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National Family Policies and Mothers' Employment: How Earnings Inequality Shapes Policy Effects across and within Countries

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Abstract

Although researchers generally agree that national 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 national levels of earnings inequality to differentially affect mothers' employment outcomes 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 to 2016 (n = 23 countries, 299 country-years, 1.2 million mothers of young children), combined with an original collection of country-year indicators. Using multilevel models, we find that ECEC spending is associated with a greater likelihood of maternal employment, but the association is strongest for non-college-educated mothers in high-inequality settings. The length of paid parental leave over six months is generally associated with a lower likelihood of maternal employment, but the association is most pronounced for mothers in high-inequality settings. We call for greater attention to the role of earnings inequality in shaping mothers' employment and conditioning policy effects.

Keywords

women's employment, family policies, income inequality, earnings inequality, educational attainment, work-family

Over the past quarter century, women's labor force participation (LFP) rates have taken a variety of trajectories across Europe, ranging from substantial gains to substantial losses (Cooke 2016). Relative to European countries, the United States ranks below the middle of the pack in LFP rates, showing little change in women's LFP. This has prompted scholars to speak of a "stalled gender revolution" in the United States (Blau and Kahn 2013; Casper and Bianchi 2009; England 2010; Sayer, Casper, and Cohen 2004). Researchers have generally looked to national family policies to explain some of this variability (for recent reviews, see Ferragina

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2019; Olivetti and Petrongolo 2017; Rubery and Figueiredo 2018). Cross-national and country-specific studies generally agree that national family policies play a role in women's LFP (although see Brady, Blome, and Kmec 2020; Steiber and Haas 2012). Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is typically considered employment supporting, particularly among mothers and mothers with young children (Boeckmann, Misra, and Budig 2015; Nieuwenhuis, Need, and Van der Kolk 2012; Pettit and Hook 2005, 2009; Steiber and Haas 2009; Uunk, Kalmijn, and Muffels 2005). Paid parental leave, in contrast, is generally considered employment supportive if well paid and of moderate length, but employment reducing if leave is "too long" (Boeckmann et al. 2015; Nieuwenhuis, Need, and Van der Kolk 2017; Thévenon and Solaz 2013).

Advances in the cross-national literature on women's employment reveal two key insights. First, the effects of family policies on women's employment may be heterogeneous within countries. Research has primarily focused on examining variability in effects by motherhood status and by women's "social class," typically conceptualized in this literature by educational attainment for theoretical and practical reasons (Grönlund and Magnusson 2016; Korpi, Ferrarini, and Englund 2013; Nieuwenhuis 2014; Pettit and Hook 2009; Steiber, Berghammer, and Haas 2016).[1] Although there is consensus that family policies affect mothers more than childless women (Boeckmann et al. 2015; Nieuwenhuis 2014), researchers disagree about the theoretical mechanisms and empirical findings regarding differential effects by mothers' educational attainment. Some scholars argue that policies disproportionately affect highly educated women, who have the most to gain from employment (Cipollone, Patacchini, and Vallanti 2014; Nieuwenhuis 2014; Pettit and Hook 2009), whereas other scholars argue that policies disproportionately affect lower-educated women, who are more sensitive to (dis)incentives (Del Boca, Pasqua, and Pronzato 2009; Korpi et al. 2013; Steiber et al. 2016).

Second, the effects of national family policies may be contingent on the overall institutional, cultural, or labor market context (Budig, Misra, and Boeckmann 2012; Estévez-Abe 2006, 2009; Thévenon 2016). For example, Thévenon (2016:491–2), in an analysis of aggregate rates of women's LFP in 18 countries from 1980 to 2007, found that spending on ECEC was positively associated with LFP in English-speaking and Southern European countries, but effects were null in Nordic and negative in Continental countries. He concludes that "institutional environment" matters, but it remains unclear what mechanisms underpin these relationships. Recent research has revealed that family policy effects are contingent and heterogeneous within countries, but there is little agreement on how, and researchers have yet to consider contextual factors that may shed light on both contingent and heterogeneous effects.

We contend that earnings inequality is a key contextual factor for understanding variation in family policy effects on mothers' employment *both* across and within countries by mothers' educational attainment. Although research has examined how women's employment affects income inequality *between households* (Esping-Andersen 2009; Nieuwenhuis, Van der Kolk, and Need 2017), earnings inequality has been largely disconnected from attempts to understand the contextual dependence of family policy effects or the heterogeneity of effects among women.[2] Earnings inequality, however, enters several explanations about why women work and which women do so. First, from an opportunity-costs perspective, earnings inequality affects the gap in monetary rewards between lower- and higher-educated women (Steiber et al. 2016). Second, earnings inequality is central to the need narrative, which focuses on how economic necessity pulls women into the labor market; this particularly applies to women partnered with low-earning men (Devereux 2004; Morissette and Hou 2008). Third, earnings inequality creates conditions for market-based solutions to meet demands for childcare, enabling highly educated

women to purchase care (Cooke 2011; Morgan 2005). All three of these mechanisms may have implications for how mothers respond to family policy (dis)incentives and for which mothers—higher- or lower-educated—respond most strongly.

Drawing on these three mechanisms, our central contribution is to develop theoretical expectations about how the two most widely studied national family policies—early childhood care and education (ECEC) and paid parental leave—interact with earnings inequality and mothers' educational attainment to influence mothers' employment. These two policies are of particular theoretical interest, as one captures state support for "work-facilitating" out-of-home nonparental care, and the other represents state support for "work-reducing" at-home maternal care. We explore a contextual feature that may jointly explain both contingent and heterogeneous family policy effects as well as clarifying the considerable debate about heterogeneity in effects by educational attainment. We test our expectations by linking micro-level data in a novel way, combining the EU-Labour Force Survey with the Current Population Survey to analyze employment data on approximately 1.2 million mothers nested within 299 country-years from 23 countries spanning 1999 to 2016. We pair this comparative longitudinal survey data with an original collection of macro-level data on policy, earnings inequality, labor market conditions, and norms about maternal employment to test our hypotheses across three commonly used indicators of women's labor force involvement (a) labor force participation, (b) employment, and (c) full-time employment in the group targeted by these interventions—mothers with young children. Using multilevel models, we find that earnings inequality matters. It moderates the association between family policies and mothers' employment and does so differentially by mothers' educational attainment. We conclude that earnings inequality is a key contextual factor for understanding the contingent and heterogeneous effects of national family policies.

Effects of National Family Policies on Mothers' Employment[3]

Public provision or subsidizing of childcare prior to school age is considered "work-facilitating" (Jacobs and Gerson 2004) because it redistributes caregiving labor disproportionately done by mothers from private households to the public domain. Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is associated with higher overall levels of women's employment (Christiansen 2016; Erhel and Guergoat-Larivière 2013; Jaumotte 2003; Thévenon 2016), particularly among mothers and mothers with young children (Boeckmann et al. 2015; Nieuwenhuis et al. 2012; Pettit and Hook 2005, 2009; Steiber and Haas 2009; Uunk et al. 2005).

