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## Shift to optional familism in Germany: (temporarily) diverging work-care arrangements of families?

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## German family policy up to 2005: „supported familialism“

*“(De)familisation“: policies which impact the degree of (in)dependence of individuals on family relationships (Lohmann & Zagel 2015)*

- Joint taxation of couples (“Ehegattensplitting”)
- 3-year parental leave & means-tested childrearing benefit for up to 2 years (€ 300)
- Entitlement to half-day ECEC place from 3 years but low level of availability of public childcare for under-3s
- Mostly income-dependent and low parental fees for ECEC services
- Low maternal labour market participation and frequent part-time work



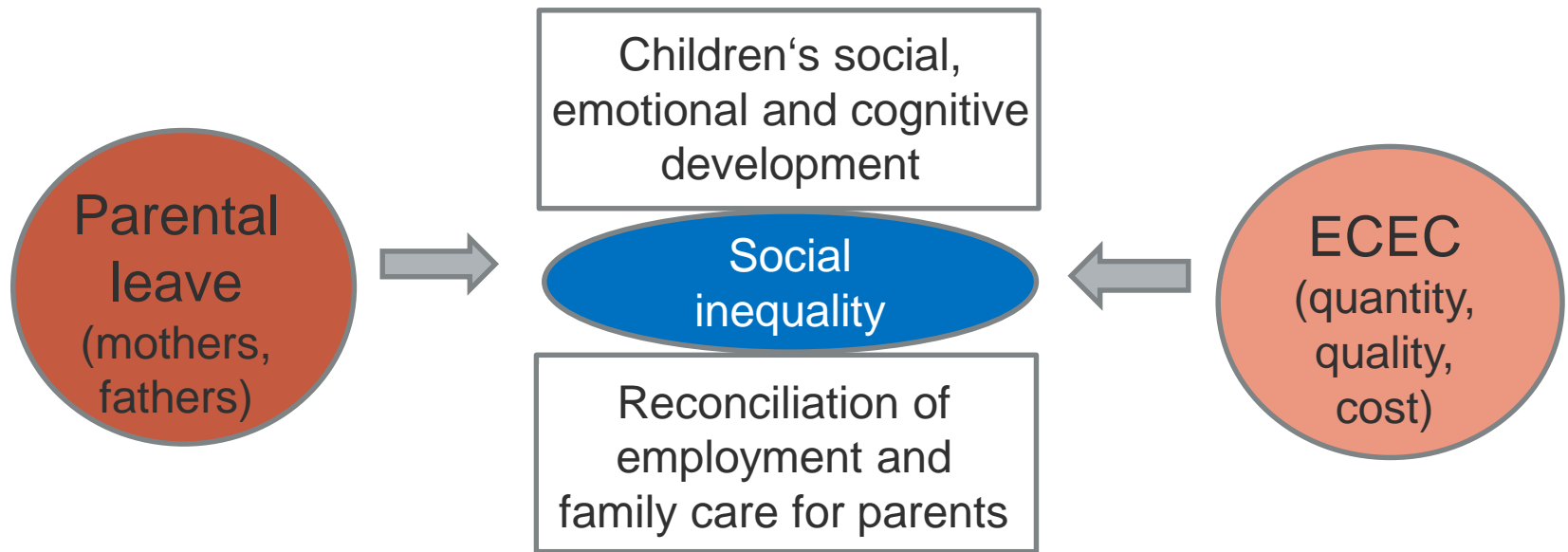
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## Paradigm shift to „optional familialism“

- 2005: provision of ECEC for under-3-year-olds if parents employed
- 2008: ECEC entitlement from age 1 starting from 08/2013
- Need-based expansion of full-day care from age 3
- 2007: reduction of paid leave to 12 months, income-dependent reimbursement, and individual entitlement for both parents
  
- **Objectives:**
- Improving work-family reconciliation
- faster maternal labour market return and greater family involvement of fathers
- Promoting early child development irrespective of social background



## Parental leave and ECEC reforms: increasing social inequality among parents and children?



Only temporary or long-term social divergence in work-care arrangements?



