

**Project A3****Gender-Specific Patterns of Opportunity in Employment**

Katrin Golsch

Anne Busch, Miriam Bröckel, Andrea Zochert

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**Headwind or Tailwind –  
Do Partner’s Resources Support or Restrict  
a Promotion to Leadership Position in Germany?**

Miriam Bröckel, Anne Busch, Katrin Golsch

In Germany, as in other modern societies, the under-representation of women in higher hierarchical positions is a stable form of gender inequality in the labor market. Helpful explanation for this vertical dimension of inequality is provided by human capital explanations, institutional and political factors, occupational sex segregation as well as family structure. However, the extent to which the inner-couple level affects workers’ chances for career advancement is not yet clear. The concepts of “linked lives” and “coupled careers” suggest that not only individual characteristics and resources but also those of the partner are important dimensions to explain career paths. Thus a relational approach centering on different negotiation models on the inner couple level is particularly well-suited for analyzing the importance of the partner for the individual’s career mobility. Systematic analysis of the effects of the partner’s resources, and the inner-couple negotiation processes associated with it, on promotions to leadership positions in Germany is still lacking. This is the first of three papers of the authors which attempt to disentangle the driving mechanisms at the inner couple level.

To understand the negotiation processes taking place on the inner couple level, we look at well-established theories that provide opposing assumptions about the influence of the partner’s resources for the occupational career of men and women. According to the economic theories, one can suppose a negative effect, while in line with the theories of social capital one can expect a positive effect of partner’s resources. Furthermore, the doing gender approach predicts an asymmetry between genders: partner’s resources are suspected to have a stronger impact on women’s promotions to a top position than it is the case for men. In addition, social support provided by one’s partner – like carrying out the greater share of domestic work – should foster the other partner’s career development.

Our analysis is based on combining panel data from interview waves 1-27 of the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (GSOEP), covering 1984-2010. We develop a new indicator for identifying leadership positions in the GSOEP. Considering individuals living in a partnership as units of analysis, we estimate discrete-time competing risks transition models in which the explanatory variables

include measures of each individual's work history, various individual resources and features of the current workplace, the partner's resources, various macro-indicators and other control variables covering marital and family status.

The results of our analysis show indeed different outcomes for men and women: while for women the relation of resources between partners plays an important role for a promotion to top positions, this is not a significant predictor for men's upward mobility. In line with economic theories, the estimates suggest that the higher woman's resources in terms of employment and income compared to her partner's, the higher her chances of obtaining a leadership position. We also find evidence for a transfer of social capital between partners although the pattern is more mixed here: For cohabiting partners the educational attainment of the partner shows a positive effect, while for married partners working in a job with a similar proportion of females increases the chances of entering a leadership position. The main finding with respect to social support provided within partnerships is that chances for upward career moves increase for men and women if the partner is responsible for the lion's share of household chores.