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Policy Effects on Class-Gender Employment Intersections

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Policy Effects on Class-Gender Employment Intersections

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Chapter 6:
Policy Effects on Class-Gender Employment Intersections[1]

Abstract

This project explored how the sociopolitical context maps current class-gender intersections in relative employment equality in Australia, East and West Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The countries were selected based on their diverse policy equality logics codified in initial welfare state provisions. Pooled and individual-country analyses of wave 5.2 of the Luxembourg Income Study revealed gender differences in the impact of individual factors on work hours and wages, as well as national differences controlling for individual characteristics. Two findings bear particular note. First, the differences in relative gender earnings inequality across the class distribution in Australia and West Germany underline that class equality policies do not ensure greater class equality for all social groups. Second, the UK and US results indicate that liberal market forces do not ensure women's greater investment in education and work hours will achieve economic equality with men. As women's 'human capital' increases, men's returns to their own increase such that gender employment equality becomes a moving target.

6.1 Introduction

The historical policy tour over the preceding chapters highlights that government policies developed vis-à-vis existing and emerging local, national, and supranational institutions. In the face of new socioeconomic challenges and the changing power of political actors, nations generally display path dependence by keeping to the initial policy course. Subsequent events merely altered the pitch of the original policy trajectory that shapes life course possibilities for members of different social groups. In this chapter we look at the practical implications of the different national contexts on current group differences in employment; in the next chapter we look at how policy shapes household divisions of paid and unpaid tasks that undergird these.

[1] The analyses presented in this chapter were possible with funding from the UK ESRC research grant RES-000-22-2819, and the research assistance provided by Pierre Walthery and Katie Hoffman.

In the next section I summarize the country profiles of within- and between-group equality. This includes the historical policy premise that affected the degree of labor market coordination and insider-outsider cleavages, as well as how recent economic shocks challenge the systems. In the remainder of the chapter, I use Luxembourg Income Study data to display the distinct patterns of relative employment equality in each of the six regions. Women's and men's predicted employment hours are the topic of the third section. Relative equality in employment participation is compared by educational attainment levels, as well as parenthood and other group statuses. The fourth section presents analyses of gender differences in returns to employment across each country's earnings distribution. Looking across the distribution reveals how class and group dynamics intersect. The final section displays further analyses of group differences in earnings, highlighting how class-gender-ethnic intersections map the complex structures of inequality in post-industrial societies (McCall 2001, 2005).

6.2 Country equality profiles

Relative employment equality consists of two basic components: differences in who works for pay, and differences in how much they are paid. The relative degree of equality in these components can be compared across classes (within-group equality) as well across social groups (between-group equality). Table 6.1 summarizes how these equality dimensions are anticipated to intersect in the countries here. These reflect the more nuanced analysis of the overall wage compression and female labor supply factors shaping relative gender equality detailed in Chapter 2.

Table 6.1 Country profiles of within- and between-group equality

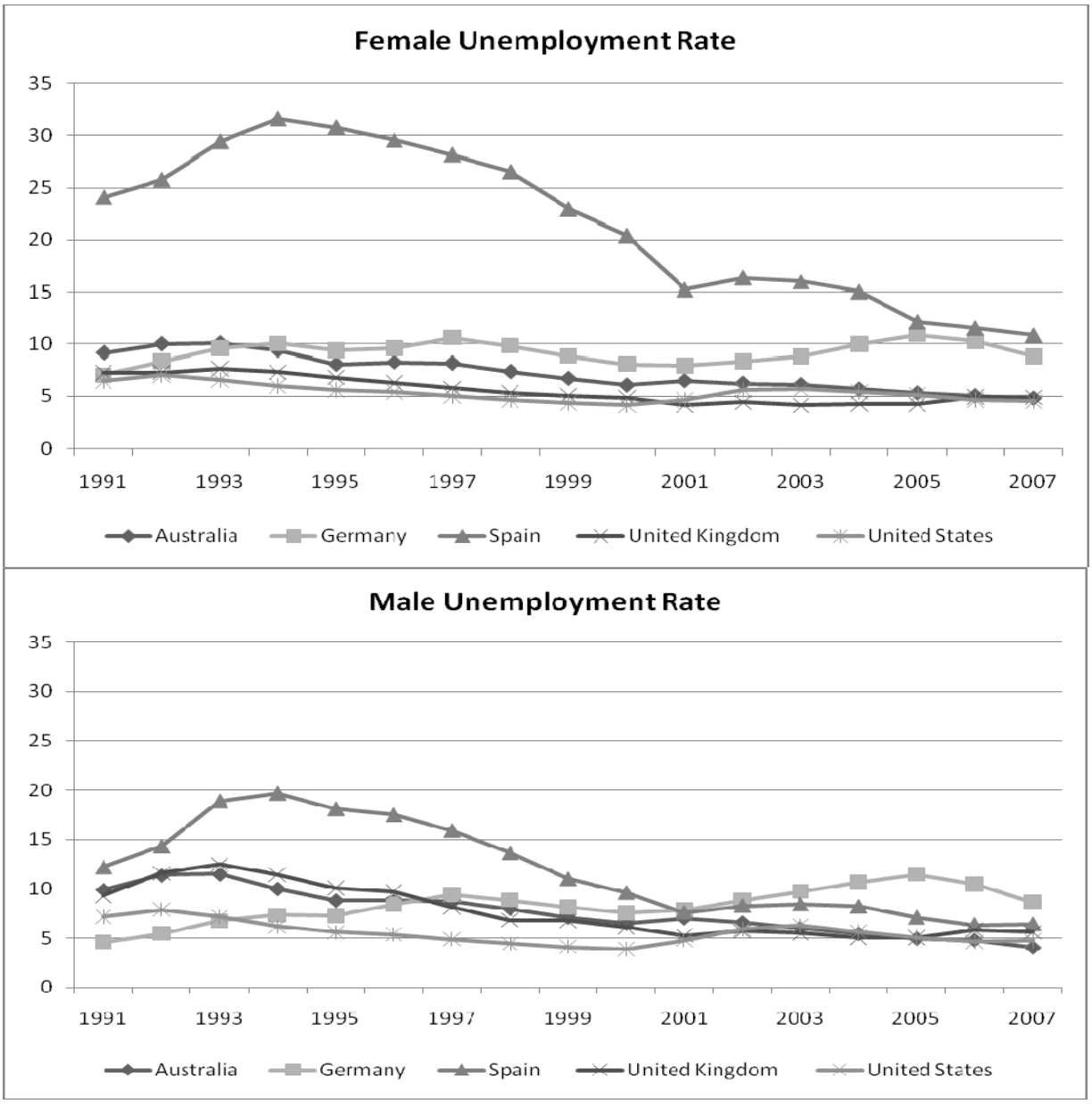
	Class Equality	Gender Equality	
		Work Hours	Wages
East Germany	high	high	high
Australia	high	moderate	high
West Germany	moderate	low	moderate
Spain	low-moderate	low	moderate-low
United States	low	high	low
United Kingdom	low	moderate	low

The coordinated dual-earner policies of socialist East German promoted the greatest degree of employment equality for more of the population. All capable adults were expected to pursue full-time employment, and the government minimized, but did not eliminate, within- and between-group wage differentials (Sorensen and Trappe 1995). After reunification and the shift to a market economy, East German wages remained lower, as did the gender differential as compared with West Germany (Rosenfeld et al. 2004). As evident in Figure 6.1, reunification was followed by a period of rising unemployment in Germany that affected the East more than the West *Länder*.[2] Rosenfeld and her colleagues (2004) suggested that the persisting gender employment equality in the East derived in part from the deterioration in East German men's wages under the high regional unemployment, coupled with the least-skilled East German women's exit from the labor market. The good news under these challenging economic circumstances is that the degree of within- and between-group equality should still be high in East Germany, despite its reunification under the West German state. At the same time, the

[2] According to data from the German Federal Statistical Office (*Statistisches Bundesamt Deutschland*), the unemployment rate in the East *Länder* averaged 17 percent across the 1990s, as compared with 11 percent in the West *Länder* (Cooke 2007: 939).

imposition of West German policies should affect some of the observed patterns of equality, even if the overall level of equality remains higher in the East.

Figure 6.1 Female and male unemployment rates, 1991 - 2007



Source: Female and male unemployment rates as a percentage of their respective civil labor force from the OECD Labour Force Statistics Database, accessed 23 July 2009, http://www.oecd.org/document/46/0,3343,en_2649_34251_2023214_1_1_1_1,00.html).

The West German tripartite coordination among the state, employers, and trade unions also supported greater class equality, but only for select groups. Therefore, West German policies reinforced between-group inequalities, with numerous provisions discouraging married women's employment under a male breadwinner model. The resulting shortage of teachers and nurses during the 1950s and 60s, however, led to the introduction and subsequent expansion of high-quality part-time civil service employment (van Oertzen 1999). Consequently, the gender employment gap at the top end of the earnings distribution might have narrowed. The occupational segregation enables some educated West German women to achieve greater employment equality, but without challenging men's dominance in private sector employment at the heart of the West German male breadwinner model.

