

# Do modern Families migrate less?

## An Analysis of Migration, Household and Employment Biographies across three West German Birth Cohorts.

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### **Abstract**

Over the last few decades developments in the employment and family roles of women have been claimed to be driving forces of declining internal migration rates in contemporary societies. Persuasive micro-economic perspectives predicted that the economic empowerment of wives would prevent long distance migrations of family households. Accordingly, labour market participation increases opportunity costs for wives to unconditionally follow their husbands. Despite a blooming life course literature seeking for micro level foundation to explain social change, to date empirical analysis on the intertwining between migration, employment and family only covered single transitions during short observation periods. Thus, no conclusive empirical proof exists to say female employment trends equate decreasing migration rates holds at the household level. To tackle this gap of knowledge, we look into migration biographies, instead of transitions. We particularly tackle their evolution across birth cohorts facing changes in the way cohort incumbents negotiate their employment and family biographies. To this end, we use retrospective records of partnership, parenthood, employment and residential histories for cohorts born around 1940, 1950 and 1964 from the German Life History Studies. We analyse biographical interdependences across these life domains by comparing sequences of states during the young adulthood stage (i.e. age 16 to 30) using Multichannel Sequence Analysis. Preliminary results indicate cross-cohorts variation on the intersections between migration trajectories with both, family and employment trajectories. The younger the birth cohort, the more poorly mobile biographies intersect with traditional single earner households. The increasing proportion of dual earner couples among movers is conditional on, but not limited to, structural change on household compositions and female employment rates. However, migration biographies diverge across individuals in dual earner couples. This variation might depend on other sources of couple heterogeneity that deserve further examination such as occupational features of partner's employment and gender roles within households.

### *Background, goals and contributions*

The decline of internal migrations in Western societies during the last decades is well documented (Greenwood 1997, Hochstadt 1999, Molloy et al. 2011, Lopez Gay and Mulder 2012). This negative trend has been particularly acute for family migrations. A common claim is that the sustained growth and demographic predominance of dual earner households since the 1970's has had an economic-driven settling effect on family households (Cooke 2013). Studies in this strand are numerous and usually find that, due to a variety of reasons, one of the partners, generally the husband, lead the move to favour its own occupational career provided this counterbalances losses of the female partner (Mincer 1978, Bruegel 1999, Cooke 2003, Taylor 2007). Accordingly, single earner households, where generally only the husband is employed, might find fewer constraints to migrate than dual earner households.

Interestingly enough, research shows that families who migrate seem to be less responsive to wives' educational and career investments (Halfacree 1995, Cooke et al. 2009). Therefore, an opposed theoretical perspective criticizes an implicit gender neutrality of the dominant economic-driven explanation and put forth normative patriarchal structures still favouring husband-led migrations independent of wives' occupational losses (Bielby and Bielby 1992). Thus, this perspective nuances the relevance of female employment in family migration decisions of households ascribing gender egalitarian values. Still, holding both, gender neutral and gender asymmetric assumptions, the pillars sustaining relatively high internal migration rates of families have been progressively breaching. Increasing educational attainment and labour force participation of women (Di Petre 2009) may have directly lowered the probabilities of the average family to migrate conditional on developments in equal opportunities policies (Esping Andersen 2009) and shifts of attitudes towards gender egalitarianism at work and at home (Gershuny 2000)

Despite these very persuasive arguments, conclusions drawn from the existing evidence can be considered premature to claim increasing demographic predominance of dual earner couples to be causally related with decreasing family migrations. The arising issues are both, theoretical and empirical. First, from a substantive standpoint, dominant views neglect factors that are arguably influential characteristics for the determination of family migration without invoking any direct influence of female employment or educational attainment per se. A justifiable alternative explanation posits that despite developments in gender equity, prevalent and persisting structural gender inequality, being occupational sex-segregation its major expression, limits the household contribution regarding wages, career prospects or the value of female work vis-à-vis male work (Shauman 2010, Perales and Vidal 2013). Alternatively, migration might not be fully determined by the employment situation of any household member because non-employment related motivations predominate in migration decisions, being employment or job change merely a hygienic condition or a consequence (Morrison and Clark 2011).