This mechanism has been theorized to promote mothers' inclusion into the labor market and equality for mothers within the labor market (Pettit and Hook 2009). It has positive effects on mothers' working hours (Andringa, Nieuwenhuis, and Van Gerven 2015; Boeckmann et al. 2015) and preferences for longer working hours (Pollmann-Schult 2016), which allows mothers to compete with non-mothers and men. It also signals at least some public acceptance of working mothers (Gauthier 1996).

Paid leave around the birth of a child increases mothers' attachment to the labor force (Ruhm 1998), and moderate amounts of parental leave are generally considered employment supportive, especially if well paid (Boeckmann et al. 2015). Extended parental leaves and home-care allowances, however, are generally considered "work-reducing" (Jacobs and Gerson 2004) because they financially support caregiving within households, which is mostly done by mothers. Researchers have found that leaves longer than two years depress rather than facilitate employment (Nieuwenhuis, Need, and Van der Kolk 2017; Thévenon and Solaz 2013), although some studies fail to find negative effects (Keck and Saraceno 2013).

Long leave is theorized to be a mechanism that promotes both women's exclusion from

the labor market and inequality for women within the labor market (Pettit and Hook 2009). Extensions of leave delay return to work (for Austria, see Lalive and Zweimüller 2009; for Germany, see Ziefle and Gangl 2014). Long leaves encourage mothers to exit work for extended periods of time, often several years, which can erode women's human capital (Bergmann 2008; Pettit and Hook 2009) and signal weak acceptance of maternal employment (Gauthier 1996). Furthermore, researchers have argued that long leave promotes discrimination against mothers and women of childbearing age (Bergmann 2008; Glass and Fodor 2011; Shalev 2008).

Effects of Family Policies × Educational Attainment × Earnings Inequality

Higher rates of labor force participation among highly educated women are generally explained by the theory of opportunity costs. That is, women with higher levels of education have more to gain by being employed (or more to lose by staying home) because they have access to jobs with greater monetary and intrinsic rewards than do women with lower levels of education (Becker 1981 [1991]). Among partnered women, however, there is a competing "income effect," where women with higher levels of education may have less economic need to work because they are more likely to be partnered with a high-income earner. Conversely, women with lower levels of education may have more need to work (Killingsworth and Heckman 1986). Cross-national evidence demonstrates that the opportunity-cost effect prevails across Western countries (England, Gornick, and Shafer 2012; Evertsson et al. 2009; Steiber et al. 2016). Although educational gaps in women's employment are more salient in some countries than others (Cooke 2011; England et al. 2012; Evertsson et al. 2009; Hook and Pettit 2015; Pettit and Hook 2009), more highly educated women are more attached to the labor market, are less likely to work part-time, and have shorter employment interruptions after childbirth (England et al. 2012; Esping-Andersen 2009, 2016; Pettit and Hook 2009).[4] Researchers disagree, however, as to how the effects of family policies on women's employment vary by women's educational attainment.

In the following sections, we build hypotheses about the three-way interaction between family policies, earnings inequality, and women's educational attainment. In total, we draw on four perspectives (two different interpretations of opportunity costs, the need narrative, and the market care perspective) to produce three distinct hypotheses about ECEC and two about longer-duration parental leave. In our hypotheses we refer to mothers' employment, but our hypotheses apply across common indicators of women's labor force involvement. We test our hypotheses across three indicators—labor force participation, employment, and full-time employment—but with respect to our hypotheses we are agnostic about differences across indicators.

Opportunity costs #1: Matthew effect. Drawing on opportunity costs, one line of reasoning suggests that policies promote employment among the women with the most to gain from employment (Pettit and Hook 2009). We refer to this as the *Matthew effect hypothesis*: the largest benefit accrues to the most advantaged (see Pavolini and Van Lancker 2018). Similarly, some argue that lower-educated women suffer from such low job quality that family policies fail to promote employment; thus, in terms of employment, more highly educated women are more responsive to family policies (Cipollone et al. 2014). Cross-country research has found that publicly provided childcare promotes employment more among highly educated women than among other women (Pettit and Hook 2009), and higher-educated mothers are most likely to use ECEC (Ghysels and Van Lancker 2011; Pavolini and Van Lancker 2018).

Conversely, work-reducing policies, such as extended parental leaves or low-paid homecare allowances, are disproportionately used by lower-educated and immigrant mothers (Bungum and Kvande 2013; Morgan and Zippel 2003). Highly educated mothers have more

Table 1. Effects of Family Policies, Earnings Inequality, and Educational Attainment on Mothers' Employment, Summary of Predictions and Findings

	Opportunity Costs #1 Matthew Effect	Opportunity Costs #2 Pulled In	Need Narrative	Market Care
Two-Way Interactions (Model 2)				
ECEC x Tertiary-Educated	more positive for tertiary; most to gain from LFP	**more positive for non-tertiary; more sensitive to policy**	**more positive for non-tertiary; greatest economic need to work**	unclear (see M3)
Long Leave x Tertiary-Educated	less negative for tertiary; greater monetary incentive to work	less negative for tertiary; less sensitive to policy incentives	**less negative for non-tertiary; less ability to take low-paid leave**	no prediction
Inequality x Tertiary-Educated	increases incentive for tertiary to be in LF (may depress non-tertiary)	increases incentive for tertiary to be in LF (may depress non-tertiary)	**pulls non-tertiary into LF** (may depress tertiary)	creates conditions for market care, boosting LFP of tertiary
Three-Way Interactions (Model 3)				
ECEC x Tertiary x Inequality	most positive for tertiary in high inequality (ECEC 1)	**most positive for non-tertiary in high inequality (ECEC 2)**	**most positive for non-tertiary in high inequality (ECEC 2)**	**has no effect for tertiary in high inequality (ECEC 3),** but is most positive for tertiary in low inequality
Long Leave x Tertiary x Inequality	most negative for non-tertiary high inequality (Leave 1)	most negative for non-tertiary high inequality (Leave 1)	most negative for tertiary high inequality (Leave 2); partially supported	no prediction

Note: ECEC = early childhood education and care. All models assume main effects of ECEC and tertiary education are positive, and long leave is negative, which is supported by Model 1. Bold = hypothesis supported.

to lose by exiting the labor market in both current forgone wages and future returns. For professional women, career discontinuity can have severe consequences for future career trajectory, pay, and promotion, whether caused by the erosion of human capital or employer discrimination (Bertrand, Goldin, and Katz 2010; Judiesch and Lyness 1999). Professional women thus may be less likely to use work-reducing policies because they are more penalized for doing so. In summary, the Matthew effect interpretation of opportunity costs suggests highly educated mothers should be more likely to respond to employment incentives created by ECEC but less likely to respond to policy disincentives created by extended parental leaves. Predicted two-way interactions between family policies and educational attainment are summarized in Table 1.

Extending the Matthew effect hypothesis, we hypothesized that highly educated mothers in high-inequality contexts benefit the most from ECEC provision because they have the most to gain monetarily from employment. College-educated women command higher average wages (Crivellaro 2016; Hout 2012).

