

GENDER AND WORK IN GERMANY: Before and After Reunification

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■ **Abstract** New state and market arrangements were twice imposed on the residents of the eastern part of Germany, once when Germany was divided in 1949 and again when it was reunified in 1990; these changes produced a unique natural experiment concerning the effect of policies and institutions on the gendered nature of work. This review synthesizes research on gender equality in paid and unpaid work in East versus West Germany during the decades immediately preceding and following reunification. We consider empirical evidence on gender equality in five major dimensions of work: the prevalence of labor market attachment, time spent in paid work, wages, employment sector and occupation, and time spent in unpaid work in the home. Taken together, developments across these dimensions suggest that, following reunification, the two parts of the country converged toward the gendered arrangement in which men are employed full-time and their female partners hold part-time jobs—with some evidence of continuing differences between East and West.

INTRODUCTION

During the four decades following the Second World War, Germany was divided into two countries. Between 1949 and 1989, East Germany (“the GDR”) had a state socialist system, a centrally planned economy, and socialist employment and family policies. West Germany (“the FRG”), in contrast, had a multiparty parliament, a market economy, and a conservative-corporatist welfare state.¹

*Rachel A. Rosenfeld died on November 24, 2002. This article is dedicated to her memory.

¹The official names of East and West Germany were the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany, respectively. The two were officially reunified in October 1990, and the West German constitution, known as the Basic Law, became the constitution of the united Germany.

The division of Germany had major implications for equality between men and women, especially with respect to divisions of labor in paid and unpaid work. During the divided years, East Germany expected, and needed, both men and women to be paid workers, while West Germany's socially conservative welfare state generally relegated women to unpaid homemaking and men to breadwinning. Not surprisingly, East German women achieved greater equality in the labor market than did their counterparts in West Germany. However, despite the East German government's stated commitment to eradicating gender inequality, employed women in East Germany failed to achieve full gender parity, especially with regard to earnings, occupational integration, and the division of labor at home, even as late as the 1980s and even among younger cohorts (Kolinsky 2003, Schenk 2003).

In 1989, as state socialism collapsed across Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, the West German government literally took over East Germany, setting in motion a rapid transformation of East German institutions and employment structures, while West Germany remained relatively unchanged. Following reunification, East German women's employment status changed markedly again, owing to a combination of factors, including policy change, industrial and occupational restructuring, and acute labor market crisis. The separation—and later reunification—of East and West Germany offers a powerful case study of the interplay between states, markets, and women's economic integration into society. Twice, new state and market arrangements were abruptly imposed in the East, setting up a natural experiment of sorts concerning the influence of policy and institutional configurations on gender equality.

The aim of this review is to present a detailed synthesis of existing research on economic gender equality in East versus West Germany, both before and after reunification. Our review focuses on a comparison of the 1980s with the 1990s for three reasons. First, research that allows reliable comparisons between East and West before 1980 is scarce. Second, the distinct employment and social policies in the East and West reached full maturity only in the 1980s. Third, the natural experiment of regime change is most interpretable when "before" and "after" fall in a relatively narrow historical period, allowing us to assume that a host of other factors are comparatively constant.

In the next section of this review, we offer a theoretical framework—a continuum of gendered divisions of labor—that is useful for comparing outcomes across countries, and, even more so, over time. We situate other western welfare states along this continuum in order to place East and West Germany in a broader cross-national context, and we pair each arrangement with the unique policy package that supports it. We then present an overview of the changes that have taken place in East and West Germany over the past two decades and use this continuum of divisions of labor to conceptualize the recent shifts and the underlying causal factors.

Lastly, we synthesize empirical evidence on several gendered labor market outcomes—focusing on East-West differences and on change between the 1980s and the 1990s. We consider an array of outcomes: participation (differentiating

employment and unemployment), hours worked, wages, and employment sector and occupation. We also summarize available findings on gendered divisions in unpaid work, although research over time is limited. Throughout our synthesis of empirical evidence, we assess comparative outcomes—East versus West, and pre- versus post-transition—and we consider the various explanatory perspectives that researchers have used to make sense of the observed differences and changes. We conclude with brief comments on what the future trajectory is likely to be in postunification Germany.

THEORIZING EAST-WEST DIFFERENCES AND CHANGE OVER TIME

The 1980s and 1990s saw a burgeoning interest in the interplay between states, social policies, and women's economic status in society (see Orloff 1996 for a review). Feminist scholars, mostly in Western and Northern Europe, have engaged in a lively debate about the contours of what Helga Hernes (1987) termed the "woman-friendly" welfare state. In recent years, core questions—descriptive and normative—have concerned the myriad ways that states balance support for women's caregiving versus engagement in the labor market. So-called "care" (or "difference") feminists call for new conceptions of citizenship that recognize women's caregiving and, accordingly, for policies that grant women time and/or remuneration for dependent care. In contrast, "employment" (or "sameness") feminists stress the importance of gender parity in paid work. The corresponding policy program emphasizes measures that strengthen women's labor market attachment, such as state-supported child care and short-term maternity leave (see, e.g., Knijn & Kremer 1997 for a synthesis of this debate).

In the 1990s, in both Europe and North America, intensified concerns about parents' influence on children's well-being stimulated new debates about guaranteeing parental time for caregiving (Gaschke 2001, Mayer 1997). Although many "employment feminists" sympathize with concerns about parental time and child well-being, they are troubled that public discourse and policy responses overwhelmingly focus on mothers' time and fail to challenge the assumption that fathers will maintain continuous full-time employment. Recently, feminist welfare state scholars increasingly envision gendered arrangements—and supportive policy configurations—that include both ample parental time for children and gender parity (see Gornick & Meyers 2003 for a review).

