is that the

impact of occupational homogamy depends on whether men and women work in occupations that are typical or atypical for their gender – an issue that is not addressed in this study and deserves further elaboration.

The role of external restrictions on the couple: Contrary to our expectation, the analysis reveals that regional differences in gross income per working hour do not appear to be associated with men's or women's support receipt. However, for women living in regions where more egalitarian gender role beliefs predominate, this goes hand in hand with more support for career advancement from the partner. At the same time, these women more often report social support from persons other than their partner (although this is only significant at the 10% level under model 3). Interestingly, this does not hold true for men's support receipt.

The role of bargaining power: The proxy variables for bargaining power clearly determine support for career advancement within partnerships but in gender-specific ways. If the man has the final word on financial decisions, he is less likely to receive support for his career advancement by his partner. For women, the picture is different. Having more bargaining power than the man increases chances of receiving support for career advancement from other persons. If, however, a woman's partner has the final say, this will lower the probability of her receiving support from him. There are also differences between couples following different models of gender division of work. For men, there is significant difference in receipt of support for career advancement between men living with a woman who is working part-time and men in dual-earner families. By contrast, women who adhere to the traditional gender division of labor are less likely to receive support for career advancement from weak ties than women in dual-earner families or modern families. Yet, deviation from the traditional family model does not generally increase support for career advancement from the partner: only women working more hours than their spouse are also more likely to report receiving support from their partner.

In summary, the results provided in Table 3 lead to the following principal conclusions. Receipt of support from the employed partner appears to be particularly likely for career-oriented men with a high occupational standing and living in more egalitarian partnerships where both partners are highly educated and in full-time employment. Women seem more likely to receive support from their working partner when they earn high incomes, cohabit with a more highly skilled man and live in regions where egalitarian gender roles prevail. This analysis is informative but limited, since gender differences in support receipt have not been modeled. Next, the discussion logically turns to the question of whether there is also a support gap between men and women.

4.2 Support Gap

Table 4 presents the estimates of logistic regression models for partner's support for career advancement within couples and includes various interaction effects. Model 2 differs from Model 1 in that it only includes dual-earner couples. Model 3 refers to the specific subsample of couples where both partners work full-time. Table 4 reports the results from two different specifications, one that excludes age, partnership status, and marital duration and one that includes these factors. Table 4 shows that the probability of receiving support for career advancement from their partner is lower for women (Model 1, Specification A). Yet, this support gap is clearly associated with the gender division of work and becomes invisible in dual-earner couples where both partners work full-time (Model 3, Specification A). Moreover, in all three models, the main effect of gender loses its significance once partnership status and relationship duration are taken into account (Specification B under Model 1-3). There are several possible explanations for these results. The first finding may be partially explained by the fact that dual-earner couples are more often egalitarian-minded and more likely to identify with the ideal of companionship than other couples. Interestingly, career orientation, risk propensity, and gender roles all show a significant impact on social support in dual-earner couples, too. Second, in the estimation models, partnership status and relationship duration may capture characteristics of a (re-)traditionalization process in couples, as described in the theoretical framework of this paper. The impact of these mediating factors seems to be potentially large. To fully gauge the implications of these findings, additional research is required with longitudinal data and including more measures also describing both partners' resources.

The remainder of this section takes a closer look at the results of the models without the family-related control variables. Figures 1 presents the main results of the analysis. Note that these average marginal effects are comparable across groups and models (Mood, 2010). The left-hand panel refers to all couples and the right-hand panel refers to the specific subsample of couples working full-time. The principal conclusions are as follows.

The role of resources and aspirations: The first aspect of concern is the role of resources and aspirations. The discussion focuses on three measures: skill level, income level, and risk propensity. Higher skill levels increase both men's and women's chances of receiving support from their partner, but women appear to receive support less frequently than men irrespective of their educational qualifications (see left-hand panel of Figure 1). Furthermore, the probability of social support increases with income. Yet, women who earn below-average incomes are significantly less likely to receive support from their partners than men. For risk propensity, the estimates in Table 4 indicate that the more risk prone men and women are, the more likely

social support receipt becomes. Again we find a support gap for women with below-average levels of risk propensity. It can therefore be concluded from the analysis of the total sample of couples that resource-rich women receive less support from their partners than men. However, this effect levels off once we analyze a subsample of dual-earner couples who are employed full-time (see right-hand panel of Figure 1).