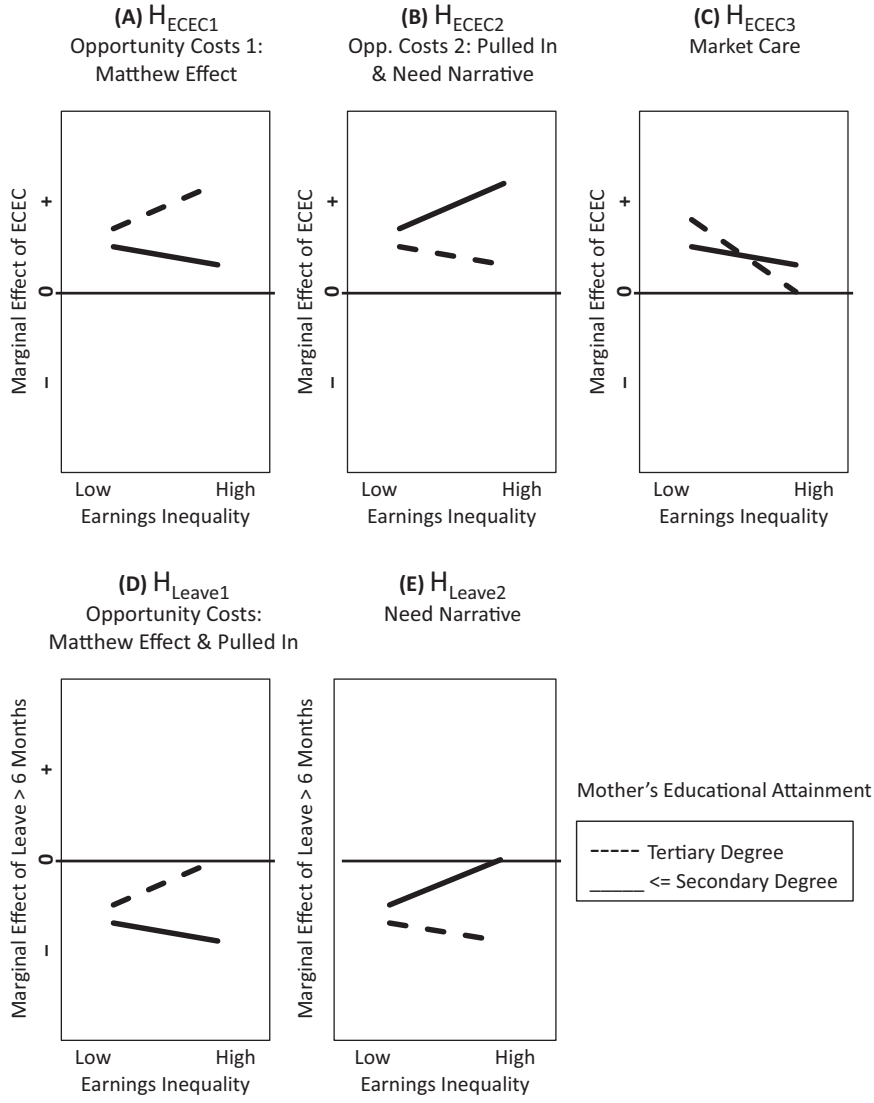


Figure 1. Hypothesized Marginal Effect of Three-Way Interaction between Family Policy, Earnings Inequality, and Mothers' Educational Attainment on Mothers' Employment

Although there is wage dispersion within educational groups (Altonji, Blom, and Meghir 2012; Gerber and Cheung 2008) and the college wage premium varies across time and place (Crivellaro 2016), the value of these higher wages will be greater in high-wage-inequality contexts and the value of lower wages will be smaller (Steiber et al. 2016). In low-wage-inequality contexts, in contrast, opportunity costs between women with higher and lower levels of educational attainment are compressed; that is, low-wage-inequality contexts generally combine a higher wage floor with a lower wage ceiling.

This hypothesized three-way interaction between ECEC, earnings inequality, and women's educational attainment is shown as H_{ECEC1} (opportunity costs #1: Matthew effect) in Figure 1. Figure 1 shows the hypothesized effects of family policies on mothers' employment by mothers' educational attainment as earnings inequality moves from low to high. At all levels of earnings inequality, we anticipate positive effects of ECEC spending on

mothers' employment. Specifically, *Hypothesis$_{ECEC1}$ (opportunity costs #1 Matthew effect): the positive effect of ECEC on employment will be largest for tertiary-educated mothers in high-inequality settings and smallest for non-tertiary-educated mothers in high-inequality settings.*

We expected a different relationship for employment-reducing policies such as long-duration parental leave. Consistent with the reasoning behind the Matthew effect, mothers with the most to gain from employment—highly educated mothers in high-inequality contexts—should be the *least* affected by parental leave. Conversely, parental leave should reduce employment most for the women with the least to gain from employment—lower-educated mothers (Bungum and Kvande 2013; Morgan and Zippel 2003) in high-inequality contexts. Figure 1 shows this as H_{Leave1} (opportunity costs). At all levels of inequality, we anticipate no or negative effects of paid leave on mothers' employment. Specifically, *Hypothesis$_{Leave1}$ (opportunity costs): the negative effect of paid leave will be largest for mothers without a tertiary degree in high-inequality settings and is expected to be near zero for tertiary-educated mothers in high-inequality settings.* Predicted three-way interactions between family policies, educational attainment, and earnings inequality are summarized in Table 1.

Opportunity costs #2: pulled in. Other researchers argue for a different interpretation of opportunity costs. They reason that opportunity costs are such that highly educated women remain in the labor force regardless of policy, but policy can shift less-educated women's opportunity costs to incentivize or disincentivize employment. Del Boca and colleagues (2009:il66) argue that "given their lower potential wage and lower status in the labour market, women with less education face higher costs of participation . . . they are more sensitive to changes in income and prices than women with more education and better labour market opportunities." They found larger effect sizes for childcare availability and parental leave length for non-tertiary-educated women than for tertiary-educated women.[5] Higher ECEC provision increases the potential gain for mothers who would otherwise find little financial incentive in employment. That is, ECEC "pulls in" lower-educated mothers who would otherwise stay at home (Evertsson et al. 2009; Steiber et al. 2016). We refer to this as the *pulled-in hypothesis*. Because this perspective argues that lower-educated women are simply more sensitive to policy variation, the pulled-in interpretation of opportunity costs suggests lower-educated mothers should be more likely to increase employment in response to ECEC *and* more likely to decrease employment in response to long parental leave.[6]

Extending the *pulled-in hypothesis* into a second hypothesis about ECEC, lower-educated mothers in high-inequality settings should benefit the most from ECEC because they have the least to gain financially from employment and thus should be the most sensitive to employment incentives; conversely, higher-educated mothers in high-inequality settings should benefit the least because those with the most to gain should already be in the labor force. Figure 1 depicts this relationship as H_{ECEC2} (opportunity costs #2 pulled in). It is identical to H_{ECEC1} (Matthew effect) but the relative position of the groups is switched; non-tertiary-educated mothers now appear at the top of the graph. Specifically, *Hypothesis$_{ECEC2}$ (opportunity costs #2 pulled in): the positive effect of ECEC on employment will be largest for non-tertiary-educated mothers in high-inequality settings and smallest for tertiary-educated mothers in high-inequality settings.*

From the pulled-in perspective, expectations about parental leave are the same as H_{Leave1} (opportunity costs): lower-educated mothers, particularly in high-inequality contexts, should be the most affected by parental leave, as they should be the most sensitive to monetary policy (dis)incentives. Predicted interactions are summarized in Table 1.

