

Fathers' and mothers' joint longitudinal employment patterns around first birth in Germany, 1990-2020

Lili Vargha

The aim of this paper is to analyze the employment patterns of first-time parents both before and after the birth of the first child in Germany from a parental dyad perspective. Using Group Based Multi Trajectory Modeling approach (Nagin et al 2016) applied to the German SOEP panel data on monthly employment spells, I explore the typical trajectories of how men and women jointly combine and sequence full-time and part-time employment surrounding first births. My focus spans the year preceding the birth and extends up to six years thereafter, enabling me to identify the typical developmental trajectories of employment surrounding first births in Germany between 1990 and 2020. I identify six distinctive joint parental employment trajectories, from which three are characterized by traditional long-term full and partial specialization and account for 71% of couples. The remaining couples are non-traditional couple types, such as Dual Full-time Worker, Female Main Worker and Dual Part-time after Birth groups. Afterwards I extend the model and analyze how the probability of trajectory group membership varies as a function of important baseline characteristics of the parental dyad and birth. I show that relative resources within the couple, such as the difference between baseline education, income and age are associated with the multi-trajectory group membership. If only he has tertiary education, there is higher probability of being in the traditional couple types, such as the Long-term Continuous Specialization. On the other hand, when only she or both have tertiary education there is a higher probability of being in the non-traditional couple types. I also confirm that the domination of Continuous Full Specialization becomes weaker after 2007, when the German Parental Leave Reform (Elterngeld reform) was introduced. The analysis also shows that traditional employment trajectories are less relevant for mothers born in East Germany even after 2007. Even though it is explorative-descriptive in nature, the paper analyzes how relative resources within and between couples, such as changing educational composition, later birth schedules and different institutional settings are associated with different employment and reproductive trajectories of parents from a dynamic dyadic perspective.