Reunification created broader economic problems for West Germany, leading to the implementation of more recent policies that erode within-group equality. For example, to deal with rising unemployment and welfare costs, the German government introduced "mini-jobs" during the 1990s for marginal male workers that fall outside of the social security system (Wanger 2006). These are similar to the British part-time jobs that fueled gender inequality in that country. The implementation of such policies highlights the difficulty in sustaining a sizeable core employment sector in post-industrial societies (see also Palier and Thelen 2009). The proliferation of such jobs also increases overall class inequality, although not to the same extent as in unregulated markets.

Britain and Spain promoted male breadwinner models, but within liberal labor markets that do not provide male breadwinner wages. As displayed in Figure 6.1, the United Kingdom is the only country here where the male unemployment rate tends to exceed women's. Spanish

unemployment rates have been extremely high, with women's unemployment about twice the rate of men's. High unemployment generates greater competition for jobs, putting pressure on wages that can blunt class inequality as in East Germany. Despite these precarious male employment parameters in both countries, many women who are employed tend to be in marginal jobs. Low-skilled British women are likely to be employed in low-wage part-time positions (McKnight, Elias and Wilson 1998). Many similar Spanish women find employment in the peripheral or black market sectors (Barbera and Vettor 2001; Ferrera 2005).

At the same time, the small proportion of highly-educated British and Spanish women could reap the rewards of the class inequality relative to low-skilled women. Class differences among Spanish women should be particularly acute given the bifurcation in women's educational attainment. As noted in Chapter 4, a growing proportion of younger Spanish women are completing post-secondary schooling, yet a sizeable percentage of adult women never completed secondary schooling (Cooke 2009). Because of the rigidities in the labor market, Spanish women who are employed tend to work full-time (Franco and Winqvist 2002). This suggests mixed between-group equality stemming from the variation in female labor supply across educational attainment levels: low in terms of Spanish women's overall likelihood of being in employment, particularly low gender equality among the least-educated, but higher earnings equality among the educated women who are employed.

The strength of the Australian trade union movement managed impressive class gains of coordinated economies within an otherwise liberal market economy. Early in the 20th Century this was an exclusionary victory that widened gender and immigrant employment inequalities as in West Germany. The strong trade union movement subsequently won gains for some women,

however, by pressing for comparable worth policies during the 1960s and 70s. Since then, the Commonwealth government has incrementally dismantled the original wage setting system, pushing negotiations down to local levels. These policies dampen wages among the core group of workers, but a benefit is that unemployment rates fell (see Figure 6.1). A number of more recent policies also encouraged Australian women to take up part-time rather than full-time employment.

The push and pull of these competing influences over time might still yield fairly high within-group equality. Between-group is more difficult to predict. In coordinated dual-earner economies such as found in the former East Germany and Scandinavia, class-based wage compression generally benefits the least skilled women (Mandel and Semyonov 2005, 2006). In contrast, the more recent expansion of marginal part-time employment taken up by Australian women would predict dynamics similar to those in the United Kingdom, where the least-skilled women endure greater inequality.

U.S. policy interferes the least in labor market dynamics within a corporate system of welfare. The lack of a state safety net encourages greater employment participation, and as noted in Figure 6.1, the U.S. male and female unemployment rates are nearly identical. Any market-based inequalities, however, get perpetuated. This suggests greater equality in labor force participation, but with greater group inequality in returns to that employment (Sigle-Rushton and Waldfogel 2007). In contrast to the United Kingdom, the United States imposed no further limitations on female employment by encouraging marginal part-time jobs for married women. In sum, the U.S. labor market invariably contains a high degree of inequality, but specific group inequalities should not vary dramatically across the earnings distribution.

6.3 Who works and how much

The Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) harmonizes information from a number of national labor force surveys and other sources of employment-related data.[3] I use data from wave 5.2 of LIS to compare relative gender employment equality across the regions circa 2000.[4] Only respondents aged 20 to 54 are included, to focus on prime working-age adults. At the younger age, the least educated would already have begun to start families and, if employed, work in low-wage, low-skill jobs. To separate out students who are likely to work in similar jobs for a finite period in their lives, I exclude those reporting they are still in schooling. I choose the top age of 54, as most countries have some public or private options for early retirement beginning at age 55.

Figure 6.2 displays the distribution of employment hours for each gender by educational level. The top panel depicts employment hours for those with lower secondary schooling or less, whereas the bottom panel depicts the employment status for those with a university degree. The white bar on the far left represents the percentage out of the labor force, whereas the black bar on the far right represents those in full-time employment, defined as working more than 33 hours per week. The shades of gray between these two extremes differentiate between short-hour (medium gray) and long-hour (dark gray) part-time employment. Short-hour part-time employment of less than 20 hours per week is less likely to have employment-related benefits or insurance scheme entitlements. Long-hour part-time employment is defined as usual weekly work hours of between 20 and 32 hours.

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[3] For more information, see http://www.lisproject.org.

[4] Wave 5.2 is 1999 data for the United Kingdom, 2000 for the United States, Germany and Spain, and 2001 for Australia.

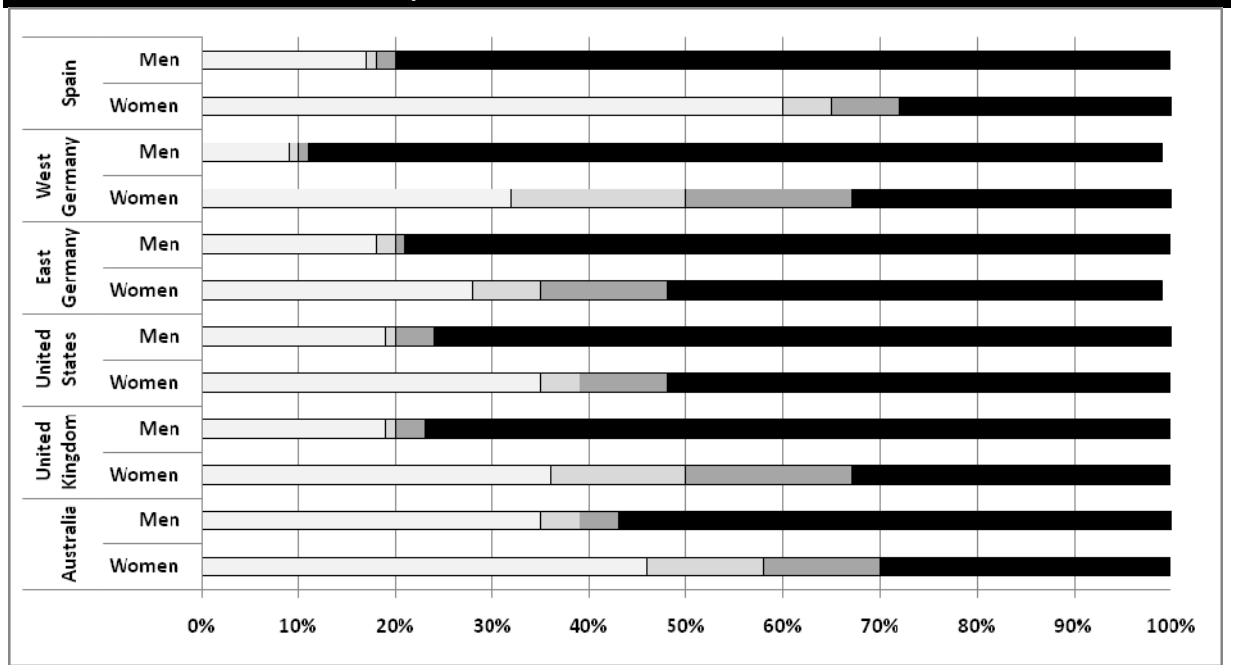
Given the importance of education to human capital investment, it is not surprising that educational attainment levels yield different patterns of who is in the labor force and, if employed, usual work hours. For both genders, those with low education are much more likely to be out of employment, whereas either gender with a university degree is likely to be employed full-time. Across educational attainment levels, however, more women are out of employment and fewer are employed full-time. As evident in the top panel, the gender employment gap among the least educated is greatest in Spain. Almost two-thirds of less-educated Spanish women are not employed as compared with less than one-fifth of similar men. East Germany has the smallest gender gap in the percentage out of the labor force, followed closely by Australia. In Australia, however, the small gap is because of the high proportion of less educated men who are unemployed—more than one-third.[5] Almost twice as many Australian women with lower secondary education are out of the labor force as compared with East German women.

As anticipated, Spain and West Germany have the greatest gender gap in full-time employment among the least educated at about 50 percentage points. It is almost as high in the United Kingdom, where only one-third of women with low education work full-time. The gender gap in full-time employment among the less educated is smaller in Australia, East Germany, and the United States at less than 30 percentage points. Again, however, the Australian gap reflects the lower percentage of less-educated men in full-time employment as compared with similar men in the other countries.