# Accommodation model of parental work-care choices

(adapted from Chaudry et al., 2010; Meyers and Jordan, 2006)

## Assumptions:

Parents aim to maximize their utility in terms of work-care balance and aim to invest in their children's development

Parents face **time and budget constraints**, i.e. varying opportunity costs of staying home and foregoing career progression

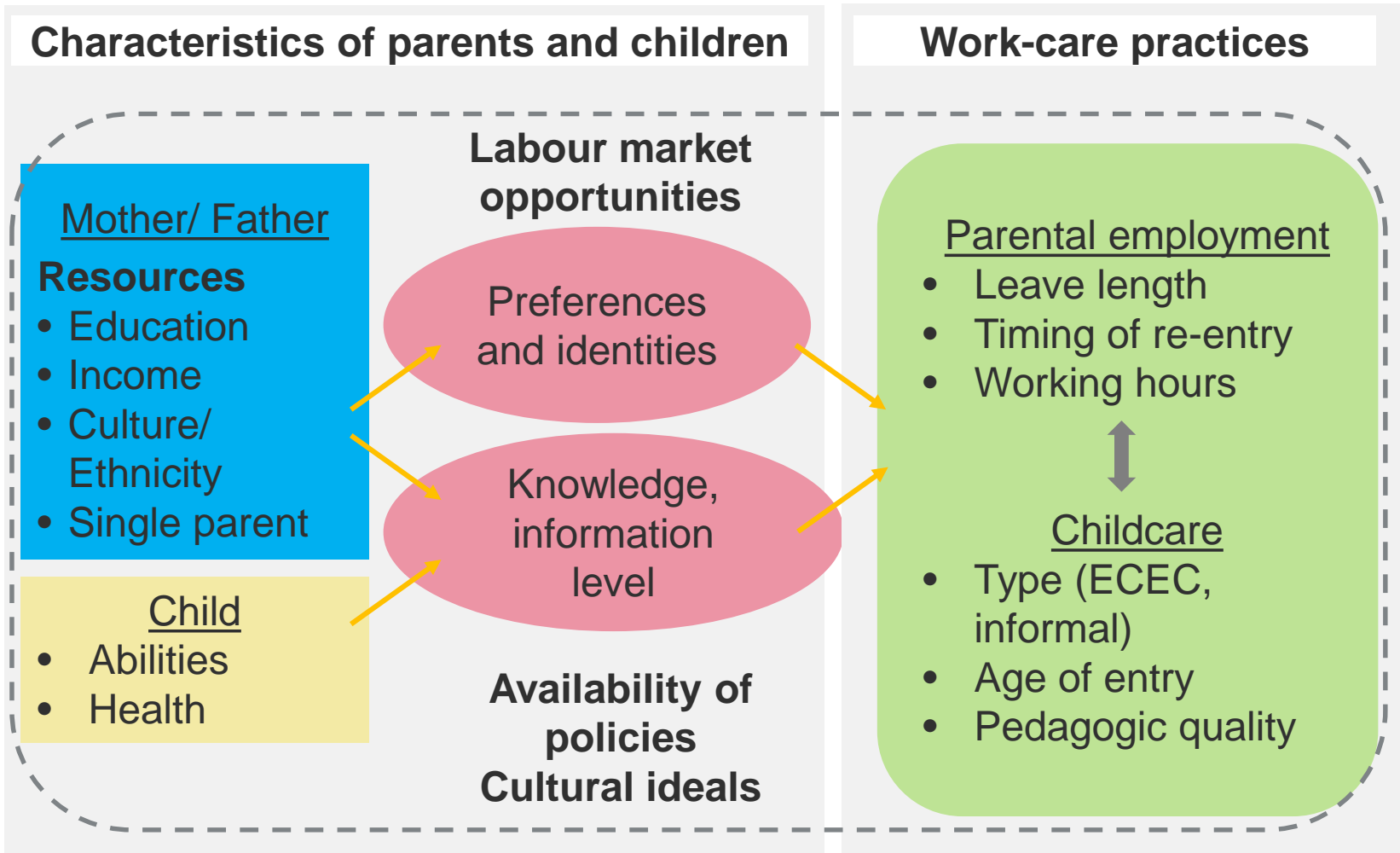
Parents **adapt preferences** based on context-specific family policies and easily accessible information