A Continuum of Gendered Divisions of Labor

Crompton (1999) offers a continuum of gendered arrangements—from the traditional "male-breadwinner/female-carer" arrangement, to current partial modifications, to an idealized "dual-earner/dual-carer" society that blends caring time with gender equality (see Table 1). Although largely theoretical in its conception, this

TABLE 1 Gendered divisions of labor

Traditional gender division of labor		←→	Less traditional gender division of labor	
Male breadwinner/ Female carer	Dual-earner/ Female part-time carer		Dual-earner/State-carer OR Dual-earner/ Marketized-carer	Dual-earner/ Dual-carer

Source: Crompton 1999, p. 205.

continuum provides a framework for envisioning both variation across states and change over time.

The *first* point on the continuum is the fully-specialized traditional family, which prevailed across industrialized countries from the late nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth century. Its pure form—men in waged work, women caring for children at home full-time—is now relatively rare throughout North America and Europe, where, in most countries, the majority of mothers now work for pay (Gornick & Meyers 2003).

The remaining points on the continuum reflect variations in the political economy of the family that are, to some degree, observable across countries. The *second* point on the continuum—the “dual-earner/female part-time carer” model—is consistent with an emphasis on child well-being, as it frees up maternal time for children. It also enables some participation in paid work by mothers, and with appropriate policy supports, it can be consistent with rewarding women as caregivers; clearly, it does not embody gender equality in either paid work or care work. This model is currently represented, e.g., by the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, where many mothers work for pay but typically with few weekly hours.

The *third* point on the continuum—the dual-earner model with substitute carers—stresses gender equality in paid work. The “state-carer” version was seen in the state socialist countries—East Germany was a prime example—and is in place, to some extent, in Finland today, where most mothers are employed and typically full-time. The “marketized-carer” version is approximated by the United States, where most mothers are also employed and generally full-time, but without an extensive public child care system. Both of these arrangements are consonant with gender equality in employment, although they can have inegalitarian consequences if paid care work is highly feminized and poorly remunerated (as in the United States) or if employed women retain the lion’s share of unpaid caregiving.

The *fourth* point on the continuum (the dual-earner/dual-carer model) embodies gender equality, as symmetry between women and men in both earning and caring is a defining feature; in all industrialized countries, that would require some reduction, on average, in men’s current labor market attachment (e.g., shorter hours, more leave taking). Because it also ensures caring time, this arrangement resolves key conflicts between advocates of child well-being who prioritize parental caregiving and feminists who prize gender parity. This final model has attracted sustained attention in recent years, especially among feminist welfare state scholars in Europe

and, to a lesser extent, in the United States [see, e.g., Nancy Fraser's (1994) call for men to become "like women are now"]].

Each of these gendered models could be encouraged, or supported, by a unique institutional configuration. The male-breadwinner/female-carer model was historically enabled by the setting of a male wage substantial enough to support a worker and his dependent family. The second model—male breadwinners with female partners splitting their time between paid work and care—would be enabled by policies that support part-time work and assure moderate levels of child care. The third—the dual-earner/state-carer arrangement—requires by definition a large public child care sector; its counterpart with market-based child care could operate with little state support. The dual-earner/dual-carer model would be enabled by a generous policy package, including ample child care, paid leave options with incentives for male take-up, and an economy-wide reduction in employment hours. Whereas no existing society has achieved the fully gender-egalitarian outcome envisioned in this model, some European welfare states have enacted policy packages that strongly encourage it—most notably, the Scandinavian countries.

Although these gendered arrangements could be supported and encouraged by the policies described above, these policies are not enacted or maintained solely because of public concerns about gender norms. They arise in conjunction with varied goals, including raising fertility, alleviating labor shortages, attaining full employment, or preventing poverty. In many countries, the factors that motivate family policy formation lack political cohesion and often shift over time.

Movement Along The Continuum: Convergence in the Two Germanies?

Before reunification, the "two Germanies" had different policy configurations and contrasting gendered divisions of labor. After reunification, gender-related policies and outcomes changed in both East and West—with substantially more change in the East—resulting in a scenario of partial convergence. We present an introductory overview of major policies and institutions and selected gender equality outcomes—in East and West, before and after the reunification—in Table 2.²

During the divided years, the two states encouraged women to blend employment and caregiving in remarkably different ways. East Germany encouraged (actually, required) high levels of employment and long weekly hours for women, including mothers; in the latter years of the regime, mothers' work-family conflicts were alleviated through extensive public provision of child care, reduced working hours for mothers, and a paid "birth year," after which women were expected to

²In this article, we focus on policies and institutions that allow workers to blend paid work and parenting. Yet many of the same issues—the need for policy supports and the prevalence of gender-differentiated work outcomes—arise in relation to caregiving for elderly and other dependent family members as well. In this review, we lay aside issues about care for family members other than children only because we found very little empirical research that allowed us to compare either policies or outcomes between the two Germanies.