Need narrative. The pulled-in hypothesis for ECEC is consistent with the need narrative, which focuses on how economic

necessity pulls women into the labor market, particularly women partnered with low-earning men. Although women are less responsive to their partners' earnings now than in the past (Blau and Kahn 2007; Goldin 1990; Juhn and Murphy 1997), the need narrative finds some support in the literature (Devereux 2004; Morissette and Hou 2008). For example, Devereux (2004) found that in the United States from 1980 to 1990, about half of the growth in LFP among women who dropped out of high school was explained by the decline in their husbands' wages; thus, growing inequality in men's wages had a significant effect on the growth of LFP among less-educated women during this period. Because of educational homogamy in marriage, which is stronger at higher levels of inequality (Fernandez, Guner, and Knowles 2005; Torche 2010), the need narrative suggests lower-educated women benefit the most from ECEC, particularly in high-inequality settings where educational homogamy and the need to work would be greatest.

Predictions for parental leave, however, depart from those derived from the opportunity-costs perspectives (both the Matthew effect and pulled-in variants). The need narrative suggests lower-educated women, particularly in high-inequality settings, simply cannot afford to take leave if it is not highly paid. Unpaid and low-paid leave may not be used by low- and middle-income families because they cannot afford the lost earnings (Ray, Gornick, and Schmitt 2010). This is consistent with findings of greater use of paid leave among families with higher-educated mothers (Ghysels and Van Lancker 2011). We expect this to be most acute for families in high-inequality contexts. For example, the most common reason employees report for not using job-protected unpaid leave in the United States is that they could not afford to take leave (Cantor et al. 2001). Figure 1 depicts this relationship as H_{Leave2} (need narrative). It is identical to H_{Leave1} (opportunity costs) but the relative position of the groups is switched; non-tertiary-educated mothers now appear at the top of the graph. Specifically, *Hypothesis$_{Leave2}$ (need narrative): the negative effect of paid leave will be largest for mothers with a tertiary degree in high-inequality settings and is expected to be near zero for non-tertiary-educated mothers in high-inequality settings.* Predicted interactions are summarized in Table 1.

Market care. Finally, the literature suggests a third hypothesis for ECEC. Hook (2015) contends that we must consider the alternatives to state or family care—which partly depend on levels of earnings inequality—when seeking to understand women's employment decisions. Likewise, she proposes examining how access to alternatives varies by women's educational attainment. In countries with high levels of earnings inequality, market-based solutions meet some of the demand for childcare through low-wage work and unregulated entrance into the childcare profession (Morgan 2005). That is, income differentials allow women with higher earnings to purchase care, whereas women with low earnings are frozen out, magnifying differences by social class (Cooke 2011; Esping-Andersen 1999; Estévez-Abe and Hethey-Maier 2014; Shalev 2008). Research on the United States, for example, has found that the educational divide in women's housework time and service spending is wider where income inequality is higher (Schneider and Hastings 2017). Similarly, where low-skilled immigration is higher, there is a smaller tradeoff between work and childbearing for tertiary-educated, native-born women (Furtado and Hock 2010), with women at the top quartile of the wage distribution working longer hours, spending less time on housework, and spending more money on domestic services (Cortes and Tessada 2011). The argument is that in high-inequality contexts, highly educated mothers do not increase employment with ECEC expansion because ECEC simply crowds out (or subsidizes) the market-based or informal care (Havnes and Mogstad 2011) that highly educated mothers are already using.

In contrast, where earnings inequality is low, the market is not as effective at providing childcare (Morgan 2005). In Germany, for example, wage equality has prevented the

growth of affordable market-based childcare (Cooke 2011). Even highly educated mothers face a barrier to employment when there is low availability of both state- and market-based care (Cooke 2011; Keck and Saraceno 2013; Pettit and Hook 2009). Thus, in low-inequality settings, ECEC should most benefit highly educated mothers because they have the highest incentive to be employed (opportunity costs) but lack access to state or market care and thus may be frozen out of the labor market. Figure 1 depicts this relationship as H_{ECEC3} (market care). The relative position of the two educational groups switches as earnings inequality moves from low to high: tertiary-educated mothers appear at the top of the graph in low-inequality settings but at the bottom in high-inequality settings. Specifically, *Hypothesis$_{ECEC3}$ (market care): the positive effect of ECEC on employment will be largest for tertiary-educated mothers in low-inequality settings and smallest for tertiary-educated mothers in high-inequality settings.*

RESEARCH STRATEGY

Micro-Level Data and Sample

To test the five hypotheses summarized in Figure 1, we used anonymized quarterly microdata from the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) (Eurostat 2018). To include the United States, we used microdata from the Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement (Annual Demographic File prior to 2003) of the Current Population Survey (CPS) provided via the IPUMS-CPS database (Flood et al. 2018). Given that we were interested in a limited set of basic measures, the EU-LFS is comparable to the CPS and the two can be used together, as shown in recent studies (e.g., Biegert 2017; Hipp and Leuze 2015).

The EU-LFS provides comparable, harmonized data, collected by each country's national statistical agency and subsequently provided to Eurostat. Data collection can differ from country to country, but the EU-LFS aids comparability across countries and over time by using the same definitions following International Labour Organization (ILO) guidelines and using common classification systems, such as the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).

We restricted the observation period from 1999 to 2016. Although microdata exist for many countries from 1992, we began with 1999 because there was a series break in OECD ECEC data between 1997 and 1998 in most countries, which severely limited the comparability of earlier and later data. Thus, we began our macrodata series in 1998, which corresponds to 1999 using a one-year lag. We retained all country-years necessary to construct our sample and measures. We used the spring quarter sample but pulled in adjacent quarters for nine countries with relatively small sample sizes.

We restricted the analyses to mothers of young children (age 0 to 4) who were household heads or partners, age 20 to 49, and were not in compulsory military service. Note that we were constrained to five-year age-band restrictions for both adults and children in the EU-LFS data. We omitted mothers in same-sex partnerships because they are small in number and retaining these cases would add an additional level of nesting. Until the EU-LFS began collecting detailed household information (beginning in 1998 to 2009 depending on the country), the only way to derive partnership and parenthood variables is to use the variable HHLINK, which describes each household member's relationship to the household head. The vast majority of women who are not heads or partners are adult children living in the parental home.

We omitted surveys with problematic patterns of missing data, often arising from large missingness on one variable such as education. Retained surveys have missing data for fewer than 5 percent of cases (mean = .5 percent, median = 0). We deleted respondents with missing data listwise. We also omitted surveys missing required macrodata. The final sample size is $N = 1{,}185{,}740$ mothers in 299 country-years from 23 countries. Appendix Table A1 lists the countries, years of

observation, and minimum sample size per country.