Information is imperfect, shaped by social networks

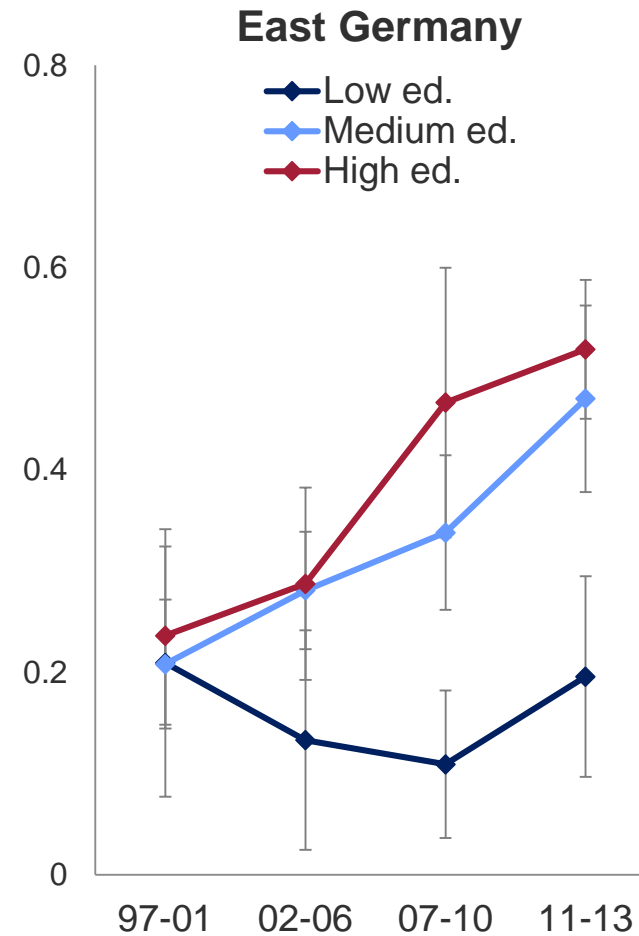
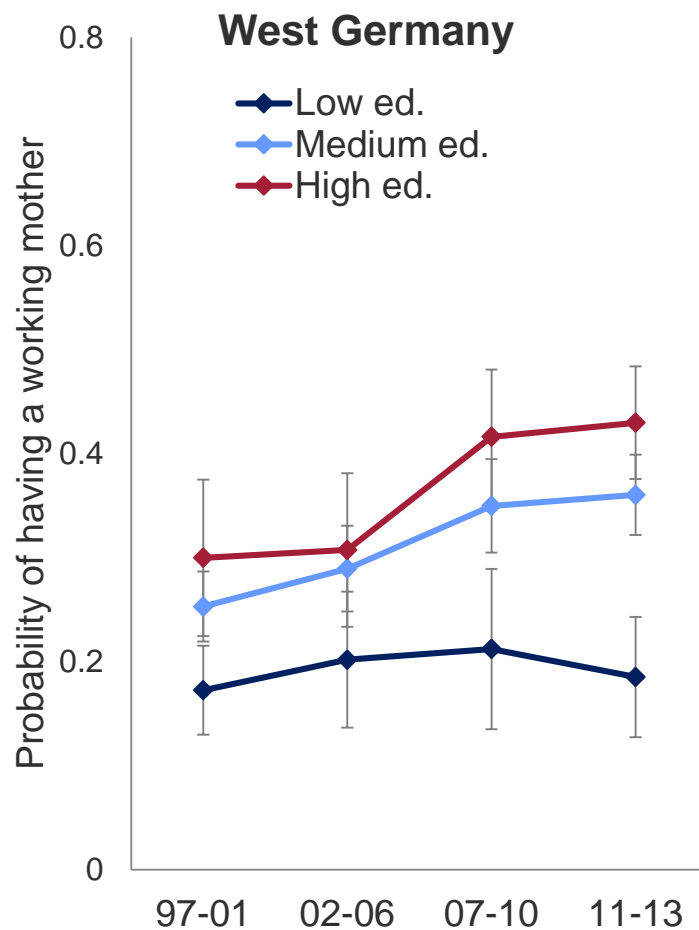
**Information, networks, preferences stratified** by location, education, race/ethnicity, and other socio-demographic characteristics