TABLE 2 Gendered policies/institutions and outcomes in East and West, before and after reunification^a

	Before reunification (mid- to late-1980s)		After reunification (mid-1990s to present)	
	East	West	East	West
Gendered policies and institutions				
Provision of public child care	High	Low	Medium/high	Medium
Benefit level of leave during year after birth	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Regulation of women's working time	Encouraged long hours	Encouraged part-time work	Encourages part-time work	Encourages part-time work
Prevalence of public employment	High	Medium	Medium/high	Medium
Wage setting	Set by the state	Market + collective agreements	Market + collective agreements	Market + collective agreements
Gendered work outcomes				
Participation	High	Medium	Medium/high	Medium
Employment	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Unemployment	None	Medium	High	Medium
Part-time work	Medium prevalence (mostly among elderly women)	Medium prevalence (mostly among mothers)	Medium prevalence (mostly among mothers)	High prevalence (mostly among mothers)
Gender wage gap	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium
Occupational segregation	High	High	High	High
Women's share of unpaid work at home	Moderate/low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

^aHigh, medium, and low are designated relative to Western and Northern Europe as a whole. This assessment of women's share of unpaid work at home before reunification is an estimate based on data from shortly after reunification.

return to full-time employment (Künzler et al. 2001, Trappe 1996). Indeed, among the state socialist societies, “it could be argued that the GDR went furthest. . . in balancing its policies toward women as producers and reproducers. . .” (Einhorn 1993, p. 35). In contrast, West German policy deterred women, especially mothers, from paid work. For those women who chose employment, state policies—especially the tax policy and part-day kindergarten—encouraged part-time work. Other institutional differences were consequential as well. In East Germany, of course, most workers were employed by the state or state-owned enterprises, and wages were set according to public pay scales. In the West, most female workers were in private employment with wages determined by the market and/or through collective agreements (Krueger & Pischke 1995).

Before reunification, these policy configurations clearly shaped women’s labor market outcomes. The starkest difference was seen in employment rates and hours; East German women had higher employment rates, and employed women worked longer hours (Künzler et al. 2001, Schenk 2003). Yet in both East and West occupational segregation remained substantial, partly because both regimes maintained a tight link between qualifications and jobs; this link tended to sort workers into occupations along gender lines (Rosenfeld & Trappe 2002). Likewise, gender wage gaps endured in both states—in the East, in part because pay scales incorporated elements from the presocialist period (Trappe & Rosenfeld 2000).

After reunification, the policies and institutions shown in Table 2 largely converged, with two exceptions: The public supply of child care remains higher in the East (Engstler & Menning 2003), as does the percentage of jobs that are in the public sector (Franz & Steiner 2000). Importantly, in the East, the postunification policy shifts were intertwined with extreme economic dislocation. The sudden exposure of industries and jobs to market forces led to a rapid and drastic reduction in labor demand. At the end of 1989, 9.6 million people were employed in the East; at the end of 1995, only 6.4 million were employed (Goedicke 2002). Accordingly, unemployment increased from an (official) rate of zero in the late 1980s to high rates throughout the 1990s—rates far higher than those seen in the West in the 1990s (Deutscher Bundestag 2002).

The restructuring of the East German labor market was not gender neutral (Nickel 2003), and women’s labor market outcomes have changed markedly. Although participation in the East remains fairly high, severe unemployment—disproportionately high among women—has sharply lowered women’s employment rates. In the East, employed women’s labor market hours have fallen, although they remain longer than those reported in the West (Deutscher Bundestag 2002). The gender wage gap has fallen in the East to levels more favorable than those seen in the West (Hunt 2002, Klenner 2002), but occupational segregation remains high in both regions (Rosenfeld & Trappe 2002). Furthermore, although evidence is limited, in the East divisions of labor at home seem to have become more gender unequal during the 1990s.

The continuum of gendered divisions of labor (Crompton 1999) is useful for theorizing the trajectories of gender inequality in the two Germanies during the 1980s

and 1990s—and also for placing the German story in the context of Western welfare states as a whole. As we have noted, the gender arrangement in East Germany on the eve of reunification corresponded closely to the “dual-earner/state-carer” model. In West Germany, in contrast, the division of labor in the late 1980s fell somewhere between the first two points on the continuum. About half of married couples with children still adhered to the “male-breadwinner/female-carer” model (the wife had no employment), while the other half followed the “dual-earner/female part-time carer” model, with wives working for pay but mostly part-time (Klammer et al. 2000).

Since reunification, the dominant arrangements in both East and West have shifted along this continuum—with some evidence of convergence—although both have established patterns on the more traditional end of the continuum. In the East, the “dual-earner/state-carer” scenario has been replaced, in part, by the “dual-earner/female part-time carer” model, as women’s employment rates have fallen sharply, and among mothers the share of their employment that is part-time has risen. In the West, the ongoing shift from the “male-breadwinner/female-carer” to the “dual-earner/female part-time carer” model has continued, as many wives have shifted from full-time homemaking to part-time employment (Blossfeld & Rohwer 1997, Deutscher Bundestag 2002).

An obvious question is *why* families—and whole societies—arrive at particular gendered divisions of labor. Why, for example, do Dutch and British couples adhere to the “dual-earner/female part-time carer” arrangement, whereas Finnish and American couples frequently comprise two full-time earners? And, in our case, why did East and West German divisions of labor diverge as they did in the 1980s, and why are they converging—if only partially—in the 1990s? Researchers have offered varied explanations for East-West differences and patterns of change. Obviously, many have stressed the direct effects of state institutions on gendered outcomes—demonstrating that “policy matters”—while others have focused on market factors, emphasizing the consequences of economic contraction and sectoral restructuring. Still others evoke cultural explanations, arguing that ideas, preferences, and social norms have shaped gendered outcomes in the two Germanies both before and after reunification. Finally, many analysts of the German transitions have stressed, persuasively, that societies—and individual families—tend to arrange their lives in certain ways largely because that is what was done in the past; in other words, “legacies matter.”