Micro-Level Measures

We analyzed three dependent variables—labor force participation (LFP), any employment, and full-time employment—to test our hypotheses across the three indicators most commonly used in other studies.[7] We use respondents' labor force status (ILOSTAT) to measure LFP and employment. LFP status was coded as in the labor force if the respondent reported being employed or unemployed. The reference category is inactive (not employed and not actively looking for work), which best captures mothers who have exited the labor force during early childrearing. Consistent with ILO definitions, employed includes any employment, regardless of type, amount, or absence. Respondents were coded as employed if they did one hour or more of work for pay or profit during the reference week; this included women working in a family business or those who had a job but were absent, as well as mothers who were employed prior to maternity or parental leave and were still on job-protected leave. The reference category is not employed (inactive or unemployed). Full-time employment was created from respondents' reports about their status in their main job (FTPT), except in the Netherlands, which uses a 35-hour threshold. Results are robust to using a 35-hour threshold for all countries. The measure covers all employed individuals regardless of absence. The reference category is not employed full-time (inactive, unemployed, or employed part-time).

The EU-LFS codes education into lower secondary, upper secondary, and tertiary. For the 2016 data, this corresponds to the 2011 ISCED levels 0 to 2, 3 to 4, and 5 to 8, respectively. We collapsed lower and upper secondary into one category and compared it to tertiary attainment. In the United States, this corresponds to collapsing less than high school and high school degree into non-tertiary; an associate's degree is the minimum credential for tertiary. Preliminary analyses indicated that patterns for mothers completing upper secondary were much more similar to mothers with lower-secondary attainment than to mothers with a tertiary degree. Most non-tertiary-educated mothers have completed upper secondary. In 2016, only 16 percent of mothers in our sample reported their highest attainment as lower secondary, and prevalence ranged as low as 5 to 10 percent in nearly half of the countries observed.[8]

We controlled for age, number of children, partnership status, and number of household adults age 65 and over. In preliminary models, we included whether the respondent was foreign-born; including this measure resulted in the loss of country-years, and its removal from the model did not affect the substantive results. Number of children and adults age 65 and over were created from the household roster; number of children was top-coded at four and number of adults was top-coded at two. Women were coded as partnered if they reported living with a partner. Cohabitation as a substitute for marriage is extremely common in some countries we observe, but cohabitation in any form is nearly nonexistent (among mothers with young children) in others (Hiekel, Liefbroer, and Poortman 2014). Given the wide variance in the existence and meaning of cohabitation across contexts, we collapse marriage and cohabitation.

Macro-Level Data and Measures

We used an original collection of macro-level data, with data for each of the 299 country-years in the microdata. Our indicators included measures of family policy and earnings inequality, as well as four control variables assessing labor market conditions and gender egalitarianism. Macro-level measures were lagged one year prior to the micro-level survey.

Spending on early childhood education and care (ECEC). How countries choose to support ECEC is complex and varies widely. Spending on ECEC may include spending on public facilities, subsidies to

private and nonprofit providers of center and home-based care, and transfers to families for purchasing care via tax relief, vouchers, or allowances (European Commission 2014). Given the difficulty in obtaining valid measures of support for ECEC via publicly supported enrollment across a large set of countries and over time,[9] we used a spending-based measure. We used ECEC spending per child under the primary school starting age. From the OECD Family Database (OECD 2019b), we took spending in the millions in constant prices of national currency, adjusted it for purchasing power parities (PPP) (OECD 2019a), and divided by the number of children (United Nations Statistics Division 2019) under school starting age (OECD 2018). In some—mostly federal—countries, the data do not fully capture local-government spending. Spending, however, encompasses the varied approaches governments take to ECEC, and there is a strong correlation between spending and enrollment (Van Belle 2016).

Months of paid parental leave. Although leave-policy design is complex and often combines periods of well-paid maternity or parental leave with periods of low-paid parental leave or home-care allowance (Ray et al. 2010), we were centrally interested in the maximum length of time the state will pay a mother to care for her child at home. Parental leave is taken from the OECD Family Database (OECD 2019b).[10] Data for Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia were constructed from multiple sources (Janta and Stewart 2018; Karu and Pall 2009; Korintus and Stropnik 2009; Robila 2012; Stropnik 2003). We used the measure of total weeks of paid parental leave, which reflects the number of weeks a mother can receive payments associated with maternity, parental, and extended leave, regardless of employment protection. We divide this measure by 4.3 weeks per month.

Given previous findings of a curvilinear relationship between leave and women's employment, we tested eight specifications of paid parental leave. We tested a linear measure, a curvilinear measure (i.e., included a squared term), and splines with one knot at either 3, 6, 9, 15, 18, or 21 months. Fit statistics strongly preferred a spline at 3 or 6 months to all other specifications. Given that fit statistics and substantive results were highly similar for the 3 and 6 month specifications, we used 6 months because this better captured our theoretical interest in distinguishing periods of longer leave. Thus, one continuous variable quantified the effect of the number of months 0 to 6, and a second continuous variable quantified the effect of the number of months greater than 6 months. This allows "short" leave to have different effects from "long" leave. The cut point at six months is shorter than the inflection point of the curvilinear term generally found in the cross-national literature.

Earnings inequality—women's P90/P10. We used women's P90/P10, which is the ratio of gross earnings of female full-time employees at the 90th compared to the 10th percentile. We chose to use a measure of inequality based on women's individual earnings, because this is most consistent with the mechanism of opportunity costs specified in the majority of our hypotheses, whereas household income includes other sources of income and is adjusted for household size. Additionally, household income is affected by variation in our dependent variables (Nieuwenhuis, Van der Kolk, and Need 2017). Data were taken from the OECD Income Distribution Database (OECD 2019c). Several countries provide data every two to four years. We fill these gaps using interpolation.

The correlations between available measures of earnings inequality were high. Women's P90/P10 was highly correlated with women's P90/P50 (.87) and P50/P10 (.78). Similarly, men's and women's P90/P10s were highly correlated (.92) as were their P90/P50s (.87) and P50/P10s (.89). Substantive conclusions were robust to women's, men's, and total P90/P10, P90/P50, and P50/P10. Although we would have liked to test the

sensitivity of results to net earnings, these data were not available. We tested the sensitivity of results to controlling for the tax position of secondary earners, but we did not include this variable in the final model because it resulted in a loss of countries and country-years. Results are robust to its inclusion.

The P90/P10 is highly correlated with the incidence of low pay (share of full-time workers earning less than two-thirds of the gross median earnings of all full-time workers) and high pay (share earning more than 1.5 times the gross median earnings). Correlations are .87 ($n = 287$) and .88 ($n = 186$), respectively. The P90/P10 is not highly correlated with the gender wage gap (.29, $n = 299$).

Women's unemployment rate. We controlled for women's unemployment rate, which was taken from the World Bank DataBank, national estimates (World Bank 2017).

GDP growth rate. To control for economic conditions, we included the annual GDP growth rate, which was taken from the World Bank DataBank (World Bank 2017).

Women's part-time employment rate. Part-time work is generally viewed as a mechanism to incorporate mothers into the labor force because it allows women to "reconcile" motherhood and employment, often without using formal childcare services (Fagan and O'Reilly 1998; Sándor 2011). The availability of part-time work may affect maternal employment, so we included it as a control. Data were taken from the OECD Employment and Labour Market Statistics (OECD 2019d). We took the incidence of part-time employment among dependent employees as a percentage of women's total employment, using national definitions. This may refer to workers' self-identification as a part-time worker or to a cut-off (generally 30 or 35 hours per week) based on usual or actual hours in the reference week.

