

## PASS: a household panel survey for research on unemployment and poverty

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## **PASS – A Household Panel Survey for Research on Unemployment and Poverty**

By Mark Trappmann, Stefanie Gundert, Claudia Wenzig,  
and Daniel Gebhardt

### **1. Introduction**

The series of reforms of the assistance scheme for long-term unemployed persons in Germany that was introduced between 2003 and 2005, the so called Hartz-reforms, is considered one of the major post-war reforms of the German social security system (Möller / Walwei, 2009, 11). It culminated in the combination of the former unemployment assistance ('Arbeitslosenhilfe') and social assistance ('Sozialhilfe') into a new form of benefit for all persons aged 15 to 64 who are capable of working and whose household has no sufficient income. This benefit is called Unemployment Benefit II ('Arbeitslosengeld II': ALG II). The new assistance scheme aims at strengthening the individual responsibility of recipients. The benefits and the labour market programmes within the scope of the new assistance scheme aim at terminating or reducing neediness, particularly by supporting re-integration into the labour market, and at assuring subsistence of the households in need.

The introduction of the new benefit called for a large amount of research to evaluate the consequences of the reform.<sup>1</sup> A new database was needed that contained labour market data on a sufficient number of cases in receipt of the new benefit as well as detailed information on recipients' behaviour, attitudes and life situations.

In 2006, the Institute for Employment Research ('Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung': IAB) started the new household panel study 'Panel Arbeitsmarkt und soziale Sicherung' (PASS). While PASS is designed to evaluate the Hartz-reforms, it also allows researchers to address broader research questions related to unemployment and poverty in Germany.

PASS was particularly designed to address the following topics (compare Achatz et al., 2007):

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<sup>1</sup> Koch et al. (2009) give an overview of the research within the first four years.

- (1) The dynamics of benefit reciprocity.
- (2) The effect of benefit reciprocity on the social situation of the affected households – including aspects as deprivation, participation, integration or health.
- (3) The effects of the introduction of the new benefit on behaviour and attitudes of people in the labour force.
- (4) The effect of the new benefit on target groups (e.g. young adults under 25 years of age) and groups with labour market impediments (e.g. single parents, migrants, and elder workers).

PASS was established as a household survey in order to reflect the fact that the new benefit (ALG II) assesses neediness on the household level. It was designed as a panel survey because most research questions are concerned with individual changes in time.

In order to allow for analyses on relevant subgroups (as those mentioned in (4)), PASS was required to include a sufficient number of households receiving benefits. At the same time it had to allow for inference to the general population to enable research on non-take-up of benefits, inflows into reciprocity or to allow for the calculation of population reference values that are indispensable for assessing the life situation of recipients.

Compared to the administrative data of the Federal Employment Agency provided for research use by the Research Data Centre ('Forschungsdatenzentrum': FDZ) of the Federal Employment Agency ('Bundesagentur für Arbeit': BA) in datasets like IABS, IEBS or LIAB (see Heining, 2010 for an overview) it was required to collect significantly more detailed data on living conditions and on characteristics that could influence the probability of overcoming reciprocity such as attitudes, employment potential or job-seeking behaviour.

This article gives an overview of the first three waves of the PASS panel. Section 2 describes the survey and sample design. Section 3 describes outcomes from the fieldwork of the first three waves. In the fourth section, an overview of the collected variables is given, and research opportunities with PASS are addressed. The fifth section introduces the data structure. In Section 6, data access procedures for researchers outside the IAB are outlined.

## **2. The Survey Design of the PASS Panel**

### **2.1 Sample Design**

The many different requirements of this survey could only be achieved through a complex survey design detailed in Schnell (2007) and Rudolph/Trappmann (2007): The most distinctive feature of PASS is the use of a dual frame for sampling. Within each of the primary sampling units (PSU), which are postcode areas in PASS, a sample of benefit recipients as well as a sample of the general population was drawn.

The target population of the general population sample were all private households in Germany. This sample was drawn from a list of private household addresses provided by microm, a private company. The general population sample was stratified by social status<sup>2</sup> within each PSU, oversampling low socio-economic status households.