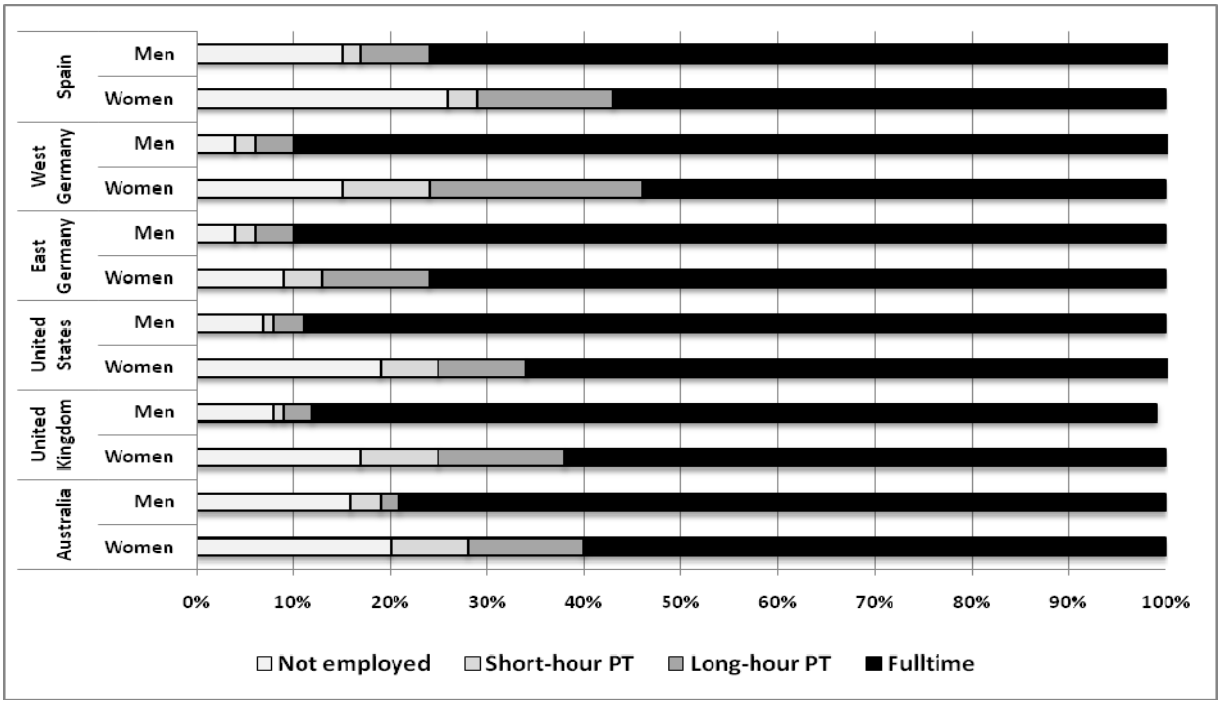
[5] This likely reflects differentials for the Aboriginals in the interior, but the Australian data only provide the ethnicity options of "Australia," "Main English-speaking countries," and "Other."

Figure 6.2 Usual weekly employment, men and women age 20 to 54, circa 2000

Panel A: Adults with lower secondary education or less



Panel B: Adults with university education



Source: Based on author calculations of Luxembourg Income Study wave 5.2: 1999 for the United Kingdom, 2000 for the United States, Germany and Spain, and 2001 for Australia. Displayed are the percentage of people aged 20 to 54 by employment statuses, defined as: Short-hour part-time (1 to 19 hours/week); long-hour part-time (20 to 32 hours/week); full-time is greater than 33 hours/week. Numbers might not total 100 due to rounding.

These proportions highlight that precarious employment is increasingly an issue affecting less-skilled men as well as women within liberal and coordinated economies (Palier and Thelen 2009). In addition, less-educated women are more likely than less-educated men to be out of the labor force, indicating greater between-group inequality. One can infer from this that couples least able to afford a male breadwinner model are most likely to be living it, something discussed further in the next chapter. We cannot ascertain with these data whether this is by choice or constraint.

Gender employment equality is greater among those with university education, but a gender gap persists. University-educated men in the two German regions, the United Kingdom, and the United States have nearly identical employment patterns, with Australian and Spanish men's unemployment rate somewhat greater. Educated women's employment diverges more sharply from their male counterparts in ways reflecting the employment policies discussed in the last chapter. Almost 80 percent of East German women with university education work full-time, a percentage reminiscent of pre-unification. The smallest percentage of university-educated women working full-time is found in West Germany. Instead, the draw of the part-time civil service positions is evident: more university-educated West German women are in long-hour part-time employment than in any of the other countries.

Over two-thirds of U.S. university-educated women are employed full-time, a somewhat distant second to East Germany. East German and U.S. educated women's part-time employment rates are similarly small. Less than 60 percent of Spanish women with a university degree are in full-time employment, as are only slightly more Australian and British women. Australian and British highly-educated women are more likely to be employed part-time, but

less likely than the less-educated women within their countries. These divergent gendered patterns among those with a university degree illustrate that education might form the universal foundation of human capital, but its translation into average employment hours for each gender varies substantially in its policy context.

One constraint inserted between women's education and subsequent employment has been the degree to which the state relies on women's unpaid care work. The countries differ in the length of paid and unpaid parental leave. Australia and the United States offer only unpaid leave (52 and 12 weeks, respectively), although employers might offer paid leave through corporate programs. As of 1999, the UK state leave provisions were the least generous of the remaining countries, providing only eight weeks of paid leave and the option for a total of 31 weeks (Jaumotte 2003: Table 5). Spain's leave provisions were more generous with 16 weeks of paid leave and up to 164 weeks total. Germany offered the most generous parental leave provisions, with 38 paid weeks out of 162 total weeks (Jaumotte 2003: Table 5). The countries have amended provisions to enable fathers to take some of the total time (Behning and Pascual 2001), but mothers remain far more likely than fathers to take leave and/or to take longer leaves (Hobson 2002).

Longer paid parental leaves, coupled with limited childcare options, encourage women's exit from the labor market following the birth of a child (Jaumotte 2003). As discussed in Chapter 4, only East Germany offers public childcare places for a substantial proportion of children under the age of 3. Australia expanded full-day childcare up until the 1990s, but then policy changed to encourage new mothers to remain out of the labor market. Over the past few decades, Spain has expanded all years of pre-primary aggressively, but the regional availability

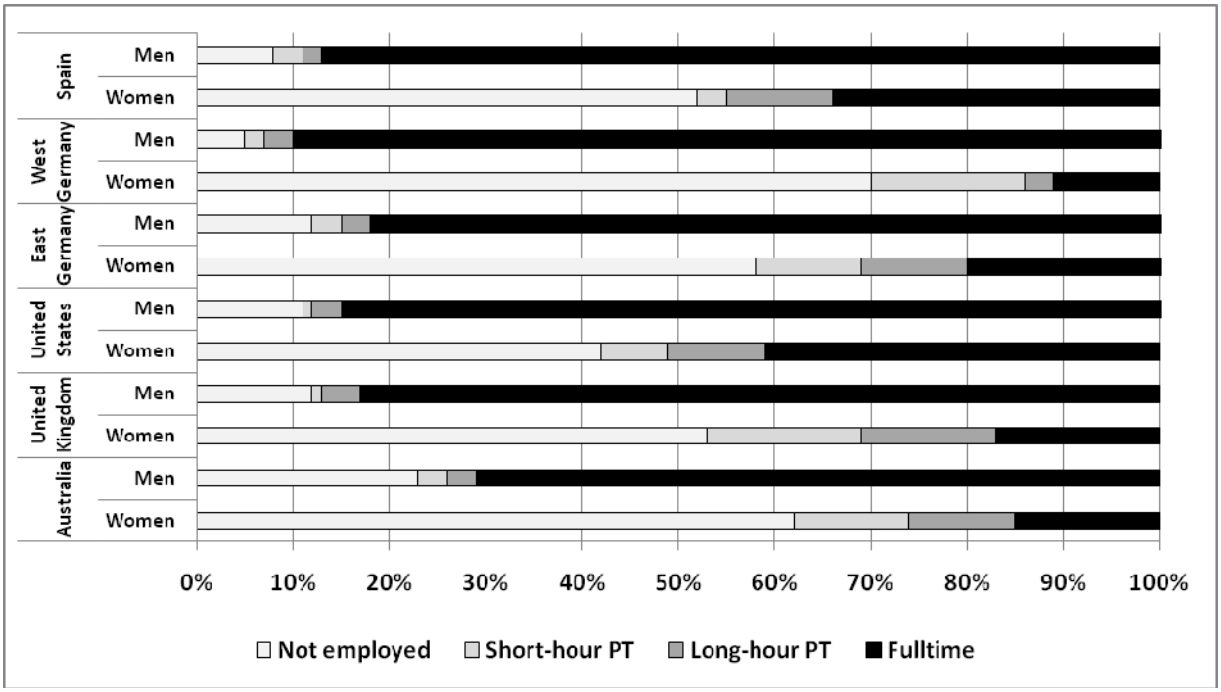
and cost varies. Britain and West Germany expanded public part-time childcare slots. U.S. policy leaves the challenge of balancing family and employment to individuals, who must find market solutions for any pre-primary care required.