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE: GENDER INEQUALITY BEFORE AND AFTER REUNIFICATION

In this section, we review the empirical research on gender equality and work in the two Germanies before and after reunification. We focus on characterizing the patterns of East-West difference and change, as well as on the factors that shape these patterns. The gendered nature of work operates in multiple spheres

(Van der Lippe & Van Dijk 2002). In this review, we consider the literature as it relates to gender and five major dimensions of work: (a) the prevalence of labor market attachment as seen in the interplay of participation, unemployment, and employment; (b) time spent in paid work; (c) wages; (d) employment sector and occupation; and (e) time spent in unpaid work in the home. Although there are other important gendered work outcomes (e.g., attaining positions of authority) and many concerns about increasing social differentiation and polarization among women and men (e.g., single parents versus dual-earner couples), space limitations require that we confine ourselves to these five dimensions and to a depiction of general patterns and trends.

Participation, Unemployment, and Employment

Before reunification, women's labor force participation in East Germany was extremely high—in fact, among the highest in the world and comparable to men's. In 1989, women's participation rate was 89%, compared with 92% for men. At the same time, West German women's participation was only 56% and was well less than men's (83%) (Klammer et al. 2000). A large part of the East-West difference in women's labor force attachment was because of differences among mothers (Kirner & Schulz 1991, Ostner 1993). In the East, women's participation rates varied little by marital or parenting status, whereas in West Germany, women's engagement in paid work was very sensitive to the presence and ages of children, more so than in many other Western countries (Gornick 1999).

From a life course perspective, during the decades that Germany was divided, West German women in successive cohorts were employed for greater proportions of their work lives (Blossfeld & Rohwer 1995) but, unlike in East Germany, long labor force interruptions associated with childbearing persisted. For younger cohorts of women born in East Germany (those who entered the labor force during the 1970s and 1980s), their cumulative employment experience approached that of men's (Sørensen & Trappe 1995), most likely because East German family policies, including generous child care and family leave benefits, favored short employment interruptions in connection with the birth of a child (Trappe 1996).

Researchers have attributed these remarkable differences in East and West German women's (particularly mothers') participation rates before reunification to several interdependent factors. These include labor market factors (e.g., the structure of women's employment opportunities as well as the pressure on them to work for pay), cultural factors (e.g., norms about the care of young children), political factors (e.g., strategies for achieving gender equality), and policy factors (e.g., public programs for reconciling employment and family obligations) (Schenk 2003). These interdependent factors shaped East-West differences at the individual and family levels, leading, for example, in East Germany to stronger preferences for employment expressed by women (Adler & Brayfield 1997) and a higher level of economic necessity within families (Künzler et al. 2001).

After reunification, employment opportunities and risks differed and diverged between the eastern and western parts of Germany (Lange & Pugh 1998). By 2000,

women's labor force participation in the West had increased to 62%, whereas men's rates in both East and West had fully converged at 80%. The convergence among men was caused almost entirely by a marked drop in men's participation in the East (from 92% to 80%). Women's participation in the East declined even more sharply, from nearly 90% to 72% (Deutscher Bundestag 2002, Klenner 2002).³ Despite the large decline in women's participation in the East, the gender gap in labor force participation is still considerably smaller there than in the West, and the female participation rate in the East exceeds that reported in the West by 10 percentage points.

The still-remarkable East-West discrepancy in women's participation rates is most often attributed to economic factors that characterize the East: a greater economic need for two incomes, women's greater economic independence (Nickel 2003), and nonemployed women's higher probability of registering themselves as unemployed (in the West, women are more likely simply to withdraw from the labor force) (Bosch & Knuth 2003, Holst & Schupp 2001). Others stress the power of cultural legacies, noting especially that in the East full-time homemaking has long been a rarity, and qualified employment has been a central component of women's self-perception. Evidence indicates that differences in preferences have endured; in 2000, only 5% of women in the eastern part of Germany reported that they were not in the labor force and did not wish to be in the future, compared with 14% of women in the West (Holst & Schupp 2001).

In the postunification period, however, substantial East-West differences in women's participation have not led to equally substantial differences in actual employment because women's unemployment is more severe in the East, both absolutely and relative to men's. Over the course of the 1990s in the East, women's unemployment rate was higher than men's; in fact, during the first half of the 1990s it was almost twice as high. In contrast, in the western part of the country, where unemployment has been considerably lower, it is not highly differentiated by gender. During the second half of the 1990s, men's unemployment rate in the East increased because of a massive reduction of male-dominated jobs in production, and it approached the high level of women's unemployment. Thus, in 2000 in the East women's unemployment was 20%, compared with 18% for men, while in the West it was 9% for both women and men. Women comprised 52% of the unemployed in the East, compared with 45% in the West (Deutscher Bundestag 2002).

East German women's higher and longer unemployment has often been offered as evidence that they are the "losers of the reunification process" (e.g., Sommerkorn & Liebsch 2002). Over time, this perspective has become more nuanced, distinguishing different risks and opportunities among women. Women's higher unemployment in the East is largely a result of their greater problems in re-entering the labor market after spells of joblessness, which results in their

³This decline unfolded rapidly in the early 1990s. After 1993, women's labor force participation stabilized at the current level (Klammer et al. 2000).

relatively longer average unemployment duration; in 2000, unemployed women averaged 11 months without work compared with 7 for men (Deutscher Bundestag 2002). The risk of unemployment is reduced for those who are employed in the public sector, who belong to the “middle-age” category (younger than age 50) but without small children, or who are qualified for a semiprofessional or professional occupation (Goedicke & Trappe 2002, Solga & Diewald 2001). So far, there is no consensus as to whether having small children (Falk 2000) or having a particular qualification (Nickel 2003) has the stronger effect on women’s risk of becoming unemployed or on subsequent chances for re-entering the labor market.