From a methodological standpoint, even if correlation also holds at the household level, there is still no guarantee that female employment might necessarily be the cause of declining migration rates. First, family migration is a very selective process, where migrant women have systematically lower career investments than their partners (Abraham et al. 2010) and are more likely to be found outside employment (Boyle et al. 2009). Therefore, methodological approaches only focusing on the determinants that lead to a probability transition in a finite time interval may neglect initial conditions leading to selection, e.g.

choice of the field of study or earlier events. Selection bias is common flaw in the empirical literature examining migrations, even when applying longitudinal methods. Indeed, observation periods generally span over a brief period of time of particular life stage. Not only this creates a gap of knowledge on historical trends, but also neglects the examination of both structural change and the long-term nature of migrations within life courses. Particularly, looking into the intertwine among both, structural and individual development, is crucial to understand social change, reflected in structures and measured as aggregated rates, but essentially formed by and altering people's courses of life (Elder 1994).

In the present article we close this gap in the family migration literature by examining overtime change interdependencies between migration, family and employment over individual's life. The aim of the research is to provide initial evidence to assess whether the structural correlation between migration decline and changing household dynamics with regard to employment and family holds at the individual level. Our ultimate goal is to shed some light on whether increasing demographic predominance of the dual earner household is a plausible driving force or a confounder of declining internal migration rates in the West German context, where both patterns have been observed since the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To this end, we take a more comprehensive life course approach, examining biographical and historical time features. Particularly, we look into how migration, employment and family situations evolve over individual life courses and how these interdependencies change across birth cohorts. Additionally, we will analyse features associated to observed biographies across birth cohorts. Features choice for analysis is theory based and includes individual, household and structural variables that theses of contested perspectives posed as relevant determinants of household migrations.

Although we avoid a causal modelling approach, this article remedies some issues of the literature to shed light on the structural association by observing patterns at the micro-level. By doing so this article also contributes to the current debates on the societal and economic impacts of recent changes in the contexts of household decisions, where it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the role of female employment. It is also highly important to understand the causes and consequences of migration, its aggregated changes and the meanings to individuals. Migration has been generally understood as an economic mechanism to adjust regional and national labour force imbalances, but little is known on its interaction with family and household processes. Investigating parallel developments in employment, household and residential trajectories enable us to identify the pertinent regularities and the diversity of family migration over the life course. The identification of these regularities is a first step to discern possible causal mechanism leading to family migration and its consequences. Separated analysis for men and women allows addressing similarities and divergences in the course of social change.

Along with the substantive contributions, this article also makes methodological contributions by pioneering in the application of a trajectory-based methodology in family migration research, which allows to carefully looking at the intersections between family, employment and migration sequences of states over individual life courses at a time. The adoption of a trajectory based approach, although descriptive in nature, goes beyond Event History Analysis of single transitions satisfying the claim that all else equal the meanings and consequences of events like family migration differ upon its placement in individual biographies (Dykstra and van Wissen 1999, Coulter and van Ham 2013). Additionally, it allows us identifying differences between the life courses of those who experience several times the migration events and those who not. Secondly, by comparing and contrasting dynamics across cohorts we are able to shed light on the processes that mediate different levels of social organization

and to make assessments about social change (Mayer and Huinink 1990). Finally, this article also contributes in exploiting sources of longitudinal social science data in the field of family migration which has not been examined so far.

### *Case study, data and methods*

Our empirical analysis examines continuities and changes on early adult life courses across cohorts born around 1940, 1950 and 1964 in West Germany. A number of studies have documented institutional features and the historical developments of individual life courses in Germany since WWII (e.g. Mayer and Hillmert 2003).

Regarding employment, Kurz et al. (2006) or Biemann et al (2011) documented an increase in career instability overtime since the 1950's, observing correlation with developments in the economic and labour market context. Attending the fact that the German educational system and labour markets are highly stratified and sex-segregated, change in career trends has been similar for men and women (Hillmert 2011). Younger female cohorts spent more time in education delaying labour market entrance, but thriving labour market participation than older cohorts. There is possibly more heterogeneity in the job careers of younger cohorts across females than across males as of decreasing rates of job exit and increasing rates of re-employment due to childbirths (Drobnic et al. 1999).