These care-related policies structure the distribution of employment among fathers and mothers with very young children, diagrammed in Figure 6.3. Comparing employment among parents with such young children also reveals gender differences in a more recent cohort within each country rather than across all working-age adults as in the previous figures. In keeping with a male breadwinner model, all fathers generally work full-time, at employment rates approaching those of the most highly-educated men. The impact of parenthood on women's employment is far more pronounced, and mirrors the policy incentives. The majority of U.S. mothers with young children are employed, and more likely to be employed full-time than mothers in the other countries. This does not necessarily reflect maternal preferences. In the U.S. corporate welfare system, remaining out of employment jeopardizes other benefits such as access to health insurance. The high proportion of U.S. mothers working and working full-time, then, reflects the market's stick as much as a carrot.

Spanish mothers with young children are almost as likely as U.S. mothers to be employed full-time. This illustrates the paradox of male breadwinner policies in precarious labor markets. The high structural unemployment across Mediterranean countries delays when young people can afford to leave the parental home and start a family (Blossfeld et al. 2005). In this context, having children becomes a luxury best-afforded by dual-earner couples despite the lack

of public or private infrastructure to support maternal employment (Cooke 2009).[6] What is not evident within Figure 6.3 is that these tensions have resulted in very low fertility rates across the Mediterranean countries (Kohler et al. 2002). More Spanish mothers of young children might be employed, but there are fewer mothers. This contrasts with the U.S. scenario in which fertility and maternal employment rates are high (Brewster and Rindfuss 2000), supported by low-cost private care (Morgan 2005).

Figure 6.3 Usual weekly employment, mothers and fathers with a child under 3, circa 2000



Source: Based on author calculations of Luxembourg Income Study wave 5.2: 1999 for the United Kingdom, 2000 for the United States, Germany and Spain, and 2001 for Australia. Displayed are the percentage of people aged 20 to 54 with a child under the age of 3 by employment statuses. Short-hour part-time employment is from 1 to 19 hours per week; long-hour part-time employment is from 20 to 32 hours per week; full-time is for usual weekly work hours of 33 or more.

[6] These modern fertility dynamics have been noted at the aggregate (Brewster and Rindfuss 2000), institutional (McDonald 2000), and individual levels (Adsera 2003; de la Rica and Iza 2003).

British mothers are the next most likely to be employed, but primarily in part-time positions. Part-time employment also dominates among employed Australian and West German mothers. More surprising is that East German mothers now display employment patterns more similar to West German mothers. A slightly larger percentage of East German mothers are employed, but half of these mothers are in part-time jobs, slightly less than in West Germany. The extensive maternity leave provisions might encourage mothers' extended exit from employment in both regions, but East German women also had generous maternity leaves under the socialist state. The current unemployment rate in East Germany, however, makes extended maternity leave a more attractive option, particularly among those with fewer skills (Rosenfeld et al. 2004). High unemployment and economic uncertainty more generally put pressure on fertility rates as noted above for the Mediterranean countries. The East German birthrate dropped precipitously after reunification (Kreyenfeld 2003). Consequently, similar to the Spanish case, the 2000 employment figures for East German mothers reflect a select group of women having children during economically trying times.

Disentangling such multiple effects on an individual's employment decision requires a more controlled statistical analysis. I pooled the individual LIS country datasets and then regressed employment hours on key characteristics. These included educational levels and having a child younger than 3, along with whether the individual is partnered, or a single parent with a child under the age of 17, and if they are an immigrant. Also included are country indicator variables given the importance of the sociopolitical context, using the United States as the referent because of the absence of policy in that country. The regression reveals the effect of each factor on women's and men's employment hours, controlling for the effects of all of the

other factors. The effects that proved statistically significant in predicting changes in women's or men's employment hours are presented in Figure 6.4.

The constant term indicates the predicted weekly employment hours for a U.S. individual with an *absence* of those group characteristics most likely to affect employment (marriage, immigrant status, and young children). Note that for women and men, the constant term is nearly identical. This means that native U.S. men and women aged 20 to 54 with an upper secondary degree but without partners or young children are predicted to work 33 (men) or 34 (women) hours per week. From this shared base, each factor significantly alters the predicted employment hours for both genders, but to different degrees and at times with opposite effects.

The regression results support the importance of human capital to employment decisions. Controlling for other characteristics, low educational attainment significantly reduces both genders' employment hours, but the effect is twice as large for women. A university degree similarly predicts men or women will spend more hours in employment, but the effect is slightly more pronounced among men. These results support gender differences in the impact of educational human capital on employment, even after controlling for other characteristics likely to alter each gender's employment hours.

Controlling for educational attainment, immigrant men and women are both predicted to work slightly fewer hours than non-immigrants. The hour penalty is again larger for women. Given the educational performance differences discussed in Chapter 4, however, part of the immigrant employment penalty could stem from language difficulties. The LIS data contain no measures suitable for exploring the effect of language on immigrants' employment, however, or

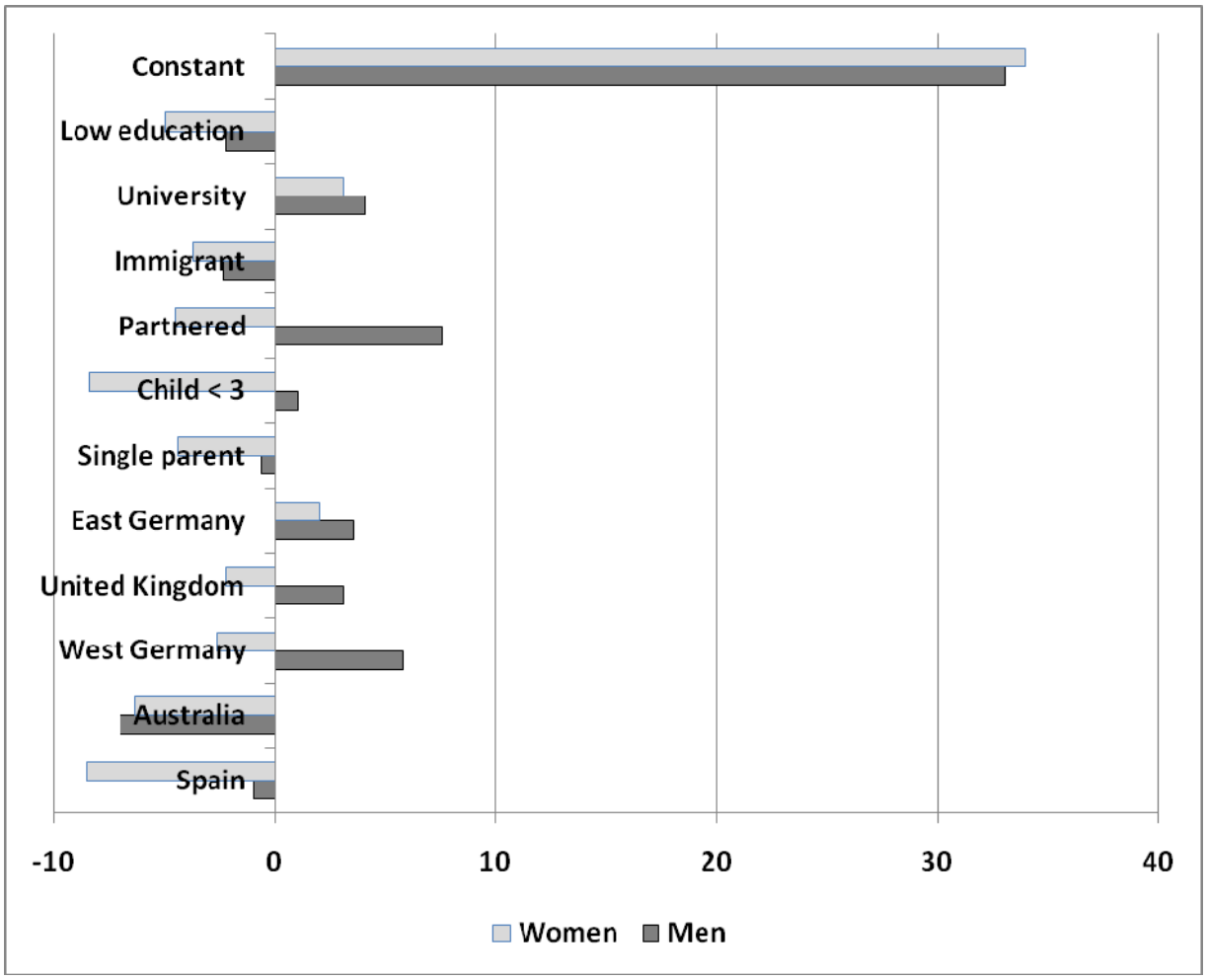
instead the degree to which the lower hours reflect immigrants' restricted access to employment.

Most family-related characteristics have opposite effects on men and women. Being partnered predicts men will work more hours, whereas partnered women work slightly fewer hours. The magnitude of the partnership effect on women's employment hours is modest. This suggests entering a coresidential relationship no longer heralds women's automatic exit from employment. The partnership effect for men is substantively much larger, and predicts the largest effect on men's employment among the characteristics included. The historical importance of men's breadwinning role suggests the most economically successful men are more likely to be an attractive partner (Breen and Cooke 2005). The significance of the effect here likely reflects, at least in part, the selection bias favoring the most economically-active men in the marriage market.[7]

Also reminiscent of a male breadwinner model is that women remain far more likely to reduce their employment hours when young children are present in the home. Controlling for all other factors, having a child younger than 3 predicts almost an 8-hour decrease in women's weekly employment hours. This is the largest single effect on women's employment hours. Young children, however, have only a minor, positive effect on men's employment hours. For the recent cohort of young people, therefore, a gendered division of paid labor persists. Partnered men work significantly more hours, whereas women work significantly fewer following the birth of a child.