# Accommodation model of parental work-care choices



## Employment trends of mothers with children 0-2 years by educational qualifications







## Parental leave reform 2007: inequality among mothers decreased in short term but increased in medium term

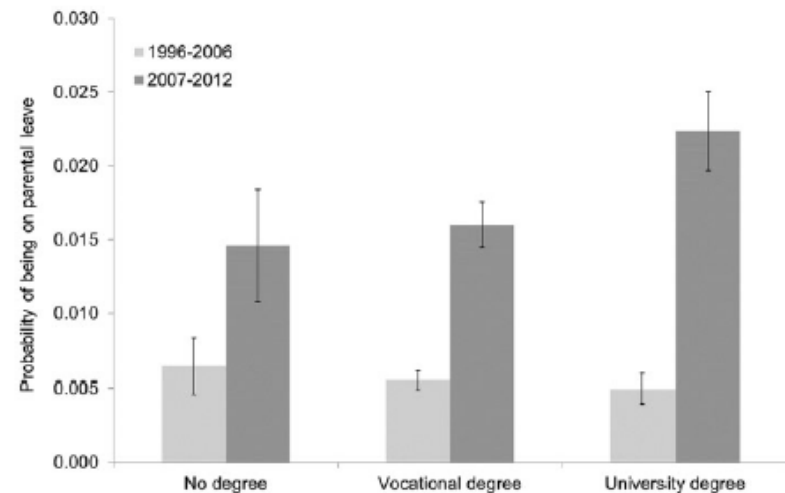
- Increasing take-up of leave during 1st year after birth for higher educated (Wrohlich et al. 2012)
- Reduction in take-up during 2nd and 3rd year stronger for less educated mothers (Geyer et al., 2015; Bergemann and Riphahn, 2011)
- 3-5 years after birth: stronger positive effects on part-time employment of mothers with medium or higher education and income levels (Kluve & Schmitz, 2014)
- Greater probability of returning to same employer and holding permanent contracts (Kluve & Schmitz, 2014)





## Parental leave reform 2007 -> increasing social inequality in take-up by fathers

- Slowly increasing take-up of parental leave by fathers from 3% in 2007 to 21% in 2008 to 42% in 2018 (Federal Statistical Office, 2021)
- Large majority takes only 2 months (Trappe, 2013), mainly due to mothers' preferences and fathers' fears of career penalties (Bernhardt et al. 2016)
- Social divergence in fathers' take-up (Geisler & Kreyenfeld, 2018; Wrohlich et al. 2012)
- Fathers' childcare involvement increased (e.g. Bünning, 2015; Schober, 2014)



Source: Geisler & Kreyenfeld, 2018.



## Parental leave reform 2007: effects on parental subjective wellbeing and child development

- Strong positive effects on parental subjective wellbeing across socio-economic groups, especially for mothers (Myrskylä & Margolis, 2013)
- Well-identified null effects on 5-year-old children's cognitive, socio-emotional and motor development based on register data from one German state (Huebner et al. 2017)
- Null effect across all subgroups by mothers' and fathers' education (Huebner et al. 2017)
- Unclear whether subsequent increases in father involvement may positively impact child development (e.g. Cools et al., 2015; Cano et al., 2018)