The role of homogamy: The estimates also suggest gender-differences in homogamous couples, particularly for couples with low skill levels (see Figure 1): low-educated women less often report support from their partners than low-educated men. Yet, gender differences disappear in the subsample of couples working full-time.

The role of external restrictions on the couple: It is worth highlighting that a partner's support for career advancement is more likely in regions where egalitarian gender role beliefs prevail. If, however, more traditional gender roles predominate, women appear to receive support for career advancement less frequently than men. This effect is still visible for dual-career couples. Interestingly, the results presented in Table 4 also suggest that regional income levels play a role for couples: Social support for career advancement appears to be more likely in regions with higher income levels – an effect that was not visible in the models based on individuals with a partner in gainful employment, however.

The role of bargaining power: Turning to the results for bargaining power, there are important gender differences, too. If their partner has the final say in financial decisions, women are much less likely to receive support for career advancement. At the same time, the estimates reveal that in egalitarian couples where both partners are equally involved in financial decision-making, women appear to receive less support from their partner than men. But the effect of bargaining power is not associated with gender differences in support receipt in couples where both partners work full-time.

5 Conclusion

The results of the analysis, although cross-sectional, give some initial insights into variations in social support for career advancement within partnerships. There is evidence that resource-rich and career-oriented individuals receive support for career advancement significantly more frequently than more family-oriented men and women with fewer resources. There are also homogamy differences in social support behavior, although this finding was only seen for educational homogamy while occupational homogamy does not appear to make any difference. Regarding external restrictions on the couple, there is an important gender difference

here. Internalized egalitarian gender role beliefs play a significant role for women but not for men. Another key finding is that the power relation within partnerships matters in gender-specific ways. Regardless of career resources and aspirations or the division of labor within partnerships, whether the man or the woman has the last word on financial decisions is of vital importance. There is also evidence that backs up the support gap hypothesis. But the indirect effect of the process of (re-)traditionalization of couples is potentially large because marital status and marital duration as well as gender division of labor appear to be strongly correlated to social support within partnerships.

The results of this study give valuable impetus to our understanding of social support for career advancement within partnerships. Strengths of this study are the theoretical consideration and empirical implementation of intra-couple negotiation patterns. To make the picture of social support within partnerships more comprehensive, the role of resources and aspirations, homogamy and external restrictions on the couple level all have to be considered. Yet, these themes deserve further exploration. For instance, further examinations are required to study the role of occupational homogamy. Furthermore, it would be useful to include more information on partners' resources such as their earnings or occupational standing. Additional research is also necessary to find out what exactly is behind the measures of external factors affecting couples used in this analysis.

More importantly, if we are to fully understand the determinants of social support for career advancement within partnerships, longitudinal data are needed. With the next sweep, such an endeavor seems promising. In the survey year 2011, the network generator of the SOEP used in this analysis was part of the survey for the second time. Data will be made publicly available from fall 2012. It will be particularly interesting to investigate the career advancement of spouses, their changing network orientations and network composition, and partner's support.

To date, there are no large-scale survey datasets that can be used to examine social support within partnerships in Germany. This paper derived information on social support within partnerships from the network generator provided in wave 23 (2006) of the SOEP (Diewald et al., 2006). Yet, there are some pitfalls with respect to the survey instrument used in the present study. The SOEP's network generator has not been developed specifically for couples. Further limitations of our approach may also result from a gender-specific perception of social support as well as a gender-specific interpretation of the wording of the question used in the SOEP. It would therefore be advantageous to develop a new instrument specifically designed to measure different dimensions of social support provision and social support receipt within partnerships.