[7] The alternate explanation is less intuitively appealing: that entering into a partnership "causes" men to work more hours. Longitudinal analyses are needed to differentiate between the two possible explanations, which generally support that employed men are more likely to partner, as is increasingly the case as well for young women (Blossfeld et al. 2005; Moffitt 2000).

Figure 6.4 **Factors affecting weekly employment hours, men and women age 20 to 54, circa 2000**



Source: Displayed are the statistically significant coefficients from ordinary least squares regressions predicting weekly employment hours of men (n=57,046) and women (n=61,255) age 20 to 54. The United States is the country referent group. Data are from the Luxembourg Income Study data: 1999 for the United Kingdom, 2000 for the United States, Germany and Spain, and 2001 for Australia.

Combining the effects of partnership of men and childbearing on women indicates that partnered women with small children spend half as many hours in employment as their partners. Extrapolating these effects, one might argue we have on average advanced only

halfway to gender employment equality. The employment experience lost during labor market exits for childbearing is not readily recaptured later (Aisenbrey, Evertsson and Grunow forthcoming), just as men do not lose the advantage of the additional experience accrued early in their careers.

The difficulties in balancing children and the market are evident in the significance of the single parent effect. When either gender is a single parent, they are predicted to spend fewer hours in the labor market. The effect is much larger for single mothers, but significant as well for fathers. This is an incremental effect of single parenthood, after controlling for education and having a very young child. These various family effects highlight the importance of care responsibilities, not necessarily gender per se, in shaping labor market participation.

After controlling for these individual characteristics, the country indicators are all significant. As compared with U.S. individuals, East German men and women work slightly more hours, and the gender difference between them is negligible. These results support that the greatest degree of gender equality in employment participation is found among East German and U.S. individuals. The socialist policies pushed individuals into employment, whereas unregulated labor markets within a minimalist welfare state pull individuals in. Australia also achieved a degree of relative equality and perhaps quality of life, with both genders predicted to work fewer hours as compared with their U.S. counterparts. Shorter average work hours are one advantage won by the labor movement, an advantage likely to wane as the Australian labor market continues to liberalize.

In contrast, West German men on average work significantly more hours as compared with their U.S. or other country counterparts, whereas West German women work fewer. This

reflects the ideal-typical male breadwinner model. Controlling for individual characteristics, British women also work fewer weekly hours, but British men do not work appreciably more than U.S. men. Spanish women spend the fewest hours in paid work, although Spanish men's average weekly work hours are also slightly less than in the United States. The latter two country effects reflect the less tenable version of a male breadwinner model found in Spain and the United Kingdom.

Employment hours, like education, represent an individual investment in human capital. Within an economic model, the reason for investing is to extract better wages. An important measure of equality, therefore, is not just the relative hours we spend toiling in the labor market, but what it gives us in return.

6.4 Relative gender returns to paid work

As noted in Chapter 4, educational expansion increasingly benefits women as they now pursue additional years of study with greater enthusiasm than men. As shown in the last section, more educated women spend significantly more time in employment. Less-educated women spend fewer hours in employment, but increasingly so do less-educated men. Based on a human capital model, these trends suggest the gender earnings gap should be narrowing. Table 6.2 displays earnings data calculated from the Luxembourg Income Study revealing the degree of relative earnings equality in each of the countries, across women and across men (within-group equality), as well as between men and women. The comparisons are based on average hourly wages of employed individuals age 20 to 54, converted into their U.S. dollar equivalents as of January 2000. Average hourly wages of both men and women are highest in the United States,

and lowest in Spain. West German men and women also have relatively high wages, with East German wages more similar to Spain's than the other *Länder*. Average wages among Australian and British men lie between the two extremes, whereas British women's wages are similar to East German women's.

A simple test of relative gender earnings equality is to calculate the ratio of women's-to-men's hourly wage rate, displayed in the third row of Table 6.2. A ratio of 1.00 represents perfect equality, whereas a ratio less than 1.00 indicates gender inequality favoring men and a ratio greater than 1.00 indicates gender inequality favoring women. The economic plight of working British women is evident in that they have the lowest ratio among the countries, with British women's average hourly earnings just 75 percent of men's. Relative to men, U.S. women do not fare too much better than their British counterparts. In contrast, those few Spanish and West German women who are employed do not suffer too great a gender wage penalty. Australia's comparable worth policies appear to have had a lasting effect, as employed Australian women on average earn comparable wages to employed men. In East Germany, women on average earn more than men.

These relative positions suggest that on average, between-group earnings equality is greater where class equality is greater (Blau and Kahn 2003). The exclusionary policies within coordinated markets that support greater class equality among men perpetuate gender inequality through the restrictions on women's access to employment rather through a gender wage gap for those few women who are employed. As a greater proportion of women enter employment in the male breadwinner coordinated markets, however, between-group inequality would be expected to increase.

Table 6.2 Mean hourly wages and 90/10 ratio, employed men and women circa 2000

	Australia	United Kingdom	United States	East Germany	West Germany	Spain
Men average	$ 13.17	15.14	18.82	10.90	16.00	7.74
Women average	$ 13.10	11.42	14.83	11.58	13.83	6.91
Between-group:						
Women/Men	.99	.75	.79	1.06	.86	.89
Within-group:						
Men 90/10	2.8	3.6	5.2	4.3	4.3	3.6
Women 90/10	2.6	3.4	4.8	4.4	4.9	4.6

Source: Author calculations of hourly wages (U.S.$ Jan 2000 equivalents) by gender for individuals 20 to 54 earning more than zero. Luxembourg Income Study data, 1999 for the United Kingdom, 2000 for the United States, Germany and Spain, and 2001 for Australia. 90/10 is the ratio in the hourly wage of those earning in the 90^{th} percentile to the hourly wage of those earning in the 10^{th} percentile.

The genders differ in the degree of class inequality each face in their labor markets. One simple measure of class earnings inequality is the 90/10 ratio. The 90/10 ratio reflects the average hourly wage of those at the top end of the earnings distribution (90^{th} percentile) as compared with the average hourly wage of those at the bottom (10^{th} percentile). The larger the ratio, the greater the class inequality within each group. The 90/10 ratio is displayed separately for women and men in the last two rows of Table 6.2.

As would be expected, the greatest class inequality among men is found in the unregulated U.S. labor market. U.S. men at the top earn more than five times the wages of men at the bottom. Class inequality among U.S. women is also very high, but not quite as high as among West German women. Class inequality is also very high among Spanish women, particularly as compared with the moderate level of earnings inequality among Spanish men.

UK earnings inequality is more moderate as well, for both women and men. The greatest degree of class equality among women as well as men is found in Australia. The gender difference in class inequality is minimal in East Germany, but within the context of fairly high inequality as is also the case in West Germany.

The degree of class inequality in Germany is higher than would be expected with market coordination. The 90/10 ratio, however, obscures the underlying structure of inequality. An identical ratio could result from extremely high top-end earnings as compared with moderate low-end earnings, or moderate top-end earnings as compared with extremely low bottom-end earnings. In other words, are the less skilled in Germany now doing particularly badly, or are the highly skilled doing particularly well?

More insight into which scenario dominates in each of the countries is gained when comparing women's and men's wages along the earnings distribution, as displayed in Figure 6.5.[8] The top figure displays relative gender wage equality among the three English-speaking countries, whereas the bottom figure plots it for the two German regions and Spain. Perfect wage equality occurs when the female-male log hourly wage gap equals zero, the heavy black bar in the middle of each figure. Points above the line indicate women's relative earnings advantage over men, whereas points below the line indicate the degree of men's earnings advantage over women. These plots reveal substantial variation along the earnings distribution in relative gender equality.