During the 1990s, although women in the East still participated at a higher rate, the unemployment differentials were such that women’s employment levels in East and West actually converged. In 2000, women’s employment rate was 58% in both parts of the country. In contrast, men’s rates have diverged somewhat: Men’s employment was considerably higher in the West (73%) in 2000 than in the East (67%) (Deutscher Bundestag 2002, Klenner 2002), clearly reflecting the difficult employment situation in the East. Between 1990 and 1994, when the employment decline for women in the East was steepest, Hunt (2002) reports that more than half of the gender gap in employment exits was because of a drop in demand for low-skilled workers.

Although women are employed at the same rate overall in the East and West, a substantial differential remains among mothers (Engstler & Menning 2003). In 2000, 30% of women with at least one young child (below age four) were employed in the East, compared with only 15% in the West (Holst & Schupp 2001). Mothers in the East interrupt their employment for shorter periods of time for childrearing than do mothers in the West. The literature suggests that these maternal employment differences are partly rooted in structural factors. First, family policy differs in East and West—in particular, scholars point to the legacy of the East German “birth year” (one year of paid leave for mothers after giving birth, followed by a return to employment) in combination with the greater availability of child care for young children that still operates in the East. Second, economic need is greater in the East; the third year of parental leave is unpaid, which makes it less practical for couples in the East to take it up (Beckmann & Engelbrech 2002).

There is also considerable evidence that, after reunification, differing attitudes toward maternal employment have contributed to mothers’ contrasting employment patterns. It is difficult to sort out the causality. Attitudes influence employment behavior, but they are also shaped by current and past employment patterns, as well as by state factors such as the availability of quality child care (Braun et al. 1994). With these caveats, it is clear that contemporary attitudes about gender roles are positively correlated with women’s labor market behavior. In 2000, in the East, both men and women expressed favorable attitudes toward mothers’ employment (there was a small gender difference that is statistically nonsignificant). In the West, however, women express significantly less favorable attitudes toward mothers’ employment, and men in the West are by far the most opposed (Künzler

et al. 2001).⁴ This general pattern has endured throughout the 1990s, with growing dissimilarities between East and West since reunification (Statistisches Bundesamt 2002).

Taken together, the developments described here suggest that there occurred a partly forced convergence in East and West in the extent of women's employment. Women's labor force participation in the East remained high, and it increased in the West over the course of the 1990s, but only in the West could women realize employment gains after reunification. Employment opportunities in the East were reduced because of persistently high levels of unemployment and increasing competition for jobs between and among women and men. Differences in maternal employment remain, however, and those differences correspond, in part, to prevailing attitudes about the advantages of mothers' labor market attachment.

Hours Worked

Relative to other European countries, in the former East Germany working hours were both long and heavily regulated. The standard work week in the GDR was 43.75 hours, set by labor law in 1968. For mothers of at least two children under age 16 and for persons regularly working at night, the working week was 40 hours with full pay (Trappe 1996).⁵ In West Germany, before reunification, sectoral collective agreements greatly affected the determination of full-time working hours, which usually varied between 36 and 39 hours per week.

During the last two decades of the GDR's existence, part-time work was considered exceptional, even for women, and especially among younger women (Winkler 1990). In 1989, 27% of employed women and 2% of employed men worked part-time in East Germany (Schenk 2003), compared with 30% of women and an equally low 2% of men in West Germany (Klammer et al. 2000). However, despite similar levels of female part-time employment in East and West, the structure of part-time work was markedly different. In the East, part-time work was mainly performed by older women, and part-time workers' weekly hours tended to be long. In addition, part-time work in East Germany brought the same entitlements to social benefits as did full-time work. In contrast, in West Germany, part-time work was largely done by mothers of young children, weekly hours tended to be short—most female part-time workers were employed for fewer than 20 hours per week—and, for those working very short hours, social benefits were limited

⁴For example, one item in the German General Social Survey asks respondents if they agree that "a small child certainly suffers if his/her mother is employed." In 2000, in the East, about 40% of both women and men agreed, compared with two-thirds of women and three-quarters of men in the West (Statistisches Bundesamt 2002).

⁵There was also a paid housework day each month for all married women, mothers of children under 18, women or men who cared for dependants, women over age 40, and single fathers. Such policies thus granted societal recognition to the labor performed—mainly by women—at home (Dölling 2002).

(Klammer et al. 2000). Thus, in East Germany, while women's part-time work served as a transition into retirement, in West Germany it was a family caregiving strategy, one that modernized the male breadwinner model and also enabled its survival (Pfau-Effinger 1993). In fact, the modest increase in West German women's labor force participation starting in the 1960s was entirely because of an increase in part-time work, especially among married mothers (Blossfeld & Rohwer 1997, Klammer et al. 2000).