Table 3

The probability of receiving support for career advancement by gender (multinomial logistic regression models)

		Men						Women					
		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
		Partner	Other	Partner	Other	Partner	Other	Partner	Other	Partner	Other	Partner	Other
Skill level^a	Low	-0.382**	-0.041	-0.366**	-0.055	-0.212	-0.006	-0.660***	-0.422	-0.633***	-0.389	-0.531***	-0.521*
	Middle	-0.312***	-0.391**	-0.308***	-0.352**	-0.169	-0.308	-0.330***	-0.303*	-0.314***	-0.278	-0.276**	-0.530**
Occupational standing^b	Manager	0.506***	0.508**	0.505***	0.519**	0.379***	0.435**	0.262**	0.596***	0.257**	0.592***	0.200*	0.478**
Financial resources	Gross labor income in Euro	0.047	0.090	0.052	0.076	-0.013	0.017	0.429***	0.630***	0.439***	0.640***	0.273**	0.382**
Labor force experience	Time spent in full-time employment	0.085	-0.040	0.083	-0.044	0.046	-0.173	0.034	-0.080	0.008	-0.109	0.020	-0.152
Self-fulfilment		0.063	-0.037	0.063	-0.025	0.052	-0.032	0.067*	0.101	0.067*	0.104	0.069*	0.135
Risk propensity		0.095**	0.243***	0.091**	0.247***	0.097**	0.248***	0.166***	0.219***	0.163***	0.215***	0.151***	0.215***
Career orientation vs. family orientation		0.173***	0.320***	0.171***	0.318***	0.192***	0.326***	0.072	0.302***	0.066	0.294***	0.074	0.257**
Regional income level				0.025	0.133	0.027	0.140			0.043	0.098	0.046	0.123
Gender roles				0.908	-1.159	0.365	-1.516			1.090*	1.578	1.291**	2.122*
Educational homogeneity^c	Both low skill level					-0.047	-0.016					0.041	0.539*
	Partner high skill level					0.229	0.313					0.382**	0.230
	Both high skill level					0.424***	0.081					0.278	0.236
Occupational homogeneity^d						0.019	0.125					0.036	-0.171
Power relation^e	Person has last word on financial decisions					-0.467***	-0.112					-0.154	0.602**
	Partner has last word on financial decisions					-0.114	0.220					-0.418***	-0.192
Gender organization of paid work^f	Traditional family											-0.089	-0.932***
	Modified family					-0.237**	-0.267					0.081	0.175
	Modern family					-0.266	-0.631*					0.585*	1.227***
	Other family models					-0.618***	-0.549**					-0.482***	-0.695**
Constant		0.023	-1.286***	-0.546	-0.595	0.036	-0.081	0.006	-1.411***	-0.705*	-2.443***	-0.797*	-2.985***
N		3,008		3,008		3,008		3,621		3,621		3,621	
Log Likelihood		-2547.072		-2540.980		-2515.411		-2,899.895		-2,897.397		-2,857.853	
Pseudo-R²		0.081		0.083		0.092		0.092		0.093		0.105	

Notes: ^a High educational qualification, ^b No managerial position, ^c Person has a higher educational level, ^d No occupational homogeneity, ^e Both equally have last word on financial decisions, ^f Dual-earner family (full-time).

Model specifications also control for age, partnership status and presence of children, marital duration, migration background, imputation flag and sample. *p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Source: SOEP, waves 21-23 (2004-2006).

Table 4

The probability of receiving support for career advancement within couples (logistic regression models)