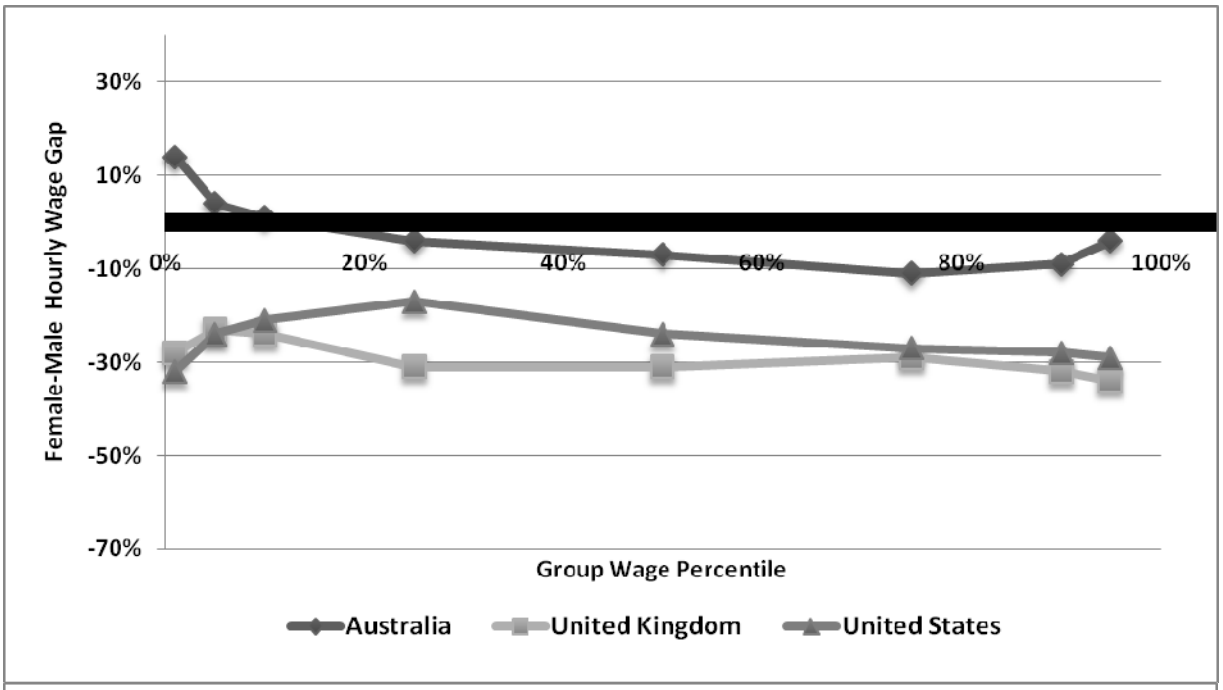
[8] To smooth out effects of extremes, minimum wages are set to an equivalent of $1 per hour and are top-coded at the 99th percentile, and then the natural log is taken to facilitate simple comparisons. The imposed minimum excludes a very small number of employed individuals, less than one-half of 1% for each gender in the countries.

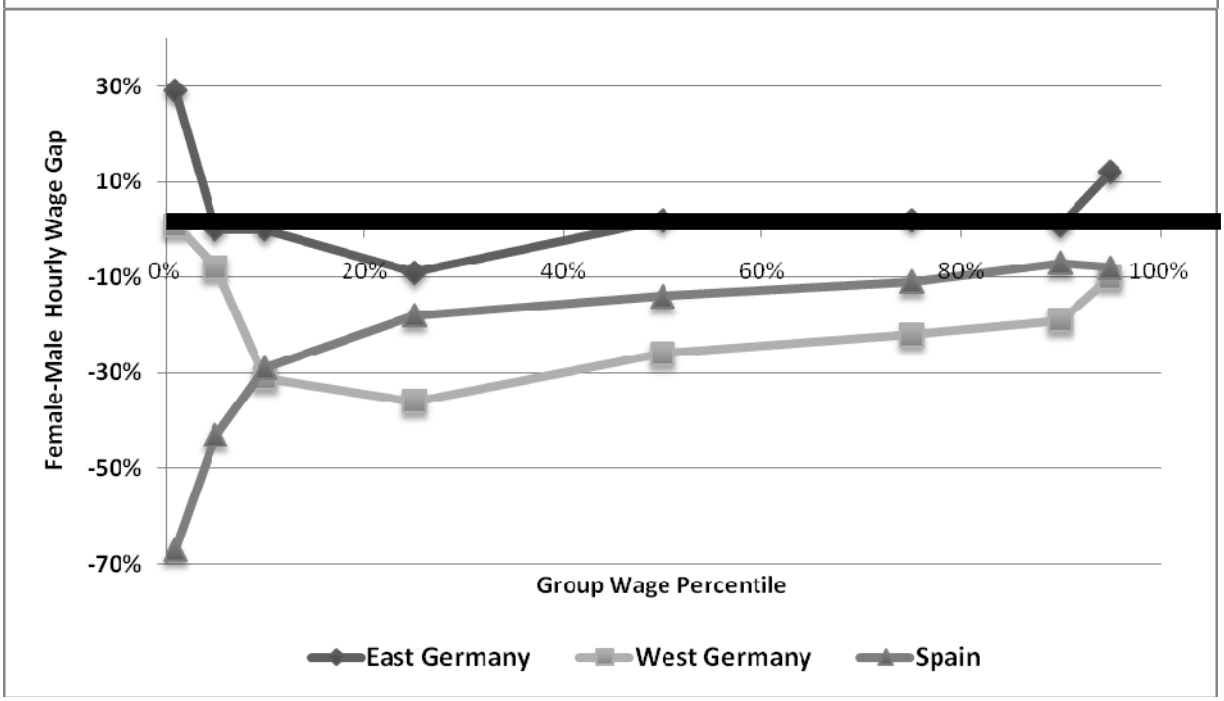
Gender earnings inequality is greatest across the entire distribution in the unregulated British and U.S. labor markets. Gender inequality is greatest in the United Kingdom, but to a more or less consistent degree across the earnings distribution. In contrast, U.S. gender earnings inequality is greater at the very bottom of the distribution, narrows across the lower fifth of the earnings distribution, and then increases again for the remainder. In relative terms, the most highly-skilled U.S. women face a larger gender pay gap than lesser-skilled U.S. women.

The Australian trend is similar to the United States, except that the least-skilled Australian women earn more on average than the least-skilled men. The Australian gender gap widens as earnings increase, but the Australian gender differential at the top end is less than 10 percent as compared with more than 30 percent among top-earning U.S. women. The Australian pattern is similar to that reported for Scandinavian countries, wherein the least-skilled women benefit from the wage compression policies, but at a cost of greater inequality among the most-skilled women and men (Mandel and Semyonov 2005).

The continental European countries display another pattern, similar to one another but differing from that in the English-speaking countries. As in Australian, the least-skilled East German women fare better than men. East German women at higher wages do better than their Australian counterparts vis-à-vis the men. Above the 50^{th} percentile, East German women's wages on average are slightly greater than men's. The same upward drift indicative of a narrowing gender wage differential is apparent in the West German and Spanish labor markets as well, but within a context of a larger gap overall. The gender gap at the low-end of

Figure 6.5 Female-male hourly wage gaps across the earnings distribution, circa 2000





Source: Author calculations of the difference between female and male log of hourly earnings at within-group percentiles using unweighted data from wave 5.2 of the Luxembourg Income Study (1999 for United Kingdom, 2000 for Germany, Spain and United States; 2001 for Australia), selecting all employed persons age 20 to 54, 2000 U.S. dollar equivalent, minimum wages of U.S.$1 per hour.

the earnings distribution is most acute in Spain, highlighting the marginal nature of employment for the least-skilled Spanish women. Above the 10th percentile, however, the Spanish gender wage gap narrows quickly, to half that in West Germany.

The West German gender wage gap along most of the bottom half of the earnings distribution is larger than that found among similar British or U.S. workers. As in East Germany, however, the gap narrows steadily as earnings increase. At the higher end, however, West German women still encounter a wage gap whereas East German women enjoy a wage premium. These comparisons highlight that class victories per se do not equate with greater between-group equality. What matters is the structure of any insider-outsider cleavages underlying the class victory.

