EXPLAINING CONTINGENT AND HETEROGENEOUS EFFECTS OF FAMILY POLICIES ON MOTHERS’ EMPLOYMENT: EARNINGS INEQUALITY AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN 23 COUNTRIES, 1999–2016

Although researchers generally agree that family policies play a role in shaping mothers’ employment, there is considerable debate about whether, how, and why policy effects vary across country contexts and within countries by mothers’ educational attainment. We hypothesize that family policies interact with earnings inequality to differentially affect the employment outcomes of mothers by educational attainment. We develop hypotheses about the two most commonly studied family policies—early childhood education and care (ECEC) and paid parental leave. We test these hypotheses by establishing a novel linkage between the EU-Labour Force Survey and the Current Population Survey 1999–2016 (n = 23 countries, 299 country-years, 1.2 million mothers of young children), combined with an original collection of country-year indicators.