In the initial wave the target population of the recipient sample was all households in which at least one person received ALG II at the reference date (in July 2006). The sample was drawn from the registers of recipients at the BA. For details on the coverage of the sampling frames and the exact sampling procedures readers are referred to Rudolph/Trappmann (2007). In order to enable researchers to draw not only inference to the recipient population at the initial sampling date, but to the cross-sectional recipient population in every single wave, each year a sample of new entries to this population is drawn from the BA's registers of recipients.<sup>3</sup> For PASS users this sample design ensures high usability. Users have the following options when working with wave 3 data of PASS:

- Working exclusively with the recipient sample of wave 1, users can draw inference to all ALG II recipients in July 2006.
- Working exclusively with the refreshment sample of wave  $n$  ( $n \geq 2$ ), inference can be drawn to the cohort of new entries between July 2004+ $n$  and July 2005+ $n$ .
- Combining all recipient samples, inference can be drawn to all households who received ALG II in any July since 2006.
- By restricting this sample to cases that still receive ALG II benefits at the most recent sampling date, inference can be drawn to the cross sectional recipient population at this date.

On the other hand the population sample allows the user to calculate reference values for the residential population. Without these reference values, statistics calculated on the recipient sample would often be difficult to interpret. This holds especially for analyses on deprivation and poverty. The analysis on the material deprivation of benefit recipients by Christoph (2008) and the analysis of labour market impediments of supplementary benefit recipients by Dietz et al. (2009) can serve as examples for this use of the population sample. Furthermore, the general population sample allows for the analysis of inflows into reciprocity.

The user should however be aware that as sampling rates differ significantly between subsamples and within the population sample, weights must be used

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<sup>2</sup> The status indicator supplied by microm is described in Kueppers (2005) and has been validated in Trappmann et al. (2009).

<sup>3</sup> The refreshment sample for wave  $n$  ( $n > 1$ ) is a random sample of recipient households on the reference date in July 2005+ $n$ , in which no member has lived in a recipient household on any previous reference date.

in all descriptive analyses. The detailed data report of PASS wave 2 (Gebhardt et al., 2009, 133 ff.) gives an overview of how the weights can be used for inference on different populations.

## 2.2 Data Collection Methods

PASS is a mixed-mode survey which uses computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI) as well as computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPI). While using the telephone-mode for the majority of interviews was necessary with regard to the financial resources assigned to the panel study, the concentration on low-income households made it necessary to supplement the survey by CAPI interviews for all households for whom no working telephone number could be found.

In each household there is a household questionnaire to be answered by the head of the household and an individual questionnaire to be answered by each household member from the age of 15. Section 4 gives detailed information on the contents of the questionnaires.

A considerable proportion of the target population does not have sufficient knowledge of German. Therefore, the survey was conducted in Turkish and Russian, the most frequent first languages of immigrants to Germany.

Data from PASS can be linked to the Federal Employment Agency's administrative datasets. During the survey, respondents are asked if they would consent to this linkage.<sup>4</sup> While the consent rate is above 80 percent not all respondents could be successfully linked. Thus there is a successful linkage for about 75 percent of PASS wave 1 and 2 respondents.

## 3. Numbers of Cases and Response Rates

PASS started with 6,804 households in the recipient sample and 5,990 households in the population sample in wave 1. The wave 1 response rate was 26.7 percent (RR1 according to AAPOR standards, The American Association for Public Opinion Research, 2009). In both subsamples, more than 9,000 person interviews were conducted. About two thirds of the interviews were conducted in CATI. 448 household interviews and 723 person interviews were administered in foreign languages. More detailed information on the results of the fieldwork of wave 1 can be found in Christoph et al. (2008) and Hartmann et al. (2008).

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<sup>4</sup> For data privacy reasons such a linkage cannot be part of the Scientific Use File. The linked data can only be used with permission by the Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales (BMAS) according to § 75, SGB X.

In wave 2, only 56.6 percent of the households could be re-interviewed (Gebhardt et al., 2009, 21). This experience led to additional measures. From wave 3 on tracking was intensified, the field-period extended and respondent incentives were paid in cash in advance. With these measures panel attrition could be reduced to about 20 percent and more than 30 percent of wave 2 attritors participated again in wave 3.