## ECEC expansion: increasing social inequalities in maternal employment in West but not in East Germany

- Associated with increased part-time employment in West Germany, especially for higher-educated mothers (Zoch, 2020)
- Increases of full-time employment only among medium and highly-skilled mothers in West Germany (Zoch, 2020)
- Largely non-significant effects across SES groups in East Germany (Zoch, 2020), possibly due to poorer job prospects and lower ECEC quality (Schober & Spiess, 2015; Stahl & Schober, 2020)
- ECEC take-up benefits integration of refugee mothers in terms of language skills and employment (Gambaro et al. 2019)

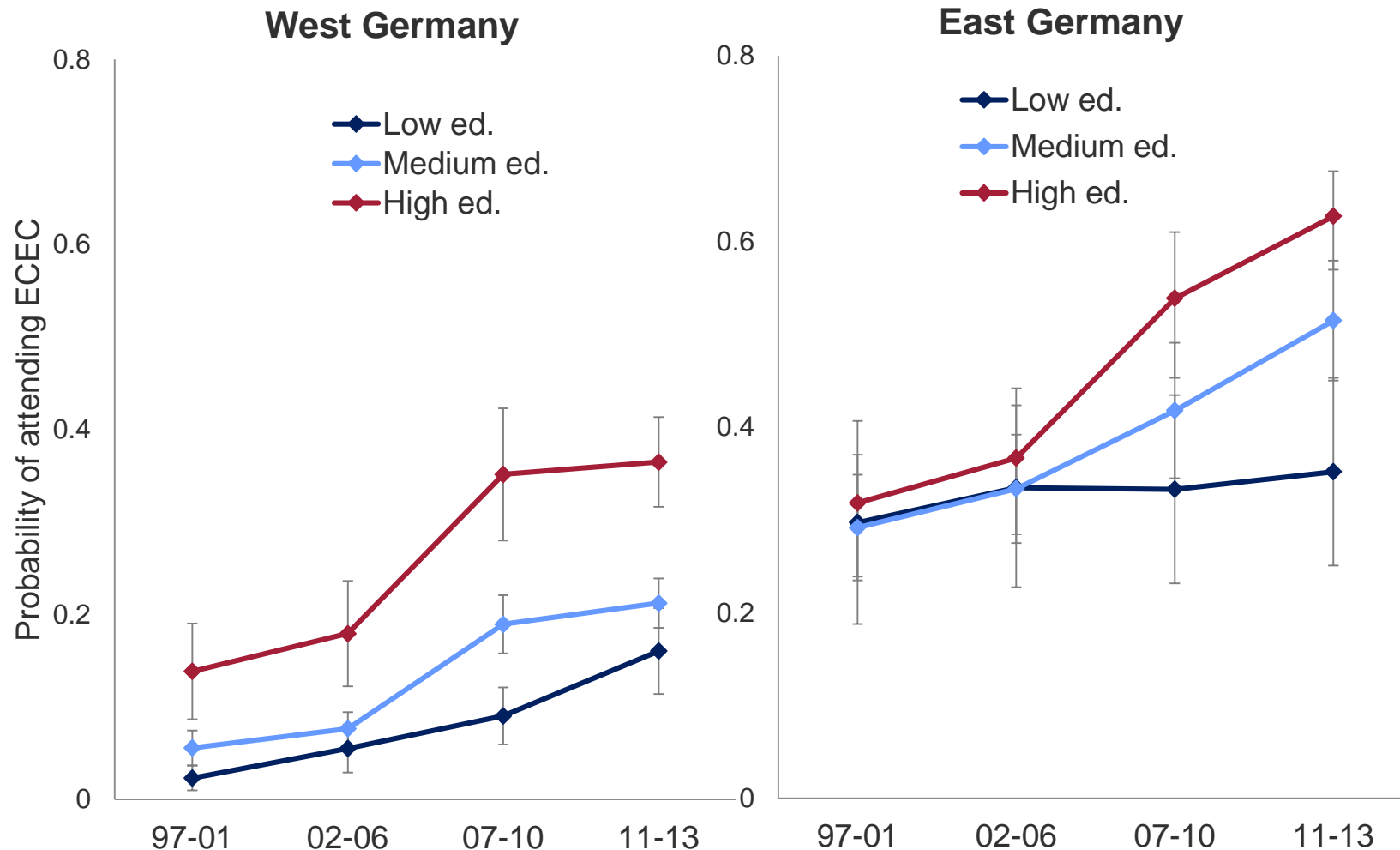


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## Increasing social inequality in use of expanding ECEC services for children under 3 years