Changes in labour market behaviour went along with changes on household and family structures. Older cohorts subscribed a dominant bread-winner model, where early steps of young male adults into secure employment and steady wage increases later in the life course accompanied and supported early marriages and family formation with relatively high fertility rates. Female employment was residual after marriage or family formation. Growing secular values and educational expansion for younger cohorts came along with increasing non-marital cohabitation as well as marital divorce, delayed parenthood and lower parities. Change on the gender relations is one of the key elements of a large family transition (Huinink and Mayer 1995), from a gender-specific role segregation (i.e. the female homemaker and male breadwinner model), to a model where men and women retain a high degree of autonomy and lower social control. Thus, new family biographies feature flexibility regarding which type of family and when to ground it. Increasing educational inequality among women more than among men intersect with biographical plurality. More educated women have in average fewer children and later. Moreover, polarisation created by educational inequality is strongly accentuated at the household level by patterns of assortative mating, particularly in regard to the role of gender in household work divisions, and ultimately being a leading factor towards the work rich and work poor households divide.

The increasing autonomy of partners, most prominently economic independence and individualistic views towards partnership and family, is what dominant perspectives put forth as a driving cause of declining migration rates. Migration decline, among other aggregated trends in mobility forms in Germany have been widely documented from historical and demographic perspectives (Hochstadt 1999). Following trends across highly industrialized countries, migrations in West Germany have decreased on frequency and distance (with the exception of the intense in flows from East Germany after country reunification). During the 70's and 80's, de-industrialization in and the rise of service economy stopped flows towards large cities and ignited processes of population de-concentration, with shorter moves directed towards nearby suburban and rural areas (Kontuly 1991). More recent trends have included a return towards the cities and individuals in their age of family formation staying in the inner

cities (Sander 2013). Informed about declining migration rates, there is a dearth of studies on family migration overtime trends and its micro-level foundations to explain them. Wagner (1989) compares the residential trajectories of cohorts born around 1930 and 1940 from the same study we use in this research (see below). He finds a great deal of *event synchronization*, i.e. events occurring at approximately the same time, such as partnership formation and migration. Indeed, partnership formation synchronizes with migration across cohorts, being the wife more likely to move than the man (Wagner 1989). After entering a partnership migration declines because partners commit to the obligations and local ties of their partners (Mulder and Wagner 1993).

The data for analysis consists of comparable retrospective records on employment, family and migration-residence sequences of statuses, as well as other relevant information, for men and women born in 1939-41, 1949-51 and 1964 in Western Germany. The cohort specific retrospective records were collected on a monthly basis as a part of the survey programmes known as German Life History Studies (GLHSs; Mayer 2007. See Wagner 1989, 1991 and Wagner and Mulder 1992, 1993, for migration studies using GLHSs). The cohort studies considered for analysis were conducted during the 80's and 90's, mostly when individuals were in their thirties. Therefore, we analyse individual sequences spanning over an earlier stage of the adult life course, i.e. from age 16 to 30, where the highest frequency of event occurrence within these trajectories is concentrated. Wagner (1991) demonstrated that only moves during childhood or youth were less likely to be recalled by sample respondents, thus, family migration misreport might be relatively low in the GLHSs.

Our empirical part revolves around three clearly delimited steps: (i) the analysis of intersections across migration, family and employment biographies, (ii) the analysis of continuity and break on the intersection of biographies across cohorts, and (iii) an exploration of theoretically grounded predictors to discriminate across main biographical paths by means of regression analysis.

We apply sequential analysis methodology to assess biographical intersections. In particular, this research uses Multichannel Sequence Analysis (MCSA), a particular sort of Sequence Analysis with a number of attractive features. Among others, it reduces typology complexity, while providing more accurate alignments and being less sensitive to noise in the data than other Sequential Analysis methods (Gauthier et al. 2010). Most prominently for our research interest, it allows to capture multidimensionality in the life course by measuring similarities across states of an individual belonging to interdependent life dimensions or channels, like being recently mother and being in paid maternity leave, as statuses respectively belonging to the family and employment trajectories. In doing so, it permits to identify local interdependencies across life domains at each point of the alignment of sequences, which can help to detect the positions of transitions with enduring effects within trajectories. By examining sequences similarity across employment, family and residence channels, we aim at identifying trends in the intertwining of these trajectories, how their interdependence evolves over the course of life. Clustering individual sets of sequences by its similarity into a few typologies that describe normal pattern from observed cases, will improve our understanding of the how household and employment careers associate with migration events over individuals lifetimes. Two sequence analyses will be examined. We first look into sequence similarities between migration, family and employment trajectories of men and women ever partnered to examine the global and local interdependencies between these life domains over the life course. Afterwards we will focus on the migration trajectory and the type of household, regarding the divisions between paid and unpaid work within households, in order to shed more light on family migration, couple bargaining and gender inequality. Analyses of

sequences are run separated by sex in order to allow the formation of gender specific cluster sequences.