Figure 1 shows the number of household interviews in the first three waves.

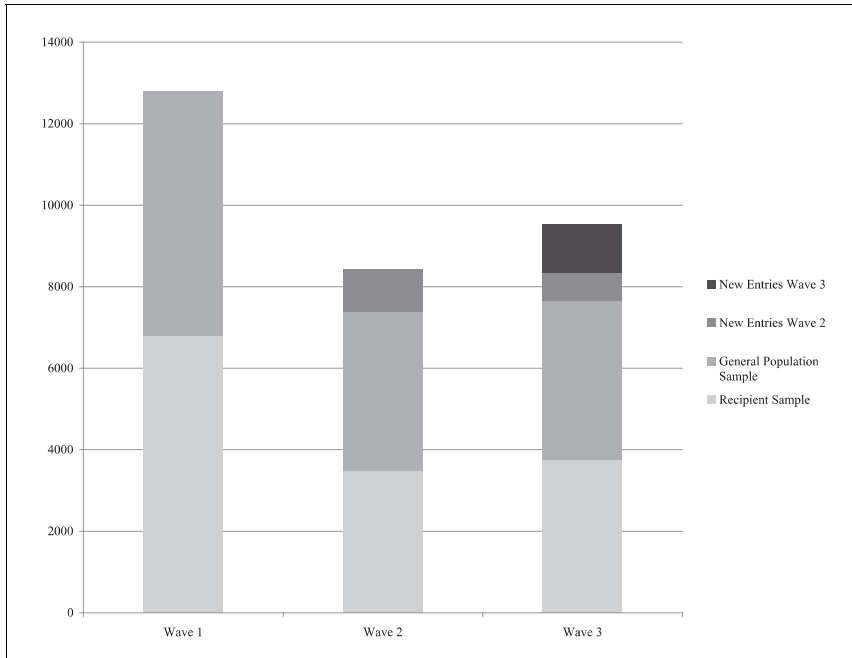


Figure 1: Number of households in waves 1 to 3

PASS puts emphasis on relevant subpopulations with receipt of ALG II: In the past, data from PASS have been used for analyses on supplementary benefit recipients (Dietz et al., 2009), single parents receiving unemployment benefits (Heimer et al., 2009), benefit recipients with a migratory background (Konsortium “Wirkungen des SGB II auf Personen mit Migrationshintergrund”, 2009), or participants of active labour market programmes (Wulfgramm, forthcoming). For researchers who are interested in these topics table 1 gives the numbers of person interviews in relevant subpopulations for wave 1 and 2.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> As the post collection processing of the third wave data is still going on at the moment of writing, numbers for wave 3 are not given here.

Table 1

**Number of person interviews in relevant subpopulations**

<b>Recipient subgroup</b>	<b><i>n</i> (wave 1)</b>	<b><i>n</i> (wave 2)</b>
<i>Migratory background</i>		
1 <sup>st</sup> generation	2,252	1,088
2 <sup>nd</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> generation	941	350
Single parents	1,775	966
Under 25 years old	1,987	974
55 years and older	1,191	788
Supplementary recipients at date of interview	1,775	1,162
<i>One-Euro-Job participants</i>		
ever	1,244	1,019
at date of interview	332	239
Entry cohort (July 2006 – July 2007)	–	1,314

**4. Variables and Research Opportunities**

In order to address the study's key research questions (cf. section 1), the PASS questionnaire covers a broad range of information on individuals and their households. The head of each household answers a household questionnaire about household composition, household income, expenditures and unemployment benefit receipt. In addition, for each household member aged 15 years or older, there is a personal questionnaire covering topics like demographic variables, social origin, education, employment, participation in labour market policy programmes and attitudes towards life and work.

Below, we will describe the information available to researchers in more detail and relate them to potential lines of research. Table 2 gives an overview of the questionnaire modules used in waves one to three. For a comprehensive description of questionnaire modules and variables, see Christoph et al. (2008) and Gebhardt et al. (2009).