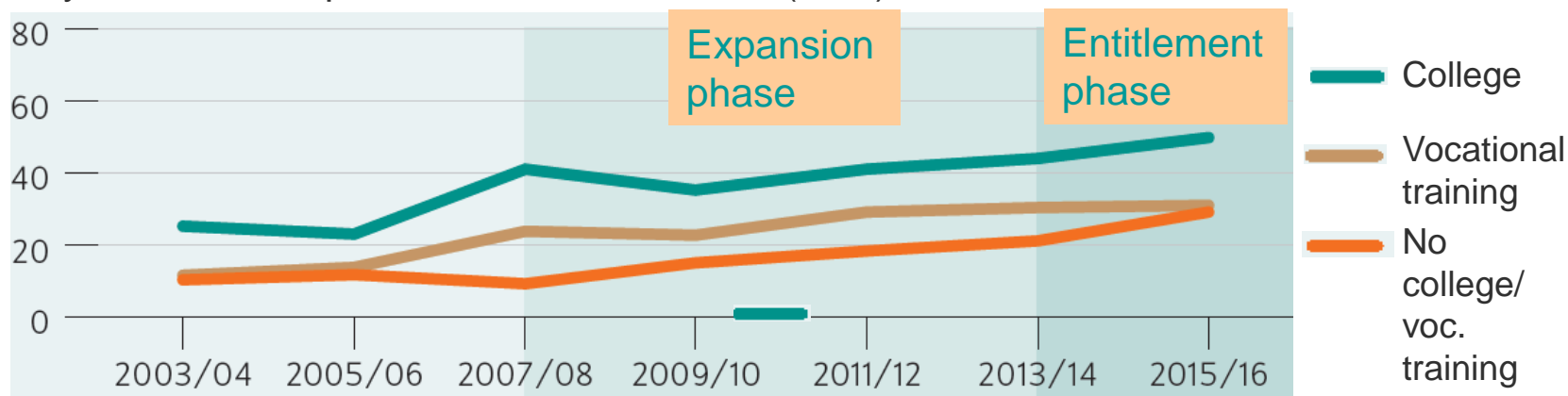


Source: Stahl and Schober, 2017.

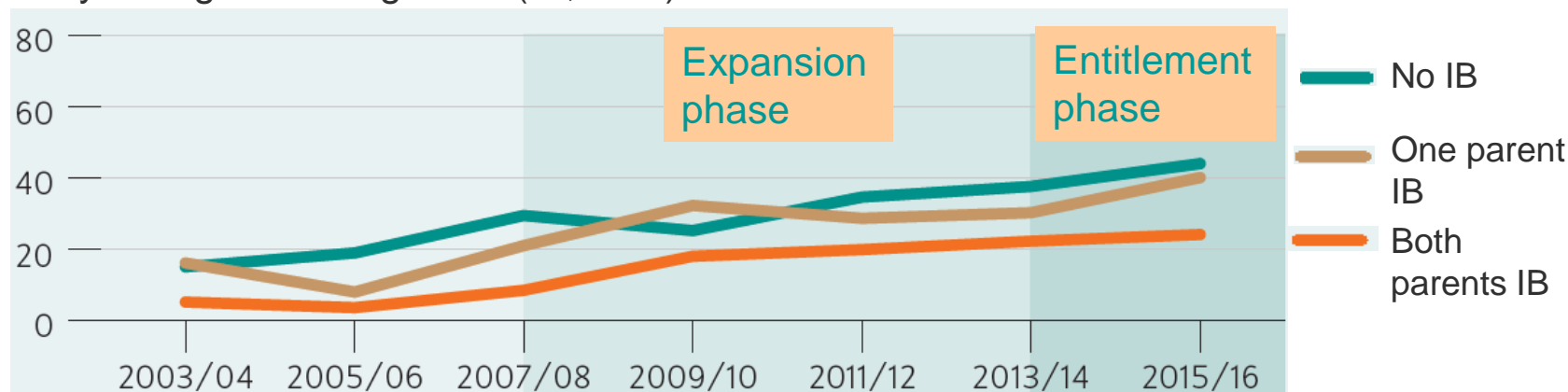


## Persistent social inequality in ECEC take-up rates since introduction of legal entitlement of ECEC place from age 1

...by educational qualification of the mother (in %)