Changes in migration patterns and their intersection with the social and economic context of household decisions are ascertained examining the prevalence of typical trajectories over birth cohorts, being cohorts considered a key observational unit carrying the weight of structural change (Mayer and Huinink 1990). By pooling the samples of the three cohort studies we will be able to observe the distribution of each cohort on the emerging typologies or clusters of sequences to assess life course developments across cohorts.

Last, an examination of theory-based predictors will be done applying multinomial logistic regression for the probability of falling in each sequence-set typology, so that we are able to assess to what extent there is significant cohort variation as well as significant interactions of cohort with relevant social stratification variables across typologies.

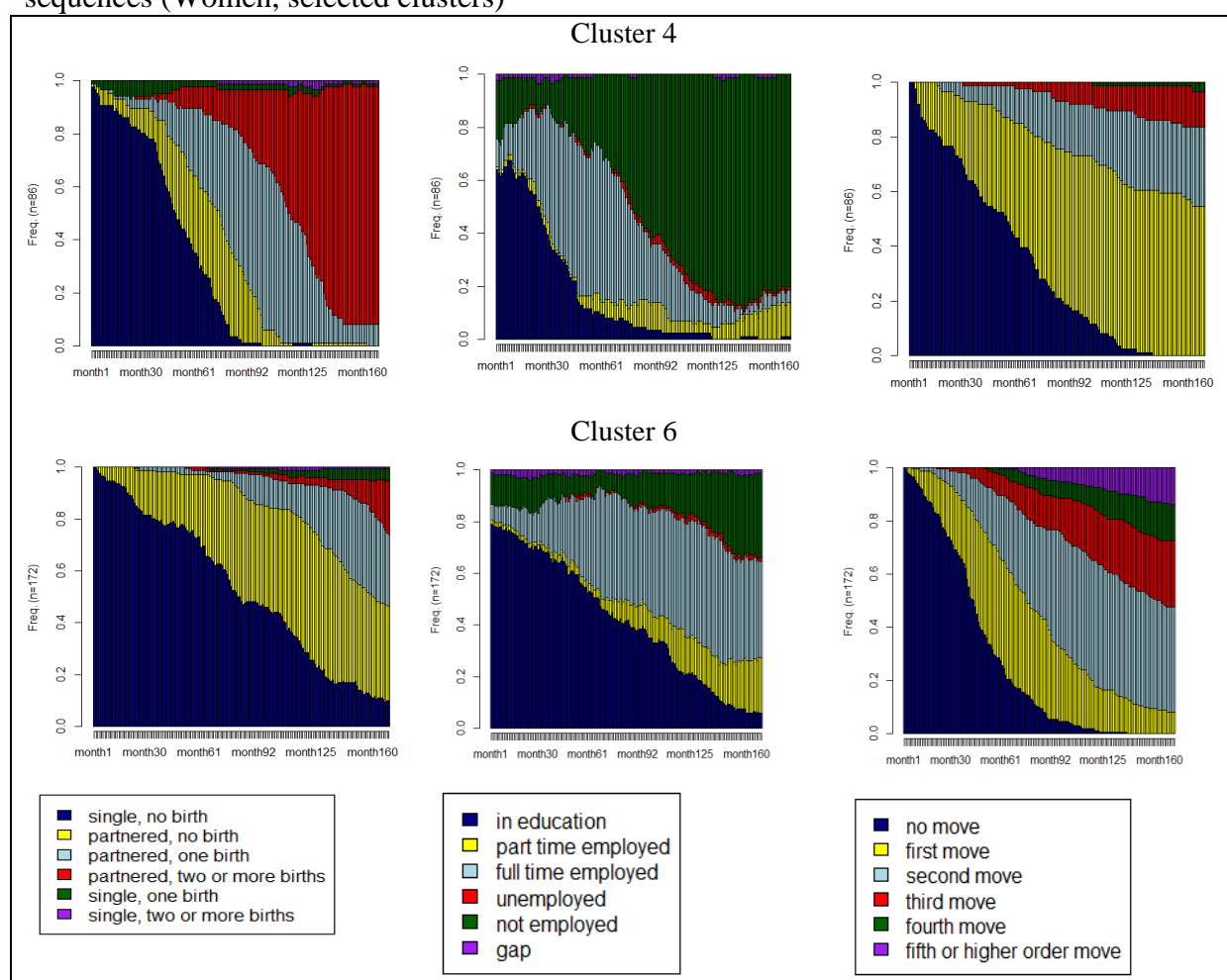
### *Preliminary analysis*

In a preliminary first step, we pooled sequence of the three cohorts to conduct a comprehensive analysis searching for multidimensionality in individual trajectories regarding patterns in employment, family and migration channels across individual biographies. Employment sequences feature six possible states: in full-time education, full-time employment, part-time employment, unemployment, non-employed situations and information gaps. There are six possible states in the family channel deriving from matching permutations between partnership states (i.e. single or partnered) and number of children (i.e. childless, one child, two or more children). Finally, the migration channel accounts for the order of residential statuses following a long distance migration ranging from no moves to five and higher order migrations. We define a migration according to the literature gold standard of a change of residence covering a distance of at least 50 kilometres (cf. Wagner 1989). Sequence similarities across individuals are measured for the three channels at a time. In order to improve the precision of our results, we accounted for monthly sequence state records between age 18 and 30, amounting to a total of 166 month-states per sequence. Acknowledging gender inequality in life course development, analyses were conducted separately for men and women. Our aim is allowing the formation of typologies by gender to ease scrutiny of sex-specific patterns of sequences and their change. We