**4.1 The Impact of Welfare State Reforms on the Dynamics  
of Benefit Reciprocity, Poverty and Deprivation**

As pointed out in section 1, PASS can be used to analyse how recent reforms of the German welfare state and the labour market affect individuals and households. Researchers can take advantage of the panel's focus on unemployment benefit recipients and low-income households and examine the determi-

nants and consequences of the introduction of a new social assistance scheme – the German Social Code II reforms – for long-term unemployed individuals and their families.

*Table 2*  
**Overview of the questionnaire modules**

<b>Demography</b>	<b>Financial Situation</b>	<b>Social Situation</b>	<b>Behaviour &amp; Attitudes</b>	<b>Benefit Reciprocity</b>
<i>Household Level</i>				
Household size and composition (age, family relationships)	Total disposable household income	Housing & housing costs		ALG II
Children and child care	Income components Deprivation Savings Loans & debts			
<i>Personal Level</i>				
Education & training	Work-related income	Health	Self-efficacy	Unemployment Benefit I (ALG I)
(Un)employment history (and other activities)	Statutory / civil servants' pensions	Social networks	Gender role attitudes	Contact to agencies providing ALG II
Current employment status		Social integration	Work-related attitudes	Participation in labour market policy programmes
Migration		Caring for elderly relatives	Life satisfaction	
Social origin			Aspirations for children's education Job search behaviour	

A core part of the survey is composed of data on ALG II receipt of the households. This data is gathered retrospectively and stored in spell format. For each episode, there is information about year and month of its beginning and end and, if applicable, about reasons for and duration of ALG II cuts. The data can be used to gain insight into histories of ALG II reciprocity and to detect risk factors as well as factors that promote exit from ALG II dependency.



The household-level information on ALG II can be linked to the person-level data of household members, such as level of *education*, *employment history*, work-related *attitudes* and a wide array of demographic variables, such as *migration background* or *marital status*.

For persons living in households that receive ALG II there are two additional personal questionnaire modules. The first one includes questions about individuals' *contact to the agencies responsible for the provision of ALG II*. From this module, cross-sectional data is available on the contact frequency and on the perceived quality and intensity of support by those agencies.

The second module consists of retrospective questions about individual *participation in labour market policy programmes*. Here, spell data on the following information is available: type of programme (e.g., one-euro-jobs, training measures); start and end date of the programme; evaluation of institutional support during the programme; perceived success of the programme (e.g., regarding employment prospects, skill enhancement, improvement of financial situation).

The personal questionnaire also includes a module on *job search behaviour*, providing information about: *search strategies*; *reservation wages*; *preferences* regarding job attributes, such as working hours; individual *readiness to make concessions* with respect to wages, commuting distance or qualification mismatches.

PASS addresses poverty and deprivation of households receiving benefits. There are many different ways to estimate poverty and deprivation (European Commission, 2007). Indicators of deprivation and poverty in PASS refer to the resource approach as well as the deprivation approach to capture the complex character of poverty. A one-dimensional income-based resource approach defines poverty as a lack of income necessary to reach the average standard of living in one's society; a poverty threshold of 60 % of median or mean income is often used. Instead of focusing solely on income, deprivation approaches to poverty use non-monetary indicators and focus on an inability to obtain certain goods or to participate in activities generally considered significant in society.

Researchers can use the resource-based approach and the deprivation approach to understand poverty and deprivation. The material situation of the household is one of the main issues in the study. Besides the *total disposable household income*, several important income components are collected in detail at the personal level. *Income from work* – including earnings from self-employment or special payments and bonuses – are gathered, as well as *statutory or civil servants' pensions* and *unemployment insurance payments*. At the household level, important *social security benefits* (e.g. child benefit, parenting benefit, ALG II) and *transfers between households* (e.g., maintenance, nursing allowance) are obtained. In addition, respondents are asked about their *savings*, *loans* and *debts*.

PASS includes a list of 26 deprivation items which covers *housing conditions* (e.g. central heating), *food/clothing* (e.g. sufficient winter clothing), *consumer durables* (e.g. washing machine), *financial situation* (e.g. saving a fixed amount a month) and *social activities* (e.g. inviting friends). In each case the respondent is first asked whether the household possesses the goods or engages in the activities included in the list. If respondents report that they do not have these goods or participate in these activities, they are asked if they do so for financial or for other reasons. A *deprivation index* (unweighted and weighted) of these items is constructed. The weights are based on the necessity which is attributed to each item by all respondents in wave 1.

