Research Statement

Bastian Schulz

I am an applied economist with research interests at the intersection of macro, labor, and family economics. My specialty is the empirical and theoretical analysis of matching markets with and without search frictions. The assignment in matching markets with two-sided heterogeneity is commonly referred to as *sorting*. The classical question about sorting, first posed by Gary Becker, is "who marries whom?" (Becker, 1973, 1974). Empirically, positive sorting (or positive assortative matching, PAM) manifests itself as a positive association of rankable types in the cross-section. Two seminal papers in the sorting literature that my work builds upon are Shimer and Smith (2000), who show under which conditions PAM arises in the presence of search frictions, and Choo and Siow (2006), who show how frictionless matching models can be estimated.

The literature shows that marriage market sorting affects the within-household allocation of resources, labor supply, and consumption, as well as inequality between-households (Goussé et al., 2017; Chiappori et al., 2018; Eika et al., 2019). Moreover, economic policy affects marriage formation and stability (Gayle and Shephard, 2019; Persson, 2020; Schulz and Siuda, forthcoming). In the context of the labor market, the extent of sorting between heterogeneous workers and heterogeneous firms matters for wage dispersion, the cyclical properties of unemployment, and skill mismatch (Card et al., 2013; Lise and Robin, 2017; Baley et al., 2022). Worker mobility is central for labor market sorting to take shape and underlies the most common identification strategies (Abowd et al., 1999; Taber and Vejlin, 2020; Bagger and Lentz, 2019; Bonhomme et al., 2019).

In eight research papers, I have built on these lines of work. I summarize these papers under three common topics.¹

1. Sorting and Labor Market Dynamics

(Lochner and Schulz, forthcoming; Schulz, forthcoming)

2. The Measurement of Sorting

(Lochner and Schulz, forthcoming; Foerster et al., 2022; Almar et al., 2023b; Almar and Schulz, 2023)

3. Joint Household Decisions, Sorting, and Policy

(Schulz and Siuda, forthcoming; Foerster et al., 2022; Holzner and Schulz, 2023; Almar et al., 2023a)

¹Some papers belong to multiple topics.

1 Sorting and Labor Market Dynamics

Recent work on the macroeconomics of labor markets shows that the extent of sorting, which reflects the allocation of workers to firms, is important for our understanding of labor market dynamics and aggregate productivity. As evidenced by the changing composition of the pool of unemployed workers over the business cycle (Mueller, 2017; Lise and Robin, 2017; Baley et al., 2022), macroeconomic conditions affect the (re)allocation of workers to the most productive worker-firm matches.

The results in Lochner and Schulz (forthcoming) shed new light on this reallocation process. We develop a search-matching model of multi-worker firms, intra-firm bargaining (following Stole and Zwiebel, 1996; Cahuc et al., 2008), two-sided heterogeneity and worker-firm complementarities. The model shows how firms can be ranked based on their estimated productivity, which we are able to separate from wages by taking into account the types of workers that a firm employs (see section 2 for details). By separating the wages that firms pay from their productivity, we can study to what extent worker sorting along wage and productivity ladders is aligned.

We find that the empirical relationship between wages and firm productivity is hump-shaped: the most productive firms pay lower wages than somewhat less productive firms, and this tendency has become more pronounced over time. Worker mobility is primarily guided by wages, so transitions from high- to medium-productivity firms are on average associated with wage gains, despite that fact that workers move to less productive firms. Consistently, the sorting of high-type workers into high-productivity firms (productivity sorting) is much less pronounced than the sorting into high-wage firms (wage sorting). We know that the extent of wage sorting has increased in recent decades (Card et al., 2013; Song et al., 2019). Combined with our findings, this trend implies that the allocation mechanism that matches worker and firms over the business cycle has become less efficient. High-type workers are increasingly matched with firms that pay high wages—a development that also affects wage inequality—and not with high-productivity firms that could employ their skills more effectively.

Another interesting question is to what extent sorting itself contributes to the dynamics of the labor market, i.e., the observed volatility of the unemployment rate, vacancies, wages, etc. over the business cycle. To explore this, I develop a dynamic search-and-matching model with free entry of firms, two-sided heterogeneity, sorting, and aggregate shocks in Schulz (forthcoming). In this framework, firms face a dynamic job-creation problem that includes an expectation over the endogenous distribution of unemployed worker types. In response to shocks, the match surplus adjusts instantaneously and disproportionately for high-skill workers and high-productivity firms due to the assumed production complementarity. The distribution of unemployment worker types adjusts slowly due to both search frictions and the fact that not all meetings lead to matches.

