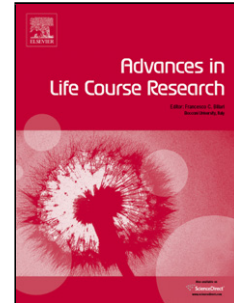


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Do women's pre-birth relative wages moderate the parenthood effect on gender inequality in working hours?

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Abstract:

Although young couples increasingly divide paid and unpaid work equally, the transition to parenthood is associated with the production of gender inequality. Given the rising prevalence of female breadwinner households in Europe, this paper assesses whether the parenthood effect on gender inequality in employment is counteracted in couples where women were the main income providers before the onset of family formation. Using longitudinal micro-data (1999-2010) from the Belgian Crossroads Bank for Social Security and the National Register, population-averaged logit models assess the effect of pre-birth relative earnings on parental employment strategies following the transition to parenthood. Results indicate that a female main earner constellation positively relates to egalitarian and female-oriented employment strategies. Although pre-birth relative earnings affect the magnitude of the negative relationship between parenthood and gender inequality in paid work, male-oriented parental employment strategies continue to occur most, even among female main earner couples. Hence, variation in pre-birth relative earnings cannot fully account for the rise in gender inequality in employment following the transition to parenthood, suggesting that cultural as well as structural factors limit parents to opt for an egalitarian employment division.

Keywords: relative resources; Belgium; childbearing; life course; labor; gender

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