

Welfare Regimes, Life Course Gender Gap Trajectories of Employment, and Cumulative Effects: A Theoretical Model and Comparative, Empirical Investigation

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Scholars note that the “women’s work revolution” of the late 20th Century is “incomplete” and that it is largely due to mother’s labor market exit during child-rearing. However, prior research has not addressed the nature of gender gaps in employment across the life course. I present a life course theoretical framework in which macro-social and macro-economic forces interact with individual women’s cost-benefit analyses of work at each life stage, explaining cross-national variation in the shape of gender gaps in employment across the life course. I empirically test this framework using complete employment histories of men and women from 14 European countries. I find that welfare regime type informs cross-national variation in the nature of employment gender gaps across the life course.