Gender egalitarianism. Research has found that egalitarian gender norms are associated with women's employment and with family policies (Boeckmann et al. 2015; Uunk 2015; but see Uunk and Lersch 2019). Although research has found that gender norms do not alter family policy effects on employment (Uunk et al. 2005), we included a control for gender egalitarianism. Consistent with previous research, we used a measure gauging attitudes toward maternal employment (Boeckmann et al. 2015).

For European countries, we used data from the European Values Surveys (EVS; 1990 to 1992, 1999 to 2000, 2008 to 2009, 2017 to 2018) and the World Values Surveys (WVS; 1990, 2010 to 2012) (EVS 2015, 2019; WVS 2015). For the United States, we used the General Social Surveys (GSS; even years 1998 to 2016) (Smith et al. 2019). We used an item asking respondents, on a four-point scale, how much they agreed with the statement "a preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works": agree strongly, agree, disagree, and disagree strongly. We created a continuous measure of the country-year mean where higher scores indicated stronger support for egalitarianism. Data were weighted and values between surveys were interpolated.[11]

Method

We used a three-level logistic regression, with individuals nested within country-years ($n = 299$) within countries ($n = 23$). Although we could potentially have cross-classified country-years as nested within countries and years, it was unnecessary because we include no year-level variables (Schmidt-Catran and Fairbrother 2015). We tested four time specifications: linear; year dummies; Great Recession period dummies for before (1999 to 2008), during (2009 to 2013), and after (2014 to 2016);[12] and a cross-classified model. The linear specification was preferred and the level-2 results were consistent across approaches. Nesting country-years within countries is commonly used when analyzing repeated cross-sectional surveys (e.g., van Hek, Buchmann, and Kraaykamp 2019).

Empty models indicated that about 11 to 15 percent of variance in mothers' employment outcomes was at the macro level. The majority of variation at the macro level was at the country level. Country-year added an additional .7 to 1.0 percent of variation depending on the outcome. Given serial correlation in time-series data, it is not surprising that country is the major source of correlation between observations within the same country-year. Intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC) for each outcome are shown in Appendix Table A2.

At the country level, we included a random intercept. At the country-year level we included a random intercept and a random coefficient for education to allow the slope of education to vary. Because constraining level-1 effects can reduce the precision of contextual effects, we tested allowing other coefficients to vary randomly, seeking a balance between flexibility and parsimony (Heisig, Schaeffer, and Giesecke 2017). Although model fit statistics favored random coefficients on all individual-level variables, results for level-2 variables were stable across specifications. Thus, we only retained the random slope for education.

Individual (level-1) variables were centered within clusters. The decision to center within clusters meant we could purge level-1 variables of between-cluster mean differences and create variables that are uncorrelated with level-2 variables. Centering within clusters at level 1 is preferred to grand-mean centering when testing cross-level interactions. Country-year (level-2) variables were grand-mean centered, which is preferred to raw metrics when testing level-2 interactions (Enders and Tofighi 2007). See Part A of the online supplement for equations and a discussion of alternative modeling strategies (fixed effects, random-effects within-between, and Bayesian models).

In this type of analysis, there is always concern about sufficient *N* at the macro level, especially in complex models for binary outcomes. Two concerns are primary. First, results are sensitive to outlying countries. We tested the robustness of our results to outliers with the omission of (1) each individual country and (2) seven country clusters.[13] Second, the behavior of estimation techniques for multilevel models in small samples can be problematic, producing standard errors that are too small and thus anticonservative (Bryan and Jenkins 2015; Schmidt-Catran, Fairbrother, and Andreß 2019). There is considerable debate about how many countries are enough, but a widely cited paper by Bryan and Jenkins (2015) concludes that at least 30 to 35 countries are required in multilevel logistic models to derive accurate results.

Consistent with recent research (e.g., Taiji and Mills 2020), we use comparative longitudinal survey data to partially address concerns about estimation in small-*N* designs (Fairbrother 2014; Schmidt-Catran et al. 2019). Our macro-level variables vary by country-year ($n = 299$). We observe 299 unique values for ECEC and earnings inequality. Our measure of parental leave has only 41 unique values, but we are primarily interested in its interaction with earnings inequality, yielding 299 unique combinations. Exploiting variation by country and year helps mitigate small sample problems for quantities of interest. At the country level, however, variance components may be underestimated, providing incorrect estimates of ICCs (Bryan and Jenkins 2015). This is a core limitation of this and similar analyses, but our design minimizes the effect on substantive results.

Because a standard multilevel model does not net out time-invariant differences between countries, we had concerns about omitted variable bias. To guard against detecting a spurious relationship, we included the variables most likely to explain the relationship between the policy-inequality interaction and women's employment. We included labor market conditions that may have been related to both earnings inequality and women's employment (female unemployment, GDP growth, prevalence of part-time work); we also included gender culture, which may be related to both family policy and women's employment.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SD	Minimum		Maximum	
Individuals (N = 1,185,740)						
In the Labor Force (%)	62.8	15.8	25.0	CZ01	90.4	PT15
Employed (%)	56.5	15.0	19.8	CZ01	85.1	SI07
Full-Time (%)	37.2	15.5	6.5	NL04	80.5	SI03
Tertiary Degree (%)	35.6	12.4	10.1	CZ99	59.8	LT15
Age	32.3	1.2	28.6	CZ99	35.1	ES15
Number of Children	1.9	.1	1.6	PT15	2.1	IE06
Partner (%)	90.4	5.2	76.1	UK11	97.9	ES06
Number of Adults Age 65+	2.3	2.3	.0	SE09	12.5	PL02
Country-Years (N = 299)						
ECEC Expenditure ($1,000s per child)[a]	2.9	1.6	.2	GR11	8.9	LU14
Months Paid Leave ≤ 6 Months	5.4	1.5	.0	US	6.0	Many
Months Paid Leave > 6 Months	11.0	13.1	.0	US	43.8	CZ99-08
Women's P90/P10 (ratio)	3.1	.6	2.0	SE09	4.7	PT05
Part-Time Prevalence (%)	25.5	16.6	2.7	SK03	75.5	NL14
Gender Egalitarianism (scale)	2.5	.3	2.0	IT99	3.1	SE09
Female Unemployment (%)	9.4	4.7	2.9	NL03	31.4	GR14
GDP Growth (%)	1.5	3.6	–14.6	EE10	24.4	IE16

[a]ECEC expenditure per child under primary-school starting age in PPP adjusted U.S. dollars, in thousands.
Note: AT = Austria, BE = Belgium, CZ = Czechia, DE = Germany, EE = Estonia, ES = Spain, FI = Finland, FR = France, GR = Greece, HU = Hungary, IE = Ireland, IT = Italy, LT = Lithuania, LU = Luxembourg, LV = Latvia, NL = Netherlands, PL = Poland, PT = Portugal, SI = Slovenia, SK = Slovakia, SE = Sweden, UK = United Kingdom, US = United States.

RESULTS

Descriptive

Across the 299 country-years, about 63 percent of mothers with young children (age 0 to 4) were in the labor force. As shown in Table 2, this ranges from a low of one-quarter (Czechia 2001) to over nine-in-ten (Portugal 2015). Figure 2 displays variation by educational attainment, country, and time. It shows large variations across countries in rates and trends as well as in the educational gap. Table 2 also shows substantial variation across country-years in educational attainment and the demographic composition of mothers and their households.