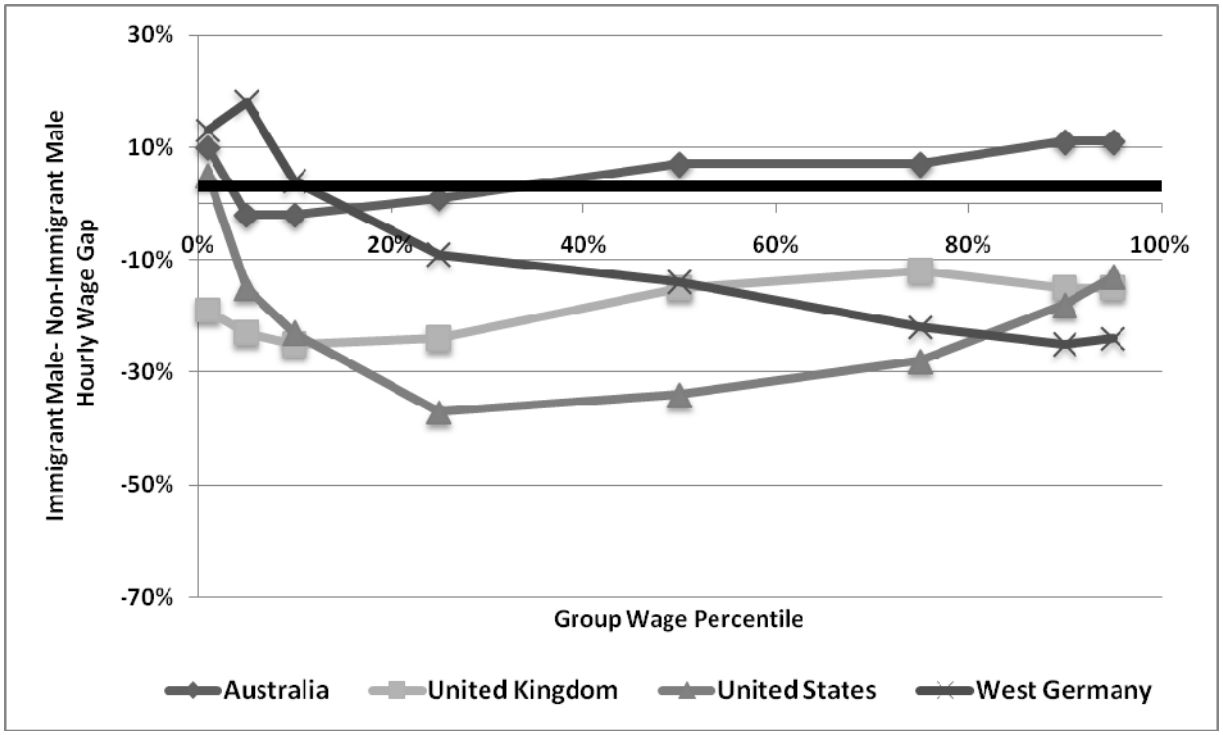
6.5 Other group cleavages

An additional layer of complexity in the structure of inequality is revealed when comparing other group wage differentials. The LIS data had too few immigrants in the East German and Spanish datasets, limiting the immigrant comparisons to Australia, West Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Figure 6.6 displays the hourly wage differential when comparing immigrant to non-immigrant men. The immigrant wage gap is smallest in Australia, as was the gender gap among the countries in Figure 6.6. At the same time, the pattern across the earnings distribution is the opposite of that found for gender. Above the 30th percentile, Australian male immigrants on average earn more than their native counterparts, whereas at about the same point in the distribution, Australian women begin to earn less than men.

In West Germany and the United Kingdom, male immigrant wage equality is greater than gender wage equality. The UK immigrant wage gap at the low end of the earnings distribution is similar to the gender gap. The immigrant gap decreases as earnings increase, however, whereas the gender gap remained fairly constant across the earnings distribution. In the upper half of the earnings distribution, the UK immigrant wage gap narrows to less than half the gender gap. The opposite dynamics occur in West Germany. Although the West German immigrant gap is narrower than the gender gap across most of the earnings distribution, the immigrant gap increases as hourly wages increase whereas the gender gap narrowed. These patterns highlight the relative importance of nationality in defining the most privileged West German worker.

The male immigrant wage gap is greatest in the United States. For most of the earnings distribution, the U.S. immigrant male wage gap is larger than the gender wage gap displayed in Figure 6.5. This might in part reflect the depth of U.S. racial divides in the labor market as compared with gendered ones (Mink 1986). Yet as in Australia, the pattern across the distribution differs. The U.S. immigrant wage gap decreases as earnings increase, whereas the U.S. gender gap increased. Consequently, the most skilled immigrants do not face as great an earnings gap as the most skilled women in the U.S. labor market.

Figure 6.6 Immigrant / non-immigrant male hourly wage gap across the earnings distribution, circa 2000

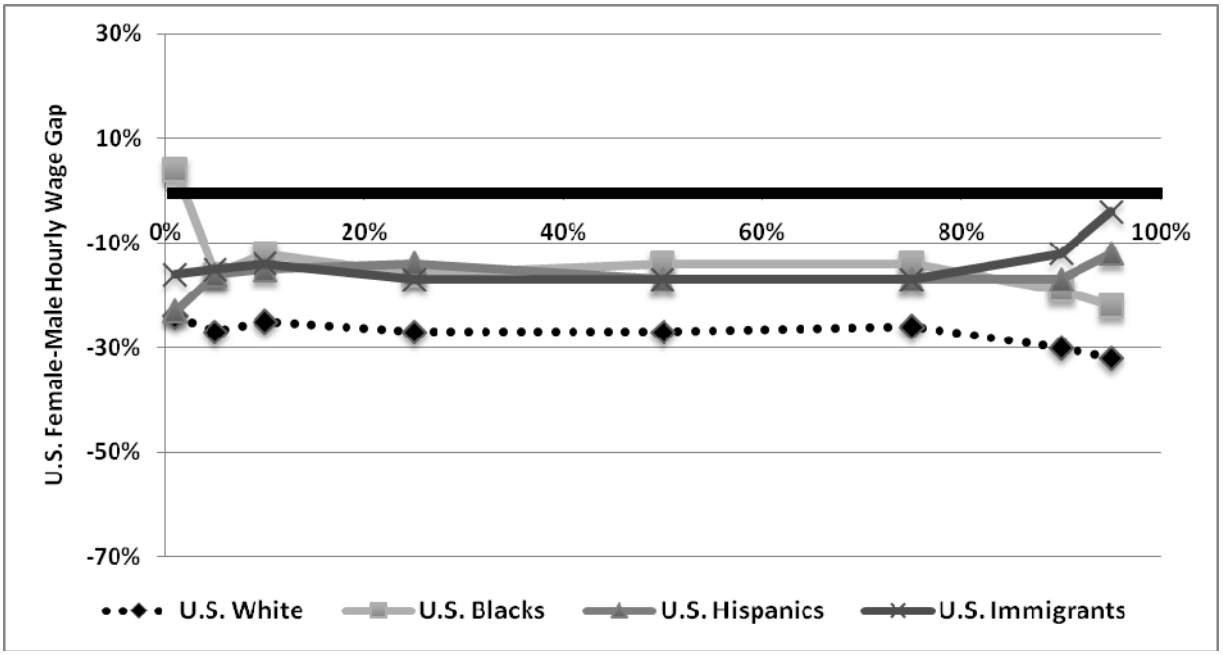


Source: Author calculations of group differences between log of hourly earnings at within-group percentile using unweighted data from wave 5.2 of the Luxembourg Income Study (1999 for United Kingdom, 2000 for Germany, Spain and United States; 2001 for Australia), all employed persons age 20 to 54 not still in school. 2000 U.S. dollar equivalent, minimum wages of U.S.$1 per hour. Immigrants are defined as someone not born in Australia; for any foreigner in Germany born abroad; Caribbean, African, or other Black, Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Chinese, or other in the United Kingdom; foreign born, whether naturalized or not, in the United States.

When comparing the gender gap among different U.S. ethnic groups (Figure 6.7), it is clear that the greatest degree of U.S. gender inequality is among Caucasians. A gender gap is evident across ethnic groups, but the size of the gender earnings gap for Black, Hispanic, and immigrant workers is about half that of White workers. In the U.S. market, gender inequality appears to trump racial inequality, at least among those who are in employment. Additional

analyses of the gender wage gap within immigrant groups in the other countries (not shown) revealed a similar scenario in the United Kingdom. Gender wage equality across the earnings distribution is greater among employed UK immigrants than for the workforce as a whole, although many immigrant women in the United Kingdom are not in the labor force (Dale, Lindley and Dex 2006). Only in West Germany was the gender gap among immigrants larger than for the workforce as a whole.

Figure 6.7 U.S. gender wage equality by ethnic group, 2000



Source: Author calculations of U.S. gender differences in log of hourly earnings for different ethnic groups at within-group percentile using unweighted data from wave 5.2 of the Luxembourg Income Study (2000), all employed persons age 20 to 54 not still in school. 2000 U.S. dollar equivalent, minimum wages of U.S.$1 per hour.

One issue confounding immigrant comparisons, as noted in Chapter 4, is that "immigrant" is not a homogeneous group in any of the countries. Different immigrant groups within each country have diverse levels of education, which affect wages. To assess the impact of each characteristic controlling for the effects of the others, the LIS country datasets are pooled to regress employed women's and men's log of hourly wages on the individual and country factors. Significant effects are displayed in Figure 6.8, with the United States again the country referent.

The constant term is not displayed in the graph, but taking its antilog reveals the average hourly wage for a 20-year-old U.S. single non-immigrant woman with upper secondary education and no children is slightly greater than that of a similar young man: $7.69 for women as compared with $7.10 for men. Thus the average young woman in the United States commences her employment career with a slight advantage over young men. Each additional year of experience, captured by the age variable,[9] predicts a slight increase in the hourly wage. The effect is identical for the genders, as would be expected within a human capital model.

Also in keeping with a human capital model, failing to complete upper secondary extracts a sizeable penalty for both men and women. Yet the low-education penalty for women is greater than the penalty for men. In contrast, a university degree predicts a significantly higher hourly wage for both genders, with women gaining a slightly greater premium as compared with men. Recall university education also predicted women's greater work hours. As more young women attain higher levels of education, these combined effects on women's

[9] Among the age group sampled (20 to 54), the age-squared term often included when predicting wages was not significant.