After reunification, average weekly work hours decreased in both parts of Germany, more so in the East. By 2000, average weekly hours were 29 for women and 40 for men in the West, and 35 for women and 42 for men in the East. Some of this change was because of changes in part-time work. During the 1990s, the prevalence of part-time work in the West continued to increase steadily, reaching 42% of employed women in 2000 (and 5% of employed men). The trajectory in the East was different. Immediately after reunification, part-time employment sharply declined, as many women part-time jobholders quickly shifted to full-time to secure their jobs. After that, however, part-time work began to rise again, nearly returning to preunification levels by 2000; much of this recent increase in the East has been because of an increase in involuntary part-time work (Deutscher Bundestag 2002). In addition, some structural differences from the preunification period remain in place. Women in the West who are employed part-time still work considerably fewer hours—often half-time and at levels too low for social benefit eligibility—than do their counterparts in the East, where part-time work hours often approach 35 hours per week.

Although some of the rise in part-time work among women in the East has been involuntary, there are also signs of East-West convergence in women's preferences. The proportion of women working part-time in the East who would prefer full-time work decreased over time, whereas the proportion in the West slightly increased (Klammer et al. 2000). Furthermore, in the East, many more women with preschool aged children were working part-time by the year 2000 than at the beginning of the 1990s (Engstler & Menning 2003). Attitudes about divisions of labor within households are largely in line with these trends. More than two thirds of all mothers with children up to primary school age in both parts of the country report that they prefer the model in which one parent works full-time and the other part-time, but, in practice, there is not enough part-time work available, especially in the East. Both the male-breadwinner/female-carer model once prevalent in the West as well as the dual-earner/state carer model once dominant in the East are losing ground, and the evidence indicates that changes in family work practices and changes in attitudes are unfolding simultaneously.

Thus, over the course of the 1990s, in both parts of the country, the dual-earner/female part-time carer model gained in prominence. In 2000, both partners were employed among 61% of married couples in the West and 66% in the East. Among these dual-earner couples, a declining majority in the East have two full-time workers (65%), and a rising majority in the West include a wife employed part-time (64%) (Holst & Schupp 2001).

The Gender Wage Gap

It is difficult to compare gender wage gaps in the East and West before and after reunification because no published literature contains the four necessary components. To ensure as much comparability as possible, we rely mainly on research that assesses relative pay in East and West at a single point in time.

Researchers have established that, contrary to public claims, state socialist societies failed to eradicate gender inequalities in pay (Brainerd 2000). The former GDR was no exception (Sørensen & Trappe 1995). The consensus in the literature is that, before reunification, the gender pay differential was about equivalent in East Germany and West Germany.⁶ Krueger & Pischke (1995) report an adjusted earnings gap of about 25% in both East and West—based on the monthly gross earnings of full-time workers (and controlling for years of schooling, qualifications, and labor force experience). Trappe & Rosenfeld (2000) studied monthly net earnings for two birth cohorts that started their full-time employment in the 1970s and 1980s; they also found gaps that were nearly the same—22% in the West and 20% in the East. They also report that although the earnings gap was nearly constant over the early life course in East Germany, it increased substantially with age in the West. This increase is attributed to the effects of a “child penalty” in pay for women, largely mediated by working hours, and a “child bonus” for men, which remained unexplained. Before reunification, the main source for the persistence of women’s pay disadvantage in East Germany was the continued low pay in the specific jobs occupied by women (Sørensen & Trappe 1995). Szydlík (1994), studying hourly net earnings, also finds a marginally larger gap in the former West than in the former East (18% versus 15%). After controlling for education, labor force experience, and tenure, women still earned considerably less than men in both societies.

In 1998, nearly a decade after reunification, gender gaps in full-time workers’ gross hourly wages—23% in the public sector and 27% in the private sector—were larger in Germany than in any other country in the European Union (Europäische Kommission 2002). Some researchers have found that Germany’s poor position relative to other European countries is a result of women’s persistently low earnings in the former West Germany. Throughout the 1990s, while the gender pay differential narrowed considerably in the East, it hardly changed in the West. In 1997, the gender gap, based on full-time workers’ annual gross earnings, was 15% in the West compared with only 6% in the East. These gaps are narrower than those reported in the previous study because the data used exclude both very high and very low wages. In addition, the gender gap in the West decreased by only

⁶At the same time, the absolute level of earnings, and consumption power as well, was much lower in the East than in the West, and the earnings distribution was more compressed. In the East, the more compressed earnings distribution and women’s higher labor force participation contributed to women earning a larger share of household income (around 40% for those who lived with a partner), which strengthened their economic independence and their position in the family (Kolinsky 2003).

3 percentage points during the prior 20 years (1977–1997), whereas it fell by 2 percentage points in the East in the prior four years alone (1993–1997) (Deutscher Bundestag 2002, Klenner 2002). Researchers attribute the gender gaps that remain to varied causes, including older women's lagging qualifications (more prevalent in the West), less employment continuity among women (more prevalent in the West), occupational sex segregation (substantial in both East and West), and mechanisms of discrimination incorporated in collectively bargained wages (more prevalent in the West).

Many observers expected that the gender pay gap in the East would widen after reunification as the socialist economy was converted to a market economy, but instead it narrowed. Why did this happen? Researchers (see, e.g., Gang & Yun 2001, Hunt 2002) tend to agree that the gender pay gap in the East declined considerably, especially in the early 1990s, but that this decline did not reflect a straightforward success story with respect to women's wages. Hunt (2002) documents a sharp decline in the gender gap during the 1990–1994 period and attributes a substantial portion of that narrowing (about 40%) to low-skilled women involuntarily exiting the labor force. This compositional explanation is supported by Franz & Steiner (2000), who find that women with poor labor market opportunities disproportionately exited the labor force after being laid off and that, for public sector workers, the effect of experience on wages increased substantially after unification because of special collective agreements taken over from the West. Since reunification, women in the East have been over-represented in the public sector, and their over-representation has increased over time, in part because of the high incidence of public works and training programs that include women, especially those with high education. Thus, in the East, the public sector has served as a shelter against the devaluation of human capital acquired under socialism, whereas, in the private sector, labor force experience accrued during the socialist years has been largely devalued.