The second half of Table 2 displays descriptive statistics for the country-year variables. We see sizable variation in all country-year variables. For example, mean yearly spending on ECEC is approximately $2,900 per child (SD = $1,633). Mean months of paid parental leave of six months or less is 5.4 months, reflecting that at least six months of paid leave is offered in 80 percent of observed country-years; only the United States and Spain consistently report less than six months of paid leave during the observation window. Mean months of paid parental leave *over* six months is 11 months (SD = 13.1 months). The mean of women's P90/P10 ratio is 3.1 (SD = .6), indicating that on average across country-years, women at the 90th percentile earn 3.1 times as much as women at the 10th percentile of women's earnings distribution. The ratio ranges from approximately 2.0 to 4.7. Figure A of the online supplement displays scatterplots of country-year indicators of interest, showing family policy indicators by women's earnings inequality.

Main Effects

We begin by reviewing the main effects of educational attainment, family policies, and earnings inequality on employment (Model 1)

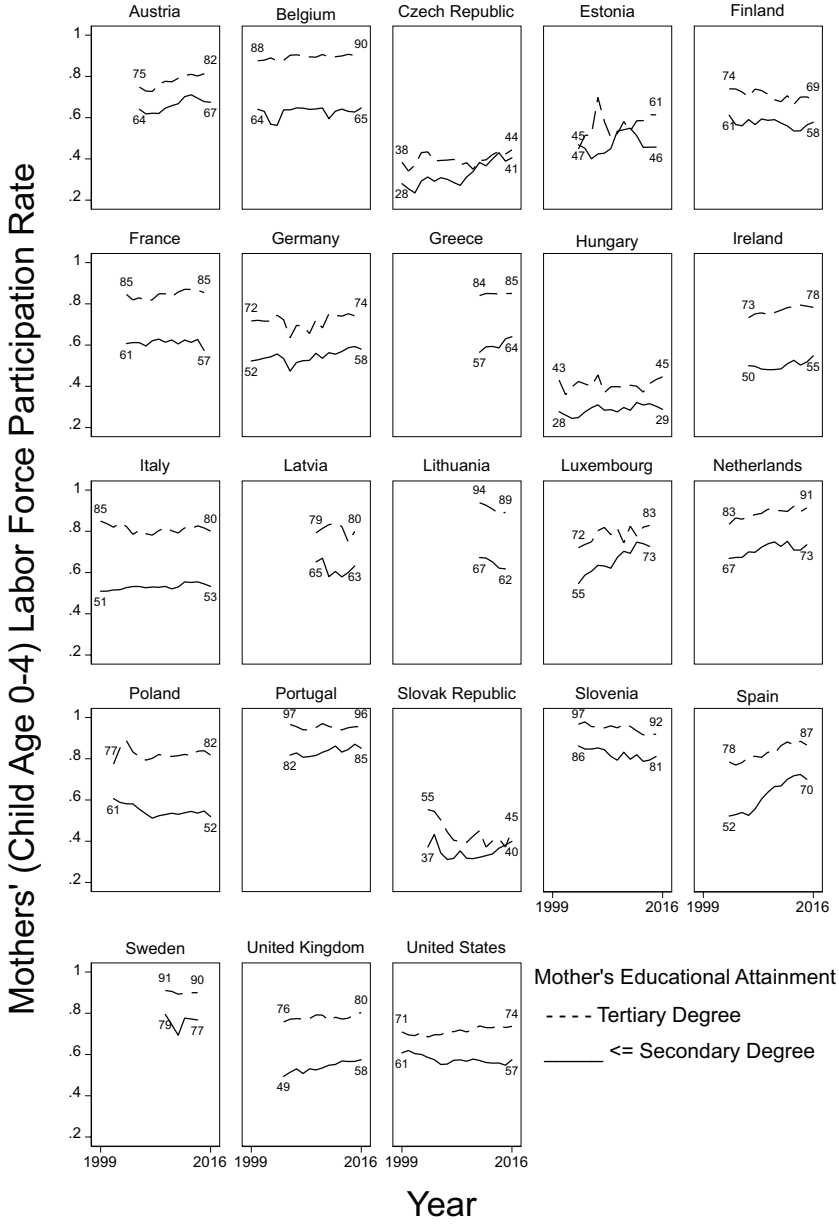


Figure 2. Labor Force Participation Rates among Mothers of Children Ages 0 to 4 by Educational Attainment, Year, and Country
Note: Unadjusted labor force participation rates.

as shown in Table 3. Consistent with previous research, tertiary-educated mothers are more likely to be in the labor force, employed, and employed full-time (FT) than are lower-educated mothers. ECEC expenditure is positively associated with mothers' LFP, employment, and FT. As shown by the odds ratios, an additional $1,000 of ECEC spending per child is associated with an increase in the odds of mothers of young children being

Table 3. Multilevel Logistic Regression, Main Effects Only, Odd Ratios

	In Labor Force	Employed	Full-Time
Tertiary Degree	2.160***	2.347***	2.097***
	(.055)	(.054)	(.043)
ECEC Expend	1.079***	1.075***	1.055***
	(.016)	(.015)	(.017)
Paid Leave ≤ 6 Months	1.029	1.002	1.017
	(.018)	(.016)	(.019)
Paid Leave > 6 Months	.992***	.992***	.994**
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Women's P90/10	1.053	1.086*	1.130**
	(.042)	(.040)	(.048)
Country-Year Controls			
Unemployment	1.021***	.994**	1.003
	(.003)	(.002)	(.003)
GDP Growth	1.000	1.006***	1.008***
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Part-Time Prevalence	1.004	1.001	.973***
	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)
Gender Norms	1.052	1.021	.943
	(.109)	(.099)	(.105)
Year	.996	.995	1.000
	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)
Individual Controls			
Age	1.057***	1.062***	1.042***
	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)
Number of Children	.619***	.626***	.631***
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Partnered	.907***	1.175***	1.036 ***
	(.007)	(.008)	(.008)
Number of Adults	1.123***	1.161***	1.184***
Age 65+	(.015)	(.015)	(.015)
Variance Components			
Country: Intercept	.433**	.343***	.337***
	(.129)	(.104)	(.101)
Country-Year:			
Intercept	.175***	.145***	.114***
	(.016)	(.013)	(.010)
Tertiary Degree	.009***	.008***	.011***
	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)
ICC: Country	.116	.094	.093
ICC: Country-Year	.119	.096	.096
AIC	121294	125164	118037
BIC	121443	125314	118187

Note: Exponentiated coefficients; standard errors are in parentheses. ICC = intraclass correlation coefficient.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

employed by 7.5 percent. In the metric of predicted probabilities, a one SD increase in ECEC ($1,630) is associated with a 2.3 percentage-point increase in the predicted probability of employment.