only considered for analysis ever partnered individuals within the observation window, as our focus is on the interaction of migrations in the context of partnership and family development. By applying these sampling rules, our analytical sample consisted of 1,175 men (belonging to birth cohort 1940: 305; 1950: 256; 1964: 614) and 1,224 women (1940: 328; 1950: 324; 1964: 572). We applied and tested several algorithms to construct the distance matrix and finally decided us for the use of the Dynamic Hamming Distance algorithm.

For the sake of brevity we only present results for women. Assessing several cluster solutions, we decided to keep results of a six-cluster solution, as it provided the best compromise between internal heterogeneity of clusters, cases in the groups and the potential to provide answers to our research question. A solution with fewer clusters would aggregate exactly those groups with important differences in migration behaviour. More clusters would result in groups with a very low N, causing problems for the regression models. The influence of employment, family and migration channels for cluster formation was equivalent, responding to the fact that we did not assign different weights to channels. Regarding heterogeneity in migration sequences, we find three out of six clusters boasting from nil to very low migration

levels. These clusters garnered about three quarters of each cohort sample of women under analysis. Additionally, most of the overall changes on the distribution of cohorts between clusters occur across clusters with scant migration frequencies, reflecting low prevalence of migrations overall. Interestingly enough, clusters with null migration incidence boast heterogeneity in the age of family formation and rates of non-employment at earlier stages, as clusters with mobility incidence show (see below). Generally speaking, this finding indicates that *immobile* women do not necessarily fall into more traditional life paths when compared to migrant women. Despite that, cohort changes across immobile women decipher heterogeneity across clusters, being 54 percent of women born around the 1964 for only 25 percent of those born around 1940 (33 percent for cohort 1950) in a cluster featuring late family formation and extended labour market participation.

Figure 1. Cluster solutions: State distributions of employment, family and migration sequences (Women, selected clusters)