To summarize, despite the East German state's public commitment to gender equality, wage gaps in the former GDR were no more favorable for women than they were in preunification West Germany. After reunification, while pay differentials in the West remained fairly stable, they narrowed in the East. That narrowing came partly at the expense of low-skilled women who were pushed out of the labor force and partly because of gains realized by women working in the public sector. Whether the gender wage gap will widen again in the East when opportunities for low-skilled women rise and/or if public sector employment is curtailed remains to be seen.

Employment Sector and Occupational Sex Segregation

Before reunification, the transition to a service economy was more fully realized in West Germany than in East Germany. However, the West German service sector was still smaller than in other Western countries, in part because of the enduring tradition of women's (unpaid) service provision within the family. Still, throughout the divided years, industrial and occupational restructuring led to a decline in the

relative number of traditionally male jobs in West Germany, while the share of typically female jobs expanded (Rubery et al. 1998).

In contrast, in 1989, the industrial structure of East Germany resembled West Germany's in 1965, with a large proportion of agricultural and manufacturing jobs. Women were concentrated in fewer occupations overall in West Germany, but female occupations were even more segregated in the East, contributing to a slightly higher level of overall occupational segregation in the East. The differences in these patterns of sex segregation have been attributed to differences in official gender ideology, family policies, labor needs, industrial structure, and vocational training (Rosenfeld & Trappe 2002).

After reunification, the western part of Germany showed little change in its basic industrial structure, whereas there was a marked shift in the East, especially between 1989 and 1991, when employment in the service sector increased by 11 percentage points. The East experienced a rapid, though mainly passive, move to a service economy. Job loss took place largely in the primary and secondary sectors, whereas the number of jobs in the tertiary sector remained relatively stable. Within the service industries, areas that had been underdeveloped during state socialism expanded, such as financial services and insurance, while others shrank, including public administration and transportation (Goedicke 2002). By 2000, the distribution of men and women across industries was much the same in East Germany as it was in West Germany, with the exception that women in the East had a relatively higher share in the service sector (Statistisches Bundesamt 2001). This is partly because of their higher presence in the public sector with its greater job protection. According to Franz & Steiner (2000), in 1995, East German women's share in the public sector was 43% compared with about one third in West Germany, whereas the proportion of men employed in the public sector was about 15% in both parts of the country.

The industrial shifts after reunification were accompanied by changes in occupational segregation, especially in the East. During the 1990s, the overall level of occupational sex segregation increased in the East, while it remained fairly stable in the West (Falk 2002, Rosenfeld & Trappe 2002). By 1997, more than 64% of workers in the East compared with 57% in the West would have to change occupation categories for the occupational distributions to be gender-neutral. The increase in the level of sex segregation in the East was because of changes in occupational structure as well as changes in the sex composition within occupations. Although the overall level of segregation was stable in the West, there were compositional shifts—and these differed from shifts that took place in the East. In the West, women increased their representation in the expanding service sector, especially in several high-skill service occupations (e.g., physician, judge, legal representative) that had been integrated or male-dominated at the beginning of the decade. In contrast, in the East, men increased their engagement in occupations (e.g., social worker, bank employee, cook) that had previously been integrated or heavily female, while at the same time occupations dominated by men became increasingly closed to women (Rosenfeld & Trappe 2002).

In sum, reunification, while the East German economy remained reliant on agriculture and manufacturing, the West German economy shifted more toward services that increased the share of typically female jobs. Occupations were sex segregated in both economies, slightly more so in the East. During the 1990s, services grew rapidly in the East, and by 2000 the industrial distributions in East and West were nearly the same for both women and men. The industrial changes in the 1990s were accompanied by occupational shifts; in the East, some occupational resegregation took place especially within the industrial sector and in agriculture, with occupations that were previously mixed or dominated by men becoming even more male-dominated.

Gender Division of Unpaid Work

States and markets influence the intrafamily distribution of unpaid work, as well as the availability of services that enable families to shift care work to outside providers. Clearly, the two German societies encouraged and supported women's paid work differently during the divided years; a crucial complementary analysis concerns divisions of unpaid work. Here, we present comparative studies only after reunification because, unfortunately, there are no reliable comparisons for the 1980s. And even in these studies, researchers have used varying definitions of unpaid work, ranging from all domestic work, including child care, to housework only.

In 1991, the time-budget study of the Federal Statistical Office indicated that, in the western part of Germany, married women spent 2.4 hours doing housework for each hour spent by married men, while in the East the ratio was 1.8. In another study from the early 1990s, Klammer et al. (2000) report essentially the same results. Regarding the division of all unpaid work, the female/male ratio was 2.1 in the West and 1.5 in the East. These findings suggest that divisions of labor in East Germany were moderately more egalitarian than in West Germany around the time of reunification (Künzler et al. 2001).

According to a recent German survey, in 2000 women in the West reported performing 35 hours of routine housework each week, compared with 17 hours for men (Künzler et al. 2001). In the East, the result was nearly the same (34 hours by women, 17 hours by men). In both parts of the country, therefore, women did about twice as much housework as men. In the West, during the 1990s, increases in men's time spent in housework surpassed increases in women's time, resulting in a narrowing of the gender gap, whereas in the East the division of unpaid work shifted in the direction of more gender inequality. In the East, this "traditionalization" has been reported in one-male-earner households, in households with full-time employed men and part-time employed women, as well as in households with both partners working full-time.