...by immigrant background (IB, in %)



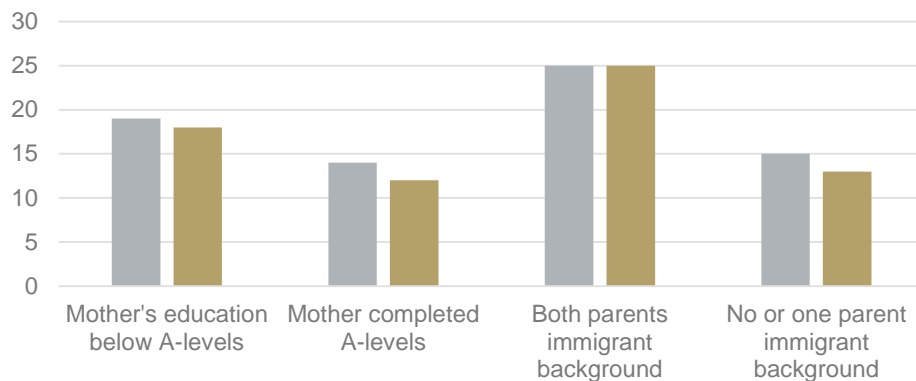
Source: Jessen et al., 2018.



## Persistent social disparities in excess demand for ECEC

- ECEC demand still exceeds ECEC supply for 1- and 2-year-olds (24 vs. 17 % in 2016), diminishing only slowly
- SES differences in take-up much larger than in demand
- Larger excess demand among mothers with lower education and families with immigrant background (Jessen et al., 2020)

SES differences in excess demand for ECEC places (in %)



Source: Jessen et al., 2020.

■ 2012 ■ 2016



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## ECEC expansion: reasons for persistent social inequalities in take-up

Low-skilled mothers estimated to increase demand if:

- Fees lowered or abolished (Jessen et al., 2018)
- ECEC availability continues to increase (Jessen et al., 2020)

-> unlikely to close the demand gap for families with an immigrant background (Jessen et al., 2018)

