Chances are high that partners in dual-earner couples do not receive equal occupational returns from long-distance moves, because job opportunities are distributed heterogeneously in space. Which partners are more likely to receive relatively higher returns after moves? Recent research shows the stratification of returns by gender and highlights the importance of gender roles in mobility decisions. I extend past literature in two ways. First, I directly test for gender differences in matched pairs of women and men in dual-earner couples and account for the nonindependence of both careers, while past research mostly examined partners separately. Second, I compare evidence from the United Kingdom and Germany to shed light on the effects of institutional and normative contexts. For my analysis, I draw longitudinal data from the British Household Panel Survey and the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (1991-2008). My results show that women in dual-earner couples are temporarily adversely affected in their careers by long-distance moves in the UK and West Germany after controlling for various characteristics of both partners. Women in East Germany are not affected by long-distance moves. Moves do not change wage rates significantly for women and men that stay in employment in both countries.

1. Introduction

Long-distance moves are often occupationally motivated and individuals are assumed to move to job opportunities to increase their life-time earnings (e.g. Becker 1995: 53; Sjaastad 1962). Individuals in dual-earner couples are constrained in their mobility, because both careers have to be considered in the decision whether and where to move. Because job opportunities are dispersed in geographical space and job offers emerge at relatively random times, it is unlikely that both partners will receive equally good job offers at a new location at the same time (Böheim & Taylor 2002;