Coping with the Winds of Change?
Evidence on the Re-traditionalisation of Maternal Employment in East Germany

Andreas Haupt (Karlsruhe Institute of Technology)
Gundula Zoch (University of Oldenburg & Leibniz Institute for Educational Trajectories, LfBi)

Short abstract:
In recent decades, women in most Western welfare states have significantly increased their labour supply. However, previous studies have argued for a ‘post-socialist exceptionalism’ due to contrasting trends in post-socialist countries, where women returned to a more traditional division of paid work. Accordingly, women in these countries needed to cope with severe changes in the labour market and the re-familiarisation of childcare. Therefore, the question remains to what extent changes in the labour market or supportive work-family policies drive the re-traditionalisation of paid work. By examining how the working hours of East German women changed differently, conditional on the type of their job or family structure, we can determine whether changes in labour market or family demands have had greater impact on the re-traditionalisation of employment in a post-socialist country.

We use a harmonized trend dataset of the German Microcensus (1991-2016, N=234.091), an official statistical survey representative of Germany. Results from annual OLS regression models show widening gaps in working hours across job and family types over time. However, the higher the status of the women’s job, the lower the estimated motherhood penalty in working hours. These results highlight that motherhood penalties in working hours are strongly interlinked with changes in the labour market and reinforce existing inequalities between women with different family demands and occupational prestige levels. From a broader perspective, our results highlight that the intersection of inequalities in the labour market and the family are an important mechanism for understanding how motherhood penalties in working hours come about.

Keywords: working hours, family policies, motherhood, intersectional inequalities, re-traditionalisation