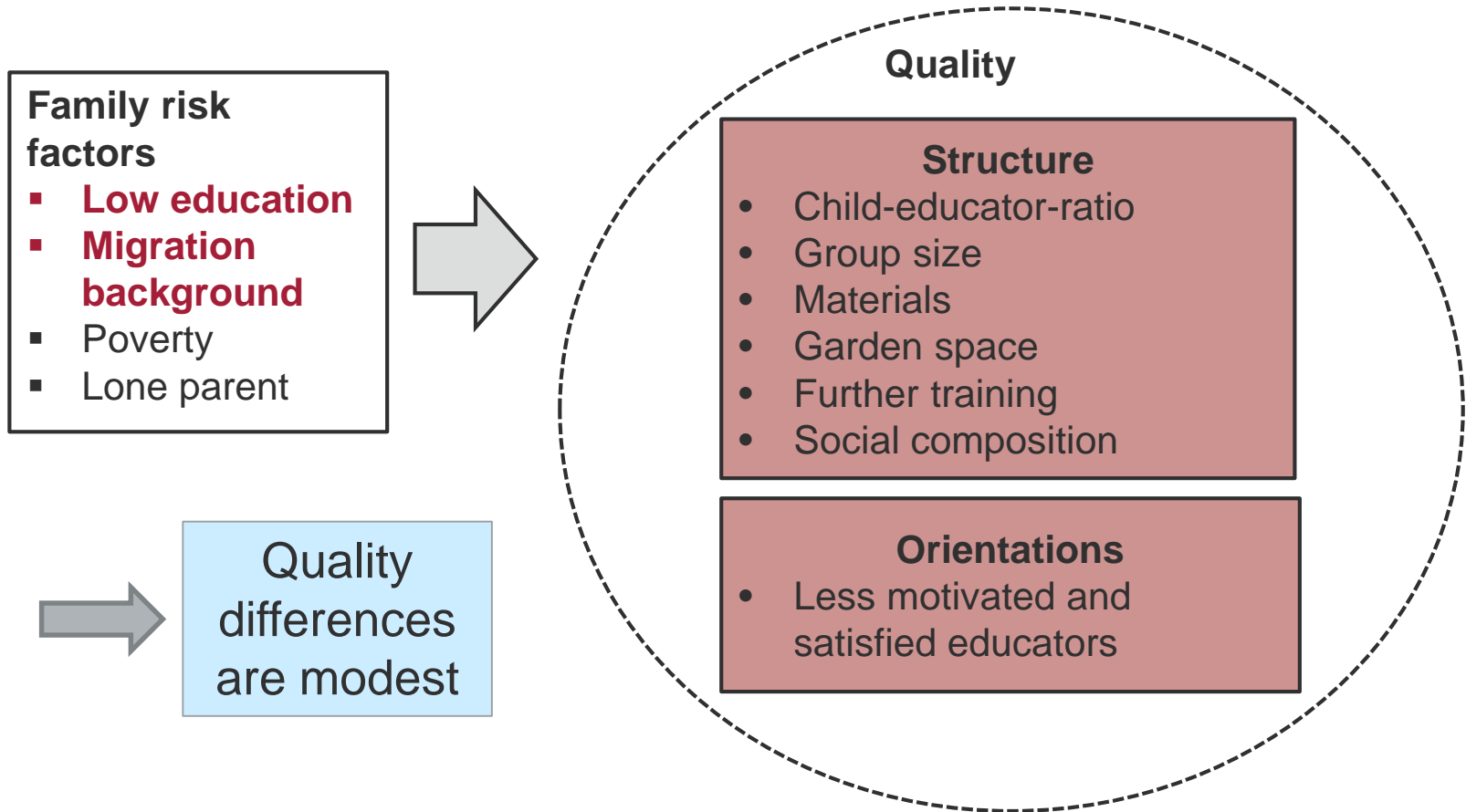
Immigrant families report they would use ECEC if:

- Registration and allocation systems were easier
- Local access improved
- Higher ECEC Quality, especially bilingual educators





## Social inequality in the use of ECEC quality?



Source: Stahl, Schober & Spiess, 2016; Becker & Schober, 2017.

Data source: NEPS, SOEP-K2iD



## ECEC expansion: reducing social disparities in child development?

ECEC take-up found to mainly benefit language skills of children with an immigrant background (e.g. Klein & Sonntag, 2017)

Modest ECEC Expansion 2005-2009 in one Northern state estimated to benefit (Felfe & Lalive, 2018):

- motor skills of children across SES groups
- Language skills of children with an immigrant background
- Socio-emotional skills of children with lower educated or immigrant parents



Progressive ECEC expansion aiming at universal access likely to reduce social inequalities



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## Conclusion and implications I

Move to optional familialism contributed to increasing social inequalities:

- In maternal employment, paternal leave and ECEC take-up
- but not in child development
  
- Recent 2020 legislation (for „good day-care“) to improve childcare quality, registration systems and further reduce costs
- Further increases in public ECEC provision likely to reduce social inequalities in take-up but not in maternal employment



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## Conclusion and implications II

- Increasing gender equality in maternal employment and paternal childcare mainly in higher-SES families
- Gender norms and labour market prospects remain more socially stratified than childcare ideals
- Since 2015, partner leave bonus and incentive for simultaneous long part-time employment of mothers and fathers not very effective
- *Change towards optional familism: only temporarily raising social inequalities? Unlikely but depends on domain...*



# Thank you.



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