

Has the male breadwinner settled in East Germany?

Empirical evidence from a typology of couples' employment histories after first time parenthood

In the GDR, having a child hardly interrupted one's employment: the common family model was a dual-earner constellation, as parents could rely on day care institutions. In West Germany, lack of day care and tax regulations, accompanied by a strong motherhood ideology, supported the male breadwinner model. After 1990, West German legislation was brought to the East, where the labour market since has shrunken, but where institutional coverage and a modern gender ideology are still alive. Much has since been hypothesised about whether the East Germans, under these circumstances, would come to adopt or rather resist the male breadwinner model.

I aim to tackle this question empirically: I focus on the transition to parenthood among couples in East and West Germany whose first child was born between 1990 and 1996. This transition has frequently led to the traditionalizing of the division of labour among couples and also correlates with welfare state institutions and regulations. Using data from the monthly employment calendars of the GSOEP, I construct joint employment histories of both partners that cover an observation frame from 6 months before until five years after childbirth. I employ the Optimal-Matching-Analysis to generate a typology of the sequence patterns. The description of the resulting types will seek to stress the following:

- occurrence of different patterns in East and West Germany
- “new” patterns that diverge from the male-breadwinner or double-earner templates
- differences between the parenthood cohorts

Accordingly, I would like to contribute to both the discussion about the “resistance” of East Germans to the male breadwinner model and the exploration of new methodological approaches to longitudinal data.

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