Both mechanisms lead to a strong vacancy-posting response of firms. Thus, the sorting model solves the unemployment-volatility puzzle (Shimer, 2005) without making the wages of new hires sticky (the common solution, see Hagedorn and Manovskii, 2008; Hall and Milgrom, 2008; Pissarides, 2009). Furthermore, the model produces realistic degrees of cross-sectional wage dispersion and (relatively low) productivity sorting (similar to what we find in Lochner and Schulz, forthcoming).

2 The Measurement of Sorting

In the context of the labor market, the key challenge for the measurement of sorting is the unobserved heterogeneity of both workers and firms. In standard matched-employer-employee data, we observe how workers move between firms along with the wages that they receive. The key identification challenge is that one data point, the wage, reflects both worker and firm heterogeneity. In a seminal paper, Abowd et al. (1999) show how worker and firm heterogeneity can be captured by in a two-way fixed-effects model by exploiting the fact that workers move between firms. Based on the estimated fixed effects, workers and firms can be ranked in terms of wages received and paid, respectively, and a measure of sorting between high-wage workers and high-wage firms can be computed. Most of the literature that builds on Abowd et al. (1999) keeps this focus on wage sorting (e.g., Hagedorn et al., 2017; Bonhomme et al., 2019; Kline et al., 2020).

The theoretical literature assumes that labor market sorting arises because workers' heterogeneous ability and firms' heterogeneous productivities are complements in production (Becker, 1973). While the wages that firms pay are most likely related to their productivity, the mapping from productivity to wages is far from obvious. Highly productive firms may share profits with their workers and pay high wages. Conversely, the wages these firms pay could be reduced by labor market imperfections or compensating differentials. Therefore, measures of wage sorting do not necessarily reflect the underlying production complementarity and, thus, the efficiency of the allocation in terms of output.

In Lochner and Schulz (forthcoming), we develop a strategy to measure *productivity sorting*, i.e., the sorting between workers' unobserved ability and firms' unobserved productivity. Guided by a search-matching model with large firms and worker-firm complementarities, we combine two empirical models: (i) the two-way fixed effects model of Abowd et al. (1999); (ii) the production function estimation of Ackerberg et al. (2015). First, we estimate the Abowd et al. (1999) model for all private sector employees in Germany and merge their estimated wage components with detailed establishment survey data. Second, we estimate establishment-level production functions and calculate firm productivity following Ackerberg et al. (2015). Importantly, we are able to separate firm productivity from the effect of heterogeneous worker ability on output because we can flexibly control for estimated wage components of all workers.

To compute a measure of productivity sorting, we correlate worker ranks based on wage fixed-effects and firm ranks based on estimated productivity. Productivity sorting is muted relative to wage sorting, and this is consistent with our finding that high-type workers are willing to move down the productivity ladder to increase their wages. It is quite common in this literature to implicitly or explicitly interpret wage-based firm effects as measures of firm productivity. Our results show that this is erroneous.

In the context of the marriage market, the discussion about the measurement of sorting has a different focus. Commonly, the classifications of types relies on an observable characteristic, which is most often educational attainment. The measurement debate in this literature does not revolve around unobserved heterogeneity but, instead, around marginal type distributions, which are known to shift over time as the average educational attainment in the population rises. Due to this challenge, the literature has struggled to establish whether marriage market sorting is increasing or not (e.g., Greenwood et al., 2016; Eika et al., 2019). In Almar and Schulz (2023), we find that the fact that female educational attainment has increased relatively more in recent decades is important in this context. We show how a common measure of marriage market sorting, a weighted sum of observed matching probabilities relative to random matching, can take this into account through appropriate weights. We derive optimal weights that minimize the effect of changing type distributions and find that education-based marriage market sorting increases in Danish data, while the same measure with naive weights exhibits no trend.

In Almar et al. (2023b), we construct a new classification of marriage market types that takes into account the heterogeneity that is hidden by the level of educational attainment (e.g., primary, secondary, tertiary). Using Danish data, we categorize individuals based on the starting wages and wage growth of peers at the educational-program level. Based on this categorization, we find that sorting increases over time and explains more than 40% of increasing inequality since 1980. In contrast, sorting trends are flat using the level of education. The mapping between education and marriage-market types matters crucially for conclusions about the role of sorting for rising income inequality.