Other indicators are available that address the social situation of benefit recipients. PASS includes health-related questions referring to *physical and mental well-being*, including having chronic diseases and disabilities that might impair individual employability. The personal questionnaire in the third wave includes additional questions about *health-related behaviour*, such as smoking, drinking and exercise.

Researchers can also refer to detailed information on labour, education, social networks and social integration, including two scales of measuring *the respondent's perception of his/her integration and position in society*.

All of this information can be used in empirical analyses of unemployment, poverty and the dynamics of benefit reciprocity to disentangle the role of individual behaviour and institutional support.

## 4.2 Research on Recent Developments in the Labour Market

Despite its focus on social benefit recipients, PASS is also an excellent data source for answering a broad range of questions about recent developments in the employment system. Researchers will find cross-sectional and longitudinal individual data on education and employment. Cross-sectional data include the *highest general school degree* and *vocational qualifications* as well as details about the *first and the last job*. Longitudinal data include individual *employment histories* and are provided as spell data. Episodes of employment, unemployment and non-employment (e.g., education, maternity leave, retirement or military service) are recorded, beginning approximately two years before individuals' first interviews and are updated in each panel wave.

In order to facilitate analyses on the quality of different types of employment, each job episode contains information about: the *type of contract* (permanent, fixed-term or temporary agency work); *occupation*; *job level*; *working hours*; *income*; *industrial sector*; and *firm size*. Likewise, researchers will find important attributes of unemployment episodes, like the amount of *un-*

*employment insurance payments (called ALG I)*; start and end date of benefit receipt; and, starting with the third wave, *reasons for ceasing unemployment*.

Researchers can make use of a broad range of person-level and household-level variables to study social inequalities in the labour market. For example, it is possible to analyse the employment trajectories of individuals with *migration background* or to compare individuals according to their *social origin* (as measured by respondents' parents' highest education and job level). In selected waves (starting with wave 3) there will be an extended questionnaire module on *social networks*, including information about instrumental and emotional support that respondents receive from their social networks. This provides an opportunity for analyses on the significance of social relationships for individual careers.

Finally, the study also allows for research revolving around the labour market participation of women and opportunities of reconciling employment and family. The household interview provides information on *child care provisions* for children under the age of 15, such as the availability of child care and the type and costs of child care institutions. Data from the person interviews supplement these data by detailing information on the time spent with *caring for elderly relatives* or friends – including kinds of tasks and institutional support – and by *gender role attitudes*.

## 5. Data Structure

The Scientific Use File (SUF) consists of anonymized datasets from the household and person interviews. The structure of the SUF follows the structure and succession of the questionnaires used in PASS (see Figure 2).

There are two *register datasets* in the SUF. The household register contains a list of all households that have ever been surveyed in PASS, while the person register contains a full list of all persons in these households. These register datasets provide basic information about the survey status of the household or person in every wave as well as additional wave specific information. For example, the household register contains an indicator for the person who answered the household questionnaire, and the person register contains information on who is a person's partner. The person register is of particular importance as it includes information on the units in joint receipt of benefits (Bedarfsgemeinschaft: BG), a concept central to research into German Social Code Book II.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> BGs are in most cases identical to households. Only in some cases is the BG smaller than the household. The most important differences between the two concepts are, first, that children form separate BGs when they are either at least 25 years old or have children of their own, and second, that people who keep house together but are neither in a partnership nor in a parent-child relation form separate BGs.