Notably, the division of child care is more equitable than the division of routine housework in both East and West. In 2000, in two-parent families in the West, women reported spending 25 hours on child care each week, compared with

17 hours by men (i.e., a female/male ratio of 1.5), whereas in the East time spent in child care averaged 17 hours for women and 14 hours for men (i.e., a female/male ratio of 1.2). In both parts of Germany, the division of child care is more equitable in families whose youngest children have reached school-age.

Künzler et al. (2001) conclude that time spent in paid work is the most powerful predictor of time spent in unpaid domestic work for both women and men in Germany. This suggests that equalizing women's and men's time spent in paid work—by increasing women's and reducing men's time—is likely to result in a more equal division of housework and child care throughout Germany. These researchers conclude that decreasing women's economic dependence motivates male partners to invest additional time in housework.

To summarize, before reunification, gender divisions in unpaid work seem to have been somewhat more egalitarian in East Germany than in West Germany, although direct evidence is unavailable. During the 1990s, divisions of labor in the East appear to have shifted in the direction of less gender equality; this is reported across a range of household types. The finding of rising gender inequality in unpaid work in the East is not entirely surprising, given the labor market shifts after reunification that indicate, on balance, an overall weakening of women's labor force attachment (Haney 2002).

CONCLUSION

Following Crompton (1999), we have argued that dominant arrangements for dividing labor along gender lines vary across societies and within societies over time. In theory, divisions of labor vary from the highly gender-differentiated “male-breadwinner/female-carer” model to the gender-symmetrical “dual-earner/dual-carer model.” In practice, across industrialized countries today, the former in its pure form is nearly extinct and the latter has not yet been fully realized anywhere; contemporary Western countries can be arrayed along the continuum between these two extremes.

During the divided years, neither German society arrived at a pattern of gender-egalitarian divisions of labor. Overall, gender equality was greater in the East; in particular, women's employment rates and weekly hours approached men's; in the West, in contrast, women's employment was less prevalent, and many women held part-time jobs. These East-West differences were primarily because of divergent institutional factors and, in the later decades of the GDR's existence, to differing perceptions of the value of women's employment. After reunification, the two parts of the country converged toward the “male-breadwinner/female part-time carer” arrangement—in which men are employed full-time and their female partners hold part-time jobs and retain the majority of caregiving responsibilities. This resulted from a gradual strengthening of women's labor market attachment in the West and, in the East, some voluntary reduction in women's labor supply compounded by severe demand-side constraints that hit women especially hard.

One of our aims in this review has been to conceptualize the postunification trajectories, especially the shift in the East toward a less gender-equal division of labor. Although it might be argued that contemporary societies will naturally converge toward the dual-earner/dual-carer model, we contend that societies have no inherent tendency to move toward gender symmetry. Inegalitarian arrangements serve many women poorly, but others in society—including many husbands and employers—benefit from women's disproportionate assumption of unpaid work and thus lack incentives to change. Gender equality can be impeded—or, of course, enabled—in multiple venues: via the state and public policy, in the employment setting, and in the family.

It is not clear what changes will unfold in reunified Germany in the next one or two generations; that depends largely on the relative balance of supportive and hindering forces. Clearly, several factors favor the growth of gender egalitarian policies, as well as changes in workplace practices and individual decision making. These include diverse pressures at the supranational level (e.g., recent EU directives and constitutional court rulings); policy developments at the national level (e.g., ongoing expansion of public day care for children aged three and older); continued erosion of the economic logic underlying limited employment among wives (e.g., the insecurity of men's employment); rising qualifications among younger cohorts of women; and ongoing transformations in men's and women's caregiving preferences and behaviors.

Other factors are likely to impede the development of a dual-earner/dual-carer society in united Germany, at least in the near future. These include varied demand-side factors that limit reductions in men's employment hours, constrain women's employment and weekly hours, and/or increase selectivity into employment; institutional inertia (e.g., the maintenance of tax features that encourage differentiated divisions of labor); and the persistent cultural tradition of subsidiarity in which parenthood and care work are viewed in highly privatized terms, relative to other European societies where childrearing is viewed more as a collective responsibility.

In our view, the contradictory incentive structures currently operating will result, in the foreseeable future, in a partial shift toward a dual-earner/dual-carer society. However, until a cohesive policy package is enacted—tax reforms, comprehensive full-day child care, generous paid family leave with incentives for male take-up, and a substantial reduction in standard work hours—the realization of a fully gender-symmetrical arrangement is unlikely. Although enabling policies alone are not sufficient to ensure gender symmetry, they are necessary.

How likely is policy development along these lines? The political feasibility of a policy package that would strongly support gender equality in work and care may increase with burgeoning concerns about Germany's low and falling fertility rate. After reunification, fertility plummeted, especially in the East where the total fertility rate fell from 1.6 in 1989 to a remarkably low 1.2 ten years later (Engstler & Menning 2003). In recent years, scholars of fertility and public policy (see, e.g., McDonald 2000) have built a strong case for the claim that measures that aid women in reconciling parenthood and paid work are necessary in any society that hopes to

achieve optimal levels of childbearing along with gender equality in employment. Whether, and when, policymakers in united Germany—in conjunction with the German polity—choose to enact a fully supportive package of social and labor market policies remains to be seen.

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