In Foerster et al. (2022), we study income-based marriage market sorting. Similar to educational attainment, the correlation of spousal labor incomes is positive in the cross-section. Theoretically, it is not clear whether spousal incomes are complements or substitutes (Becker, 1974, 1981). We exploit plant closures (Jacobson et al., 1993) to shed light on the apparent contradiction between household specialization and the positive correlation that seems to suggest PAM. We find that men who are displaced from their job have persistently lower labor income and higher chances to get divorced. Divorcees who re-marry, however, find new partners that outearn their previous partners. This implies that sorting in the income dimension must be negative. Using a multi-dimensional sorting model, we show that the positive income correlation is likely spurious.

3 Joint Household Decisions, Sorting, and Policy

Most papers that study the role of joint household decisions for, e.g., labor market dynamics (Guler et al., 2012), gender pay gaps (Flabbi and Mabli, 2018), health insurance coverage (Dey and Flinn, 2008; Fang and Shephard, 2019), and marital wage premia (Pilossoph and Wee, 2021) keep the marriage market fixed. That is, they take household formation as given and do not consider the possibility of divorce.

The main contribution of my research to this literature is the development and estimation of models in which the marriage market and the labor market are in joint equilibrium (Holzner and Schulz, 2023; Almar et al., 2023a). This implies that choices in the marriage market (e.g., whom to marry or whether to get a divorce) and in the labor market (e.g., labor supply or search intensity) affect one another. Based on this interaction, the second contribution to this literature concerns the role of economic policy. I show that labor market, tax, and family policies can have significant repercussions on households' choices and the marriage market, which can either reinforce or dampen their effects (Schulz and Siuda, forthcoming; Holzner and Schulz, 2023; Foerster et al., 2022; Almar et al., 2023a).

In Schulz and Siuda (forthcoming) and Almar et al. (2023a), we use frictionless matching models in the spirit of Choo and Siow (2006). In Foerster et al. (2022) and Holzner and Schulz (2023), we use search-matching models in the spirit of Shimer and Smith (2000). The natural approach to study marriage formation integrates frictions. The reason is that search models naturally generate the sluggishness that seems to be a general characteristic of many matching markets, including the marriage market. However, frictionless matching models have important advantages in terms of tractability and estimation.

In Holzner and Schulz (2023), we combine an on-the-job-search model with endogenous search intensity with a search-matching model of the marriage market that features transferable utility and ex-ante heterogeneous men and women (Shimer and Smith, 2000; Goussé et al., 2017). The key innovation is that we allow endogenous job-finding rates to depend on marriage: men and women bargain over transfers, domestic time inputs, and labor search intensity based on current and future marital surplus. For singles, reservation wages depend on current income, home production, and the marriage market option value. For couples, reservation wages additionally depend on the surplus change that occurs if working hours change. Less time for home production negatively affects the household's public good and, thus, marital surplus.

In this framework, labor market transitions can lead to an endogenous divorce, and married individuals incorporate this into their search intensity choice. Our paper is the first in the literature on joint job search of couples to consider the possibility of divorce. Using German household-survey data, we quantify the relative importance of these "labor market transition divorces". Depending on the couple-type, between 0–80% of divorces are associated with job loss or job finding.

Using our estimated model, we study marriage market effects of recent developments in the German labor market. A series of labor market reforms from 2003–2005 lowered the generosity of the unemployment insurance system but also increased matching efficiency and labor demand. This development is associated is associated with higher participation rates of females (Burda and Seele, 2017). In a counterfactual exercise, we fix the estimated labor market parameters at levels from the 1990s and find that the labor market policy changes were not neutral with respect to marriage. More married women entering employment led to more divorces, but the decrease in divorces caused by less job loss among married men was greater, resulting in a net decrease in the overall divorce rate.

In Schulz and Siuda (forthcoming), we use a single reform element—tighter means testing—that specifically affected couples as a laboratory to study insurance within the household. The idea is simple: social insurance and within-household insurance are substitutes. When unemployment insurance benefits are generous and not means-tested at the household level, the dependence on the partner's income upon job loss is low. But as means-testing thresholds get tighter, potential partners that are exposed to unemployment risk become less attractive in the marriage market. We estimate marital surplus based on the Choo and Siow (2006) model and proxy unemployment risk with nationality. We find that the labor market reform had a sizable negative effect on the formation of intermarriages in Germany. At the same time, marital stability increased, which is consistent with a better selection of couples.