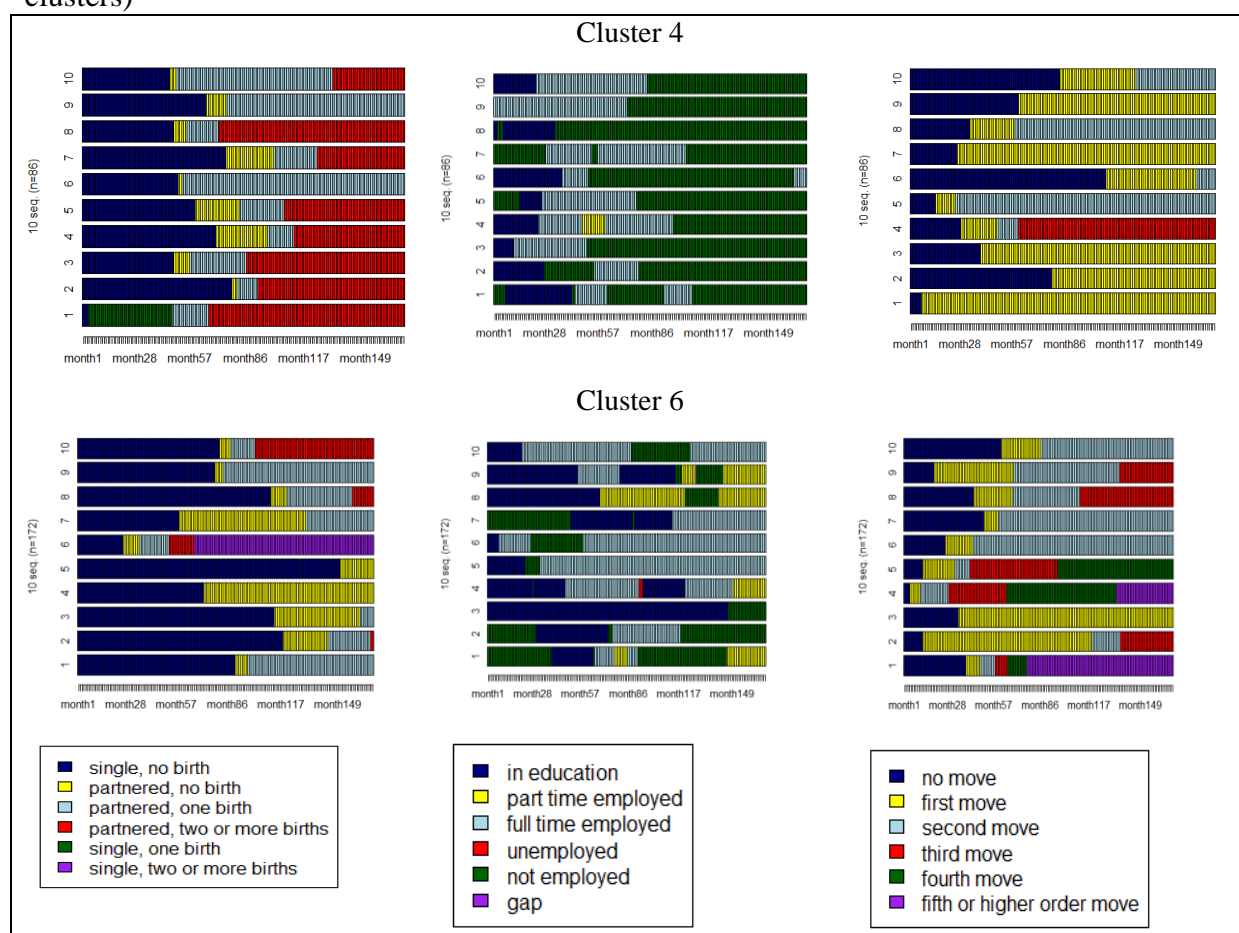
Source: GLHS, own estimations

We focus now on the remaining three clusters with higher migration incidence in order to observe whether there have been variations across cohorts and which tendency they followed. The first of them has a significantly lower prevalence among high mobility clusters amounting to five percent of all women. This cluster features one time migration and relatively early in young adult life: it occurs before or right after the transition from school-to-work and just before partnership or family formation. This cluster is not actually leading any interesting dynamics, as it is evenly distributed across the three cohorts. Moreover, as

migration occurs before main family and employment transitions, it applies a similar mechanism to those in the three *immobile* clusters: main life transitions settle.

The other two clusters present more interesting dynamics and are visualized in Figures 1 and 2 to ease interpretation. The only common feature among both clusters is the relatively higher rates of migration, being higher for Cluster 6 (median: two moves) than for Cluster 4 (median: one move). Cluster 4 reflects very traditional female life course with early family formation, two or more children and leaving employment at an early stage. With 12 percent of the group concentrated there, this cluster is mostly the case of females born in the 1940s. Excepting migration behaviour, it resembles the immobile cluster where cohort 1940 is overrepresented too. Prevalence of Cluster 4 declines over cohorts, being six percent for cohort 1950 and four percent for cohort 1964. In contrast, Cluster 6 features less traditional employment and family life courses than any other cluster, with late partnership and fertility postponement, where by the age of 30 most were unpartnered, childless or had only one child. This cluster pools the most mobile women of the youngest cohort, amounting to 17 percent of women born around 1964. Although lower, other cohorts have also relatively important prevalences in this cluster, being 11 percent for the cohort 1940 and 12 percent for the cohort 1950.

