

A Comparative Longitudinal Analysis of Intra-Household Inequalities in Australia, Germany and the UK

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Gender analyses of family and social policies of welfare state regimes evaluate their effects on gender equality in various dimensions. However relatively little attention has been paid to effects on gender inequalities within households. This paper draws on previous research by the authors that found the employment status of members of a couple, including the particular combination of full and part-time employment, to be a crucial variable affecting individual entitlement to household resources, and their subsequent well-being. The paper analyses a range of policies of Australia, Germany and the UK to compare their potential effects on intra-household gender inequalities, both through the gendered roles such policies encourage and through the ways in which policies affect the salience of gender roles to men's and women's access to household resources. By comparing two countries with liberal welfare regimes (Australia and UK) and comparing them with one considered more conservative (Germany) the paper discusses the potential impact of policies that have effects on gender roles, such as childcare, parental leave and tax-benefit policies on inequalities between individuals within households. These three countries have been chosen, not only because of the characteristics of their welfare regimes but also because they all collect good household panel data that can be used for empirical investigation of such intra-household effects. We present some comparative results that show how relative economic positions of partners is associated with relative access to household resources, in particular their individual income, their caring responsibilities and costs and their socio-economic status related to employment. By comparing partner's respective answers to a question on satisfaction with household income, which is available for several years in all three countries, we are able to infer some information about individual access to household resources and how this differs by gender. We have stripped out some noise effect due to the subjective nature of the variable. These confounding factors include: the influence of personality traits and other time-invariant unobserved characteristics, so we use using fixed-effect estimations to isolate them; the influence of individual heterogeneity in the changing relative valuation of monetary aspects with respect to other domains of satisfaction –leisure, social life etc. – so we control for overall satisfaction. Empirical results are presented and discussed, within each country between the three countries, and a policy discussion is drawn from this comparison.