In Almar et al. (2023a), we consider the joint equilibrium of families' career investment and firms' training and promotion decisions. In this paper, the marriage market is frictionless (Choo and Siow, 2006) and the labor market competitive. However, firms make endogenous training decisions and promote workers subject to a capacity constraint, taking into account heterogeneous career investments of men and women of different types. At the same time, families base their joint labor supply choices, which affect human capital accumulation, on expected promotion probabilities that vary by gender and type. We use the estimated model to analyze the effectiveness and distributional consequences of parental leave policies and diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives to promote families' and firms' investments in women. For example, we find that parental leave policies and board quotas have significant repercussions on households' joint labor supply choices, transfers within the household, and the marriage market equilibrium.

In Foerster et al. (2022), we construct a multidimensional sorting model to show that negative assortative matching in the income dimension is compatible with a positive correlation of spousal labor income in the cross section. We calibrate this model using Danish register data and illustrate the significance of our finding—sorting in the income dimension is negative, see the measurement discussion in section 2—by means of simulated tax reforms. Specifically, we consider an increase in the progressiveness of the Danish tax system and find that the limiting effect that such a reform has on between-household

inequality is dampened by the marriage market. The reason is that more progressive taxes compress the support of the net-income distribution. With search frictions and income-NAM, this implies that high-income singles become more likely to marry another high-income individual because they are more similar to low-income individuals after the tax reform. This tends to increase between-household inequality. The finding that tax policies and marriage market sorting interact to determine the effect of tax progression on inequality is a novel finding in the literature on household taxation.

4 Future Work

4.1 Joint Labor Search and the Taxation of Couples

In Denderski et al. (in progress), we introduce household decision making into a directed search equilibrium model to analyze joint tax-transfer policies. As mentioned above, most of the exiting literature takes household formation decisions as given. The tractability of the directed search framework allows us to explicitly consider demographic trends in household structure and family composition, either by endogenizing household formation or by studying transition paths between different steady states.

We extend the directed-search equilibrium model developed by Chaumont and Shi (2022) with dual-earner households. Single and couple households in our model are risk averse and can save in a risk-free asset subject to a borrowing limit. In addition to self-insurance through precautionary savings, workers in couple households share labor market risks within the household, jointly deciding their job search strategies. Homogeneous firms post wages, commit not to counter outside offers, and take into account workers' job quitting into other jobs or non-employment. The possibility for both household members to search off- and on-the-job, in conjunction with their current asset position, creates a rich set of labor market dynamics, which, in equilibrium, interact with firms' job-posting decisions. Despite its simplicity, our model is well suited to analyze the consequences of public policy for employment, earnings, and savings of single and couple households.

The first goal of this paper is to use the model to analyze the effects of the joint progressive taxation of couples. Our framework has novel implications for employment and earnings dynamics in couple households compared to previous literature. In models with competitive labor markets, the wage rate of a worker is determined by her/his current labor productivity. In contrast, in our model, it reflects past search behavior and the position on the job ladder. The joint search behavior of couples, in turn, is crucially influenced by the design of the tax code. For instance, consider the case of a couple where one worker earns a medium-high wage and the other earns a lower wage. Under individual-based taxation, a progressive tax code implies a high marginal tax rate for the primary earner, which lowers her/his incentive to quit into better-paid jobs. At the

same time, the spouse directs search effort to better-paid jobs that are easier to find. As a result, the couple will experience higher wage growth for the secondary earner. With joint taxation, conversely, marginal tax rates will be relatively lower for the primary earner, who is more likely to climb the job ladder. In contrast, the secondary earner is taxed at a relatively higher rate and hence has lower incentives to quit for better-paid jobs. If the partner's earnings or the household's assets are sufficiently high, the secondary earner may even quit into non-employment. Against the backdrop of rising shares of dual-earner couples in many countries, these forces shape the career patterns of both spouses under different tax treatments. Our model allows us to quantify these effects' strength and evaluate their implications for joint earnings dynamics, the consequences of job loss, aggregate unemployment, and wage inequality.

The second goal of this paper is to examine the effects of unemployment insurance (UI) for couple households. In many countries, there is a two-tier transfer system where laidoff workers initially receive individual UI benefits that depend on the previous wage but not household characteristics. Upon expiration of UI, the worker potentially falls back on social assistance, where benefits are means-tested against house- hold income and assets. Similar to joint taxation, little is known about the consequences of such transfer systems for the labor market outcomes of couple households. In standard (single-worker) models, higher UI replacement rates induce workers to search for higher-paid jobs at lower job-finding rates. In a couple household, the strength of this effect depends on spousal earnings, household assets, and the effect that transitioning into employment has on the spouse's job-search strategy. Higher UI benefits will likely induce a decline in dual-earner households and more unequal earnings within couples. Regarding social assistance, we expect that stricter means testing steers job search efforts of both spouses toward lower wages with potentially ambiguous effects on savings and welfare in equilibrium. Our model allows us to study the interplay between social insurance and within-household insurance, which has novel implications for UI policy and labor market dynamics.