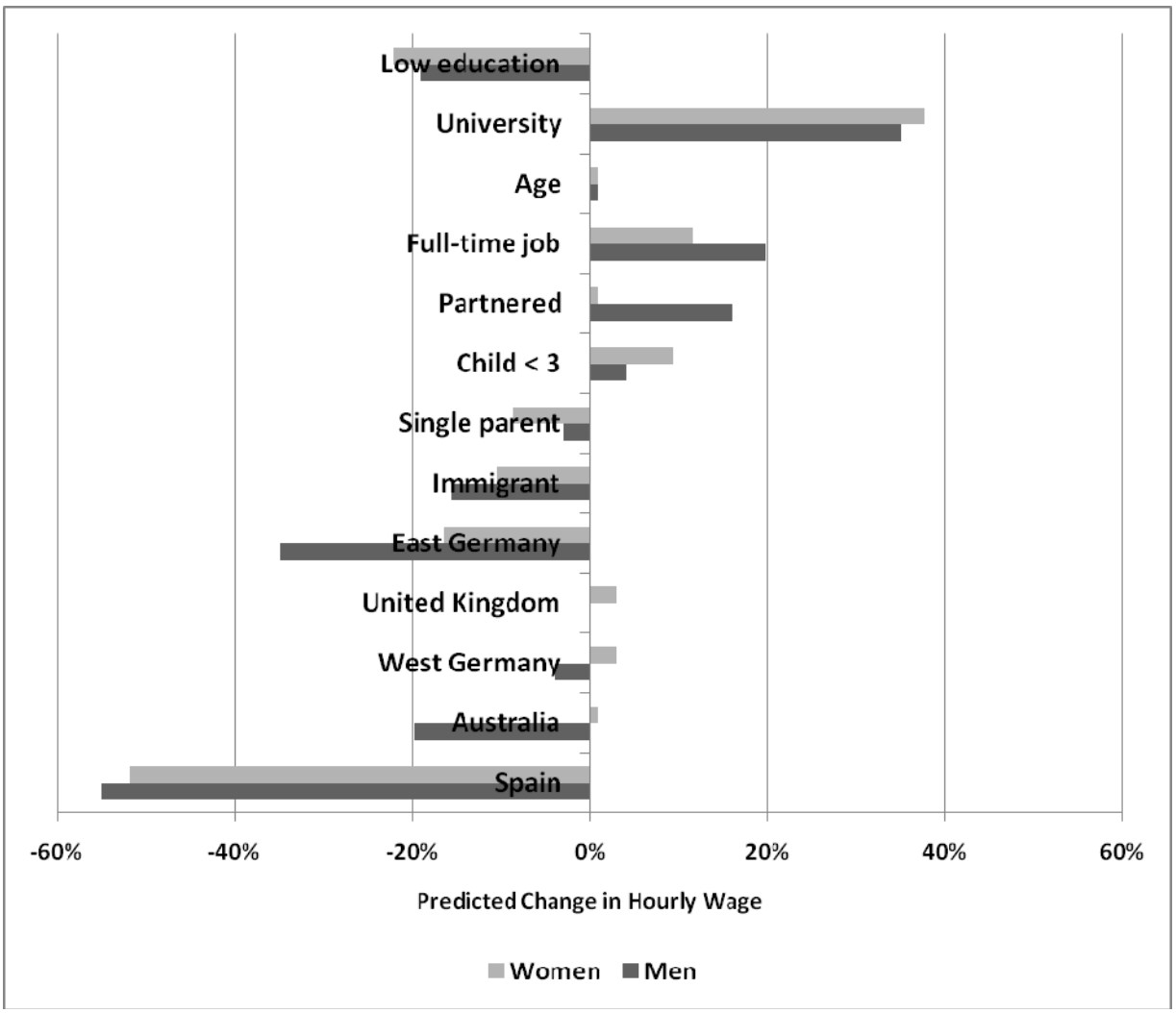
employment bode well for the trajectory of future employment equality, everything else being equal.

Effects of the other characteristics, however, suggest everything else is not equal. Working full-time accrues human capital more quickly, but the wage returns for full-time employment are appreciably greater for men than women. Partnered men are predicted to have a sizeable wage premium, which could in part reflect their significantly greater weekly work hours revealed in the earlier analysis. As in that analysis, the effect also embeds any selection bias in the marriage market towards economically successful men. Notice as well, however, that partnered women also have a significant, albeit slight, wage premium. This supports Valerie Oppenheimer's (1988, 1997) argument that in today's more uncertain labor markets, employment is an increasingly desirable female attribute in the marriage market.
When controlling for single parents, having a young child predicts a rather large wage premium for employed (partnered) mothers, and a somewhat smaller premium for (partnered) fathers.

This, too, reflects some selection bias. As was apparent in Figure 6.2, most mothers with small children are not in employment in any of the countries. Those who are might have better jobs that afford them good-quality private care. Single parents, in contrast, have less option to remain out of the labor market, particularly under the labor activation policies targeting single parents that have expanded since the 1990s.[10] Single mothers as well as fathers encounter a

[10] Labor activation policies place more conditions on receiving state benefits, or reduce benefit amounts and duration (Serrano Pascual 2004; Standing 1999). Labor activation policies also target groups more likely to receive state benefits, such as single mothers (Taylor-Gooby 2004). Australia, Germany, and the United Kingdom introduced new employment incentives for single mothers, akin to those found in the U.S. Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program (Baker 2001; Henninger, Wimbauer and Dombrowski 2008; Paz-Fuchs 2008).

Figure 6.8 Factors affecting hourly wages, employed women and men 20 to 54, circa 2000



Source: Displayed are (100*(1-exp^{b})) computed for statistically significant coefficients when regressing log of hourly wages on each characteristic on pooled unweighted data from wave 5.2 of the Luxembourg Income Study (1999 for United Kingdom, 2000 for Germany, Spain and United States; 2001 for Australia), employed women (n=38,894) and men (n=42,321) age 20 to 54. 2000 U.S. dollar equivalent, minimum wages of U.S.$1 per hour. Immigrants are defined as someone not born in Australia; for any foreigner in Germany born abroad; Caribbean, African, or other Black, Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Chinese, or other in the United Kingdom; foreign born, whether naturalized or not, in the United States. Single parent is someone without a partner with a child under the age of 17. Antilogarithm of constant equates to US$7.10 for men; US$7.69 for women.

wage penalty, although it is greater among single mothers who comprise the vast majority of single parents (Millar and Rowlingson 2001). The relatively small magnitude of the penalty indicates that modern families somehow manage to juggle care and work demands with varying support for doing so. This suggests policy has great potential to close the gap entirely.

Immigrant women and men encounter a wage penalty after controlling for education and family characteristics. This suggests the immigrant wage gap along the earnings distribution displayed in Figure 6.6 does not derive from differences in educational attainment, although language differences might still play a role. The immigrant wage penalty is greater for men, but then these are within-group comparisons. Immigrant men's wages are compared with the wages of non-immigrant men. The smaller pay penalty experienced by immigrant women could simply reflect non-immigrant women's slightly lower average wages as compared with non-immigrant men. This possibility is further supported by the smaller gender wage gap among immigrants noted above (Figure 6.7). The smaller penalty might also reflect some unmeasured characteristic of women who migrate as workers to a new country. Many women who migrate as wives do not or cannot enter employment.

Country effects capture the contextual differences in each gender's national wage rates evident in Table 6.2, after controlling for any differences in individual educational attainment and family. The two countries with the highest unemployment rates have the greatest wage penalty relative to the United States: Spain and East Germany. Spanish workers have the lowest hourly wages, with Spanish men's somewhat lower relative to U.S. men's than Spanish women's are relative to U.S. women's. East German men also fare poorly as compared with East German women. This suggests the East German gender wage gap favoring women does not derive from

exceptional wages among women as much as relatively poor wages among men. Yet it might also reflect a selection bias noted by Rosenfeld and her colleagues (2004), that the least-skilled East German women are now less likely to be in the labor market.

Australian and West German men's wages are also predicted to be less than U.S. men's wages, as was suggested by the wage averages listed in Table 6.2. In these two countries as well as the United Kingdom, employed women have a slight wage advantage as compared with U.S. women after controlling for individual characteristics. This included a control for full-time employment, an option overwhelmingly chosen among employed U.S. women. Consequently, the country effects capture that part-time wages in Australia, West Germany, and the United Kingdom are not as poor, relatively speaking, as those in the United States. McGinnity and McManus (2007) using other data found U.S. women working part-time extracted a particularly large wage penalty as compared with women working part-time in Germany or the United Kingdom. At the same time, however, the effects also contain the selection bias as to which Australian, British, and West German women might be employed. When fewer women are in employment, the wages of those who are tend to be higher than in countries with higher female labor force participation rates (Blau and Kahn 2003). In other words, some women enjoy greater earnings equality, but in the context of more women remaining reliant on a male breadwinner or the state for financial security.

6.6 The employment branch, not the equality tree

These contrasts in who is likely to be in employment and its relative returns highlight how the intersection of our group memberships predicts individual economic resources. The class

dynamics that have dominated analyses of policy effects on group equality do not fully capture the diversity in the country equality profiles. Factors of human capital predict relative employment hours and wages, but group membership varies access to and returns from human capital investment. In sum, relative employment equality reflects individual attributes nested in our group memberships nested in the socioeconomic context. As illustrated here, these all vary across these countries, whereas Leslie McCall (2001) highlighted that they vary within a country as well.

Looking at differences in employment, however, assesses the outcomes rather than the processes shaping relative gender equality. As noted in Chapter 2, the majority of adults live with a partner. Couple households must decide how each partner allocates their time not just to employment, but to the unpaid work of the private sphere. This includes not only the more mundane tasks of daily living such as cleaning and cooking, but also the important task of reproducing and raising the next generation. Many argue the incompatibility between home and market in industrial societies sustains gender inequality in both spheres (Ferree 1990; Hartmann 1981). We next explore how the country context affects household time allocations to unpaid as well as paid work.

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