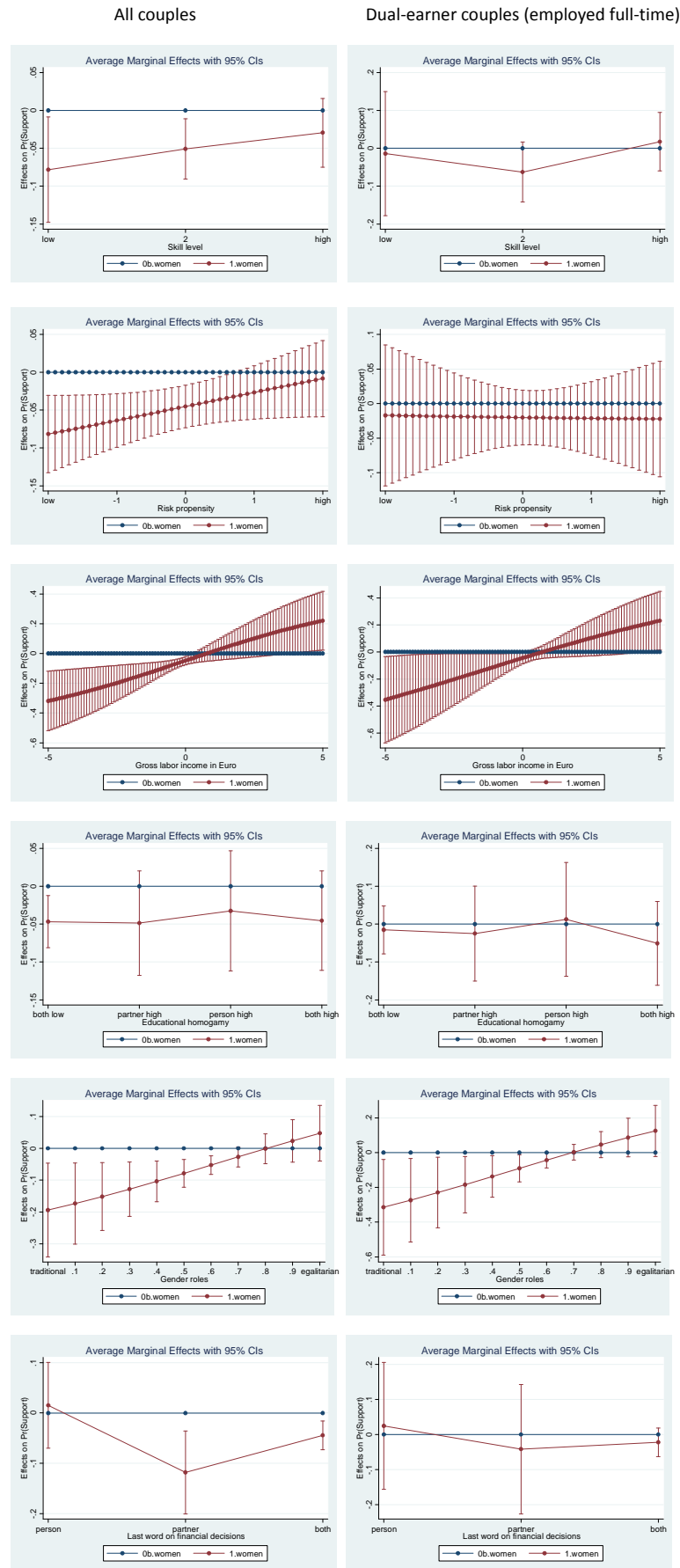
		All couples		Both partners employed		Dual-earner couples employed full-time	
		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
		A	B	A	B	A	B
Gender	Women	-1.185***	-0.456	-1.134**	-0.942*	-1.222	-1.064
Skill level^a	Middle	0.0847	0.103	0.091	0.106	0.268	0.293
	High	0.313**	0.395***	0.227	0.280	0.415	0.470
	Women*middle	0.211*	0.212*	0.025	0.014	0.050	0.007
	Women*high	0.536***	0.501***	0.467**	0.423**	0.558*	0.496
Occupational standing^b	Manager	0.265**	0.323***	0.231*	0.281**	0.237	0.259
	Women*manager	0.144	0.207**	0.103	0.168	0.026	0.070
Income	Income	0.026	0.024	-0.030	-0.032	-0.048	-0.055
	Women*income	0.304***	0.257***	0.245**	0.212**	0.234	0.196
Labor force experience	Labor force experience	-0.526***	0.011	-0.483***	-0.069	-0.442***	-0.138
	Women*labor force experience	-0.295***	0.038	-0.315***	-0.042	-0.508***	-0.248*
Self-fulfillment	Self-fulfillment	0.057	0.056	0.042	0.038	0.112	0.109
	Women*self-fulfillment	0.126***	0.085**	0.078	0.048	0.020	-0.004
Risk propensity	Risk propensity	0.103***	0.092**	0.116**	0.112**	0.162**	0.156**
	Women*risk propensity	0.188***	0.157***	0.158***	0.148***	0.156**	0.153**
Career orientation	Career orientation	0.179***	0.161***	0.192**	0.190***	0.224**	0.225**
	Women*career orientation	0.098**	0.060	0.106	0.096	0.258**	0.250**
Regional income level	Regional income level	0.060*	0.057*	0.097**	0.093**	0.179**	0.182**
Gender roles	Gender roles	0.523	0.469	0.315	0.238	0.049	0.088
	Women*gender roles	1.719***	1.228**	1.780***	1.607**	2.157**	2.159**
Educational homogamy^c	Partner high skill level	0.309**	0.331**	0.268*	0.293*	0.134	0.132
	Person high skill level	-0.074	0.077	-0.044	0.077	-0.409	-0.355
	Both high skill level	0.113	0.293**	0.342**	0.494***	0.231	0.329
	Women*partner high skill level	0.303***	0.388***	0.371***	0.410***	0.091	0.094
	Women*person high skill level	-0.011	0.040	-0.026	0.021	-0.292	-0.256
	Women*both high skill level	0.120	0.333**	0.219	0.391**	0.062	0.196
Power relation^e	Partner has last word	0.280	0.293	0.258	0.284	0.342	0.393
	Both equally have last word	0.374***	0.377***	0.387**	0.405**	0.145	0.178
	Women*partner has last word	-0.326*	-0.273	-0.066	-0.017	0.035	0.059
	Women*both have last word	0.111	0.164	0.171	0.221	-0.068	-0.039
Gender organization of paid work^f	Dual earner family model	0.273**	0.255**				
	Modern family model	-0.186	0.033	-0.507***	-0.323*		
	Modified family model	-0.018	-0.030	-0.256**	-0.256**		
	Other family models	-0.491***	-0.247*				
	Women*dual earner family model	0.439***	0.121				
	Women*modern family model	0.343*	0.202	-0.093	0.041		
	Women*modified family model	0.176	0.180	-0.297**	-0.034		
	Women*other family model	-0.461***	-0.218*				