4.2 Marriage Market Sorting with Endogenous Divorces

The literature on marriage market sorting abstracts from divorce. This is a serious shortcoming because the assignment of partners to one another in the marriage market does not only depend on household formation decisions. It also depends on which couples "survive", i.e., do not get a divorce. We know surprisingly little about how marital stability differs across couples that are heterogeneous in terms of, e.g., education and income. In theory, couples that are optimally matched in terms of education (for example, two highly educated spouses in case of education-PAM) command a higher marital surplus and should therefore be less likely to divorce in response to an adverse shock. Empirically, however, this is far from obvious. For example, in highly-educated "power couples" both

spouses are likely to work. This may reduce marital surplus due to a lack of joint leisure or home production. This is line with Folke and Rickne (2020) who document that promotions of women into top positions in politics and business are likely to cause divorce, and such effects tend to be concentrated in couples that follow traditional parenting norms. Moreover, Bertrand et al. (2015) show that within-household distributions of relative earnings are skewed toward husbands even when wives are more productive, i.e., have higher hourly wages. They explain this with gender norms and the instability of couples in which the wife outearns the husband.

In Holzner and Schulz (in progress), we build on the model developed in Holzner and Schulz (2023) to study endogenous divorce across heterogeneous couples. Due to the build-in link between labor market outcomes and marital stability, married individuals can take into account how their marital surplus changes in response to labor market transitions. If the foregone surplus is high, for example because home production time inputs of married women are particularly valuable, reservation wages are going to be higher. However, if a labor market transition occurs, divorce may follow and the prevalence of this type of divorce will depend on the heterogeneous couple type. If power couples were more likely to form but also more likely to divorce than couples that specialize into market and home production, the effect of marriage market sorting on, e.g., inequality could be lower than models that model marriage but abstract from divorce suggest.

4.3 Marriage Market Impact of Danish ART reforms

Assisted reproductive technology (ART) is used to treat infertility, with In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI) and Intrauterine Insemination (IUI) being the most common forms of treatment. In Ciscato et al. (in progress), we use the changing availability and regulation of ART to identify changes to individuals' marriage market outside options and, thereby, elucidate motives underlying partnership formation and sorting in a new way.

In Denmark, the Artificial Fertilization Act, which entered into force on October 1, 1997, provided the first regulatory framework for IVF treatments. It applied to any ART treatment, diagnostics, and research carried out by a doctor or under the responsibility of a doctor in both public hospitals and private clinics. Crucially, starting in 1997 only women who are married or cohabit with a man can receive ART treatment. On June 8, 2006, an Amendment Act was passed. Since January 1, 2007, access to ART is no longer restricted to married and cohabiting couples. It is also explicitly stated that public hospitals and clinics have to guarantee free ART treatment to childless single women and couples that did not have children together. Importantly, access to treatment in public hospitals is restricted to couples that do not have children together and childless single women. In both cases, the treated woman must be under the age of 40, while there is

no restriction on the age of her partner. Access to treatment is conditional on obtaining a referral from a GP.² This reform-induced variation in Denmark allows us to identify how the expectation of future procreation affects marriage market matching. Specifically, after the 2007 reform, young women can expect to have access to ART should they remain single. From a theoretical perspective, this should make them more picky in the marriage market and, thus, affect marital sorting.

In Ciscato et al. (in progress), we use the Danish population, birth, and assisted reproduction registers, which are administered by Statistics Denmark and the Danish Health Data Authority, respectively. Register data on ART treatments is available starting from 1994. The data include information on all treatments women received, both in the public system and in private fertility clinics. Among other things, we observe diagnostic codes for male and female-factor infertility, the type of fertility treatment received, established pregnancies, and birth information. After 2006, the ART registers also list whether or not women sought treatment as singles or together with a partner.

In a reduced-form analysis, we study the effects of access of single women to ART in an event-study design. We use the age thresholds specified by the law to distinguish between treatment and control groups and control for a large array of covariates (education, location, income, etc.) Preliminary findings suggest that young women indeed delayed marriage formation. Moreover, cohabiting and married women became more likely to separate from their partners.

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²However, all kinds of ART treatments are available with self-payment at private fertility clinics for all women aged 45 or younger, regardless of the number of previous children and their conjugal status.

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