Unemployment, Conflicts and Partnership Stability: An Application of an Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (First Results)

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Overview

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Problem and Research Questions

- Unemployment indicates and causes problems at the macro-as well as micro-level.
- We are interested in micro-level effects, esp. family life and intimate partnerships:
  - Does unemployment affect relationship stability?
  - If it does, can we explain the mechanisms that link unemployment and relationship stability? Is it a direct (via external constrains/barriers) or an indirect effect (spillover effect)?
  - Does the link vary between:
    - different level of institutionalization (LAT, cohabiting and married couples)?
    - females and males?
Overview

2. Previous Research and Theoretical Background
Macro- and Micro-Level Findings

Macro-Level

- Negative (bivariate) association between unemployment rate and divorce in Europe; no longer statistically significant in multiple regression models (Kalmijn, 2007).

- Positive (bivariate) correlation between US states’ unemployment rate and divorce rate, but turns negative when divided into time periods (Amato & Beattie, 2011).

Micro-Level

- Findings vary by sex, duration of partnership, and employment status of both partners (e.g., Jalovaara, 2003, 2002)

- Unemployment increases the risk of divorce (e.g., Hansen, 2005; Kraft, 2001)
Why Direct Effects of Unemployment on Separation?

- For marriages:
  Divorce is expensive (as well as life after divorce).

- Unemployment decreases the chance of finding alternative partners.

- For females:
  Due to lack of financial resources and her dependency on her husband/male partner.
Why Indirect Effects of Unemployment on Divorce?

Social and psychological stress

Aneshensel (1992)

conflicts (+) &
appropriate conflict behavior (-)

Lewis/Spanier (1979)
Gottman, (1993)
Karney/Bradbury (1995)

relationship satisfaction (-)

SEPARATION/DIVORCE
Conceptual Model

Control variables are not shown; FoC: Frequency of conflicts; CB: Aggressive conflict behavior; Sat: Relationship satisfaction;
Overview

3. Data and Method
Data

- First four waves of the German Family Panel (pairfam), release 4.0 (Nauck, Brüderl, Huinink, & Walper, 2013). A detailed description of the study can be found in (Huinink et al., 2011).

- Here: 4,706 heterosexual dyads (and approx. 105,000 person-months)
  - marriageable age: one partner is 18+, the other partner is 16+ (at each wave)
  - age of consent: both partners were at least 14 at partnership begin

- At least one measurement per couple (w1, w2, w3 or w4)
- Left truncated and right censored panel data
Operationalization

- Relationship dissolution: 1: Yes, 0: No; between any two waves.
- Relationship satisfaction (TVC²): “Overall, how satisfied are you with your relationship?” (0: Very dissatisfied – 10: Very satisfied).
- Employment status (TVC; lagged by 3 months): 0: full/part time employed, 1: unemployed, 2: other (e.g., students, retired persons, housewife, etc.); starting with wave 1.
- Frequency of conflicts (TVC): “How often do you and [name partner] disagree and quarrel?”; “How often are you and [name partner] annoyed or angry with each other?” (1: never – 5: always).
- Aggressive conflict behavior (TVC): “And how often did you engage in any of these behaviors”: (1) “Insult or verbally abuse your partner”, (2) “Yell at your partner” (1: never/almost never – 5: very often).

- Control variables: Age when the relationship began (in years); relationship duration (TVC) in years; number of previous relationships; panel wave
Analyzing Dyadic Data with an Event Variable

- Dyadic data can be analyzed with the actor-partner interdependence model (APIM) (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006).
- The APIM is estimated using a path model approach.

- The central endogenous variable is an event (separation) and a discrete-time event history analysis (EHA) model is estimated; the unit of analysis are person-months (in a path model not statistically independent, clustered standard errors are estimated).

- Our model is a mixture of an APIM and an EHA model, first introduced by Arráñz Becker and Lois (2012), Arráñz Becker (2013), Lois (2013).³

³We would like to thank Oliver Arráñz-Becker and Daniel Lois who provided us with initial Mplus code.
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4. Results
Multi-group Path Model

- Mplus 6.11 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998) was used to fit a multi-group path model.
- Multiple imputed data sets \( m = 10 \) were created with R’s Amelia II package (Version 1.7.2, built: 2013-04-03); Honaker, King, & Blackwell, 2011).

- Some fit indices:
  - \( \text{Chi}^2 (36) = 97.15, p < 0.01 \)
  - \( \text{RMSEA} = 0.007 \)
  - \( \text{CFI} = 0.993 \)
  - \( \text{TLI} = 0.947 \)
Path Model for Living-Apart-Together Couples

Other$_M$

Unemployed$_M$

Unemployed$_F$

Other$_F$

CB$_M$

FoC$_M$

Sat$_M$

Separation

CB$_F$

FoC$_F$

Sat$_F$

***: $p < 0.01$, **: $p < 0.05$, *: $p < 0.10$;
Control variables are not shown; FoC: Frequency of conflicts; CB: Aggressive conflict behavior; Sat: Relationship satisfaction;
Path Model for Cohabiting Couples

- Other\textsubscript{M}
- Unemployed\textsubscript{M}
- Other\textsubscript{F}
- Unemployed\textsubscript{F}
- CB\textsubscript{M}
- FoC\textsubscript{M}
- Sat\textsubscript{M}
- CB\textsubscript{F}
- FoC\textsubscript{F}
- Sat\textsubscript{F}
- Separation

Control variables are not shown; FoC: Frequency of conflicts; CB: Aggressive conflict behavior; Sat: Relationship satisfaction;

***: p < 0.01, **: p < 0.05, *: p < 0.10;
Path Model for Married Couples

Other\textsubscript{M}

Unemployed\textsubscript{M}

CB\textsubscript{M}

FoC\textsubscript{M}

Sat\textsubscript{M}

Separation

Unemployed\textsubscript{F}

Other\textsubscript{F}

CB\textsubscript{F}

FoC\textsubscript{F}

Sat\textsubscript{F}

***: p < 0.01, **: p < 0.05, *: p < 0.10;
Control variables are not shown; FoC: Frequency of conflicts; CB: Aggressive conflict behavior; Sat: Relationship satisfaction;
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5. Conclusions
Summary

- Employment status affects the likelihood of partnership dissolution; a direct effect was found for married couples only:
  - For males: unemployed(MALE) -> (+) separation ("her divorce", Kalmijn and Poortman (2006))
  - For females: others(FEMALE) -> (-) separation (barriers: financial dependence).

- For all couples: indirect effects of unemployment on relationship dissolution.

- The higher the level of institutionalization:
  - the higher the total indirect effect,
  - the more statistically significant actor and partner effects for communication variables and relationship satisfaction.
Limitations (and Future Research)

- No discussion regarding reversed causality or spurious correlation (heterogeneity; Blekesaune (2008)).

- Selectivity issues.

- No control for the presence of children.

- No interaction between conflict behavior and frequency of conflicts on relationship satisfaction (Wagner & Weiß, 2005, 2010).

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References


References

References