		All couples		Both partners employed		Dual-earner couples employed full-time	
		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
		A	B	A	A	B	A
Presence of children	Number of children < 6	0.215**	0.079	0.287*	0.192	-0.001	-0.064
	Women* Number of children < 6	0.500***	-0.090	0.401***	0.032	-0.389	-0.527*
	Number of children 7- 16	0.020	-0.044	-0.106	-0.160	0.114	0.087
	Women* Number of children 7- 16	0.270***	0.089	0.201**	0.068	0.319*	0.322
Controls	Age		-0.585***		-0.430***		-0.287*
	Partnership status: married		0.225**		0.288**		0.287
	Marital duration		-0.090*		-0.119*		-0.140
Constant		-0.619*	-1.133***	-0.139	-0.625	-0.173	-0.655
N		7,722		4,763		1,780	
Log pseudolikelihood		-4881.790	-4808.0167	-3077.801	-3052.936	-1113.108	-1107.977
Pseudo-R²		0.088	0.102	0.060	0.067	0.069	0.073

Notes: ^a Low educational qualification, ^b No managerial position, ^c Both have low educational level, ^e Person has last word on financial decisions, ^f Traditional family model under model 1 / Dual-earner family (full-time) under model 2. Model specifications also control migration background, imputation flag and sample (Robust standard errors). *p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Source: SOEP, waves 21-23 (2004-2006).

Figure 1 Average marginal effects from logistic regression



Notes: Average marginal effects from logistic regression (see Table 4). Source: SOEP, waves 21-23 (2004-2006).

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