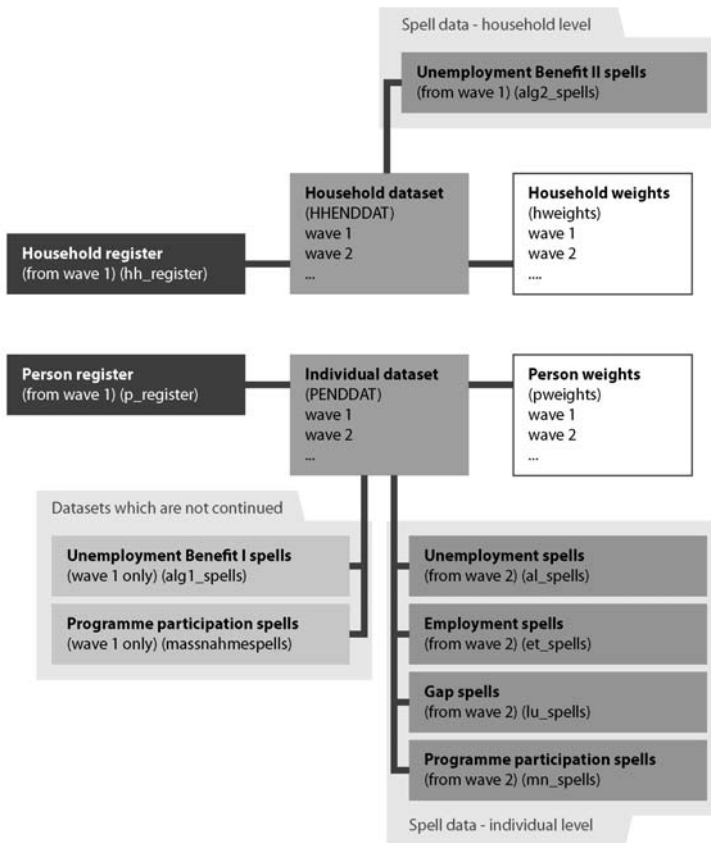


Figure 2: Structure of the Scientific Use File of PASS in wave 2

While the register datasets contain only basic information about the household, their members and the respective survey status, the *main datasets* of PASS contain most of the survey data collected during the interviews at the household and individual level, excluding information that was recorded in spell format. The main datasets of PASS are prepared in long format and not – as can be found in some other panel surveys – in separate annual files. Thus, each observation in the household and person datasets corresponds to a wave for a particular household or person, respectively. Each variable, even if it is repeatedly collected in different panel waves, is only one column. Changes in the way a question is asked can lead to the decision that a new variable has to be integrated in the dataset. If the change concerns a central item, a newly generated variable is included which harmonizes the responses across the waves. The *weighting datasets* on both the household and the individual level correspond to this structure, as they are prepared in long format as well.

In addition, the SUF includes several *spell datasets*. At the household level, information about the receipt of ALG II is prepared in spell format. That is, each observation is a particular spell of receipt of ALG II; each household could have multiple spells at each wave.

Four spell datasets are included in the SUF at the individual level: (a) periods of employment, (b) periods of unemployment, (c) periods of economic inactivity, where the respondent is neither employed nor unemployed, covering the time since January 2005, and (d) labour market policy programmes since 2006. From wave 2, reciprocity of ALG I is included in the unemployment spell dataset.

The datasets of the SUF are the result of comprehensive data processing (see Gebhardt et al., 2009, 40 ff.) that includes various steps of data checking, editing and generating of variables. These *generated variables* include coded responses to open-ended survey questions as well as indices. These indices have been aggregated from other variables, and some have a foundation in certain theoretical concepts (e.g. ISCED 97 (OECD, 1999) or CASMIN (Brauns/Steinmann, 1999)). To make working with the datasets easier, PASS contains indices on various topics, such as education, socio-economic position, occupational activity, income, benefit reciprocity, household context, marital status, migration or employment status.<sup>7</sup>

Our goal is to provide new PASS users a quick start and easy access to the data collected in PASS. The data structure of the SUF and the availability of these generated variables are designed to aid this process.

## 6. Data Access

Currently, the first two waves of PASS are available as weakly anonymized SUFs, and wave 3 will be available from January 2011. All datasets can be used by researchers at scientific institutions for non-commercial research. Data Access is provided by the FDZ. See [http://fdz.iab.de/de/FDZ\\_Individual\\_Data/PASS.aspx](http://fdz.iab.de/de/FDZ_Individual_Data/PASS.aspx) for questionnaires, field reports (Hartmann et al., 2008; Büngeler et al., 2009), codebooks (Christoph et al., 2008; Gebhardt et al., 2009) and information on how to apply for the data.

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<sup>7</sup> For a complete list of generated variables see Gebhardt et al. (2009, 40 ff.).

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