Figure 2. Most frequent sequences of employment, family and migration (Women, selected clusters)



Source: GLHS, own estimations

*Discussion and prospective work*



Our cluster solutions for females showed that biographies with high and low mobility intersect poorly with family and employment biographies. That is, traditional and less traditional family-employment biographies are observed for immobile and mobile women. Despite that, clusters are of different sizes, and high levels of mobility tend to be more likely when women have less traditional family-employment biographies. This pattern becomes more important when comparing changes in the distributions of clusters over cohorts. We observe that women born in the 40's were equally likely to follow a more or a less traditional life course while following high mobility biographies. Overtime, however, migrant women are only likely to have less traditional life courses. Although overall structural change shifted towards pluralisation of female family and employment biographies unconditional to migration behaviour, our findings point that women with traditional nurturer life courses are less and less likely to be highly mobile. This finding is, thus, a first indication that female employment and dual earner households overtime does not associate with immobility, but the traditional bread-winner model with a full-time housewives does. However, still dual earner households may be more likely to stay than in the past, as of an overall increase of this household form across immobile clusters. In our prospective work we will seek to shed light more light on the evolvement of dual earner household and their features to see possible connection with declining migration rates.

The above discussed analyses focus on the ample interdependence between employment, family and migration channels and, thus, they shed light on the life course and cohort changes on careers and family behaviour of women relative to their levels of migration. This proves particularly helpful to understand whether migration decline responds to general life course changes. Interestingly enough, our result contradicts the theses of female economic independence as a catalyst of migration declines, as we find that household where women has a low attachment into the labour market are less likely follow highly mobile biographies over the most recent cohorts. Our next steps consider replicating the results for men as well as two complementary analyses detailed below.

Although this preliminary results proved interesting looking at the big picture, we have neglected that household decisions, like family migration, concern more than one decision-maker. By only considering the employment situation of the individual and not the partner we neglected the network aspect of family households, the 'linked lives' (Bailey and Cooke 2004) and partner's decisions as the continuous renegotiation of their commitments. To account for that we will run MCSA for another set of channels: household-earners structure and migration order. While the migration channel keeps unchanged, the new household channel synthesizes information of employment and family biographies. We consider up to five possible statuses for the new channel: single household, male-breadwinner household (i.e. husband is full-time employed and wife is unemployed, non-employed or part-time employed), dual-earner household (i.e. both full-time employed), and other households (including male outside full-time employment). This new focus on the earning structure of households will help to delineate the extent to which recent developments on the dilapidation of the bread-winner model at the expense of a polarization between work rich and work poor households are alienated with claims of family migration decline. As of data limitations on detailed labour market information of partners, this alternative analysis will be done only for women. We have several substantive reasons to exclude men. First, the higher impact of changes in females' roles regarding paid work and family has been already demonstrated (Begall 2013). Second, men are generally more likely to be full-time employed with few employment discontinuities. Moreover, little job mobility to almost nil occupational for the

average German male throughout his working life justifies focusing only on wives for this analysis.

Household mirroring breadwinner model roles might not be prone to moving because they mainly fall at the bottom end of the occupational ladder, thus, they accrue low occupational rewards from moving. Our results, however, do not rule out that features of certain dual earner couples may explain different likelihoods of migration across this type of couples. Postulates of bargaining models and gender roles need to be further scrutinized in light of gender inequality in the labor market. In fact, there is certain agreement in the literature that the intersections between class and gender are important ones to understand heterogeneity among the life courses and their change overtime (Cooke 2011). Above all, gender inequality in the labour market has been claimed to be a main cause for the perpetuation of gender inequality in family migration (Shauman 2010). Most prominently, persisting occupational sex-segregation and lower returns to occupational investments for women still favouring husbands leading job-related family migrations, while migration rates may decline because of a decline in male career related migration benefits. Therefore, after articulating new hypothesis, we will analyse how class and gender inequality features associate with a life paths with relative higher or lower incidence of migration by applying Multinomial Logistic regression where the dependent variable is men's and women's cluster groups each time. As main independent variables we use birth cohort and a number of covariates regarding class and gender labour market inequality (e.g. occupational sex segregation) as well as predictors of other dominant perspectives such as the human capital or couple bargaining models. We will estimate interactions of birth cohort with other covariates as well, to assess the effects of changes in inequality structures. We will be cautious with the interpretation of cohort effects as it has been documented that large-size cohorts are more likely to move later but longer distances than smaller birth cohorts in different context like the Spain or the US (Pandit 1997, Lopez-Gay and Mulder 2012)

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