Paid parental leave of six months or less is not associated with any outcome. Paid parental leave greater than six months, however, is negatively associated with all outcomes. An additional month of paid parental leave or

Table 4. Marginal Effects of Country-Year Context on Employment Outcomes by Educational Attainment

Marginal Effect of. . .	. . . on Probability	≤ Secondary	Tertiary
ECEC Expenditure per Child (in 1,000s)	LFP	.019***	.006*†
		(.003)	(.003)
	Employed	.020***	.005†
		(.003)	(.003)
	Full-Time	.016***	.003†
		(.003)	(.004)
Months of Paid Leave ≤ 6 Months	LFP	.002	.019***†
		(.004)	(.003)
	Employed	−.005	.013***†
		(.004)	(.003)
	Full-Time	−.003	.018***†
		(.004)	(.004)
Months of Paid Leave > 6 Months	LFP	.000	−.004***†
		(.000)	(.000)
	Employed	.000	−.004***†
		(.000)	(.000)
	Full-Time	.000	−.004***†
		(.000)	(.000)
Women's Earnings Inequality P90/10	LFP	.020*	−.004†
		(.009)	(.007)
	Employed	.026***	−.003†
		(.009)	(.008)
	Full-Time	.024**	.015
		(.008)	(.010)

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses. Appendix Table A3 presents the full table. Marginal effects are based on a linear predictor that includes both the fixed and random effects.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests). † = Effects differ by educational attainment ($p < .05$).

home-care allowance over six months is associated with a decrease in the odds of mothers of young children being employed by .8 percent, with similar magnitudes for LFP and FT. A one SD increase in leave (13 months) is associated with a 2.5 percentage-point decrease in the predicted probability of employment.

Earnings inequality is positively associated with mothers' employment and FT. A one unit increase in the P90/P10 ratio is associated with an increase in the odds of mothers of young children being employed by 8.6 percent. This translates to a 1.0 percentage-point increase in the predicted probability of employment for a one SD increase in the P90/P10 ratio (SD = .64).

To validate that we are capturing the association of family policy with mothers' employment outcomes, we replicated this model on a sample restricted to childless women age 20 to 39. There are no effects of ECEC spending or paid parental leave on any of the outcomes; odds ratios are 1.0 or close to it, providing greater confidence in our results.

Context by Educational Attainment

Next, we examine the interaction between educational attainment and our macro-level measures of interest—family policies and earnings inequality (Model 2). Given the difficulty of interpreting interaction effects, we present a table of marginal effects;[14] the full table appears in Appendix Table A3. Table 4 reveals that the main effects displayed in Table 3 conceal substantial differences by

mothers' education. Table 4 shows that lower-educated mothers are more responsive to work-facilitating ECEC than are higher-educated mothers, but they are less responsive to both measures of paid parental leave than are higher-educated mothers. Only lower-educated mothers are responsive to earnings inequality.

Table 4 shows that higher levels of ECEC spending are associated with stronger positive effects on non-tertiary-educated mothers' employment outcomes. An additional $1,000 of ECEC spending per child is associated with an increased probability of employment by 2.0 percentage points for non-tertiary-educated mothers of small children, but it is linked to only a .5 percentage-point increased probability (not statistically significant) for tertiary-educated mothers. For non-tertiary-educated mothers, this association is also robust for LFP and FT, whereas it is only evident for the LFP of tertiary-educated mothers. In the metric of predicted probabilities, a one SD increase in ECEC ($1,630) is associated with a 3.3 percentage-point increase in the predicted probability of employment for non-tertiary-educated mothers.

Table 4 also shows that the null association between paid parental leave of less than six months and mothers' labor force outcomes concealed positive associations for tertiary-educated mothers. Paid parental leave of short duration appears to foster LFP, employment, and FT only among tertiary-educated mothers. Paid parental leave over six months, however, appears to depress the same outcomes only among tertiary-educated mothers. An additional month of paid parental leave or home-care allowance is associated with a decreased probability of employment by .4 percentage points for tertiary-educated mothers of small children. This amounts to a 6.3 percentage-point decrease in the predicted probability of employment among tertiary-educated mothers for a one SD increase in leave (13 months).

Table 4 shows that earnings inequality is positively associated with non-tertiary-educated mothers' LFP, employment, and FT but is not associated with the same outcomes for tertiary-educated mothers. An additional one unit increase in earnings inequality is associated with an increased probability of employment by 2.6 percentage points for non-tertiary-educated mothers of small children, which amounts to a 1.6 percentage-point increase in the predicted probability of employment for a one SD increase in earnings inequality (.64). Results for the two-way interactions are summarized in the top half of Table 1.

Family Policies by Inequality by Educational Attainment

Finally, we present three-way interactions between educational attainment, family policies, and earnings inequality (Model 3). Figures 3 and 5 show the interactions, and Appendix Table A4 provides the full table. The figures replicate Figure 1, showing the marginal effects of each family policy as earnings inequality moves from low to high by mothers' educational attainment. We do not present a three-way interaction for months of paid leave under six months. We did not hypothesize an interaction with inequality for parental leaves of short duration, nor did we find any evidence to support this interaction. In this model, months of paid leave under six months remains in a two-way interaction with education.

Figure 3 provides support for H_{ECEC2} (opportunity costs #2: pulled in and need narrative), most closely resembling Panel B of Figure 1. We find little difference in the positive association of ECEC with mothers' LFP and employment in lower-inequality contexts, but as inequality increases, mothers diverge by educational attainment, such that the associations between ECEC and LFP and employment are distinct in higher-inequality contexts. Results for full-time employment are suggestive of the same relationship.

We do not find evidence consistent with H_{ECEC1} (opportunity costs #1: Matthew effect; Panel A of Figure 1) that mothers with tertiary degrees in contexts with higher earnings inequality show the largest positive association.



Figure 3. Marginal Effect of Three-Way Interaction between Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), Earnings Inequality, and Mothers' Educational Attainment, with 97.5 Percent Confidence Intervals

Note: Marginal effects are calculated from results in Appendix Table A4. They are based on a linear predictor that includes both the fixed and random effects. Confidence intervals are set to 97.5 percent to adjust for pairwise comparisons between educational levels.

We do, however, find evidence consistent with H_{ECEC3} (market care; Panel C of Figure 1) that ECEC does not boost highly educated mothers' employment in high-inequality settings; effects of ECEC are null. The hypothesized mechanism is that these mothers already have access to care through the market. But we do not find any evidence that highly educated women in low-inequality settings, who were "frozen out" of market care, are most affected by ECEC.

Figure 4 illustrates these results in the metric of predicted probabilities, showing the predicted probability of employment by educational attainment as ECEC moves from the observed minimum to +2 standard deviations, over three levels of earnings inequality. Figure 4 shows the slope of ECEC spending on the probability of maternal employment becoming increasingly steep for non-tertiary-educated mothers as we move from the minimum earnings inequality observed (which is less than –2 SD) to +2 SD. For non-tertiary-educated mothers, a one SD increase in ECEC spending is associated with a 1.9 percentage-point increase in maternal employment at the minimum observed earnings inequality, a 3.8 percentage-point increase at the mean of earnings inequality, and a 5.8 percentage-point increase at +2 SD earnings inequality. For tertiary-educated women, we see a weak curvilinear pattern across the three panels. Note, however, that we do not observe any country-years where earnings inequality is +2 SD and ECEC spending exceeds approximately +.5 SD (see Figure A in the online supplement).

Figure 5 shows the marginal effects for months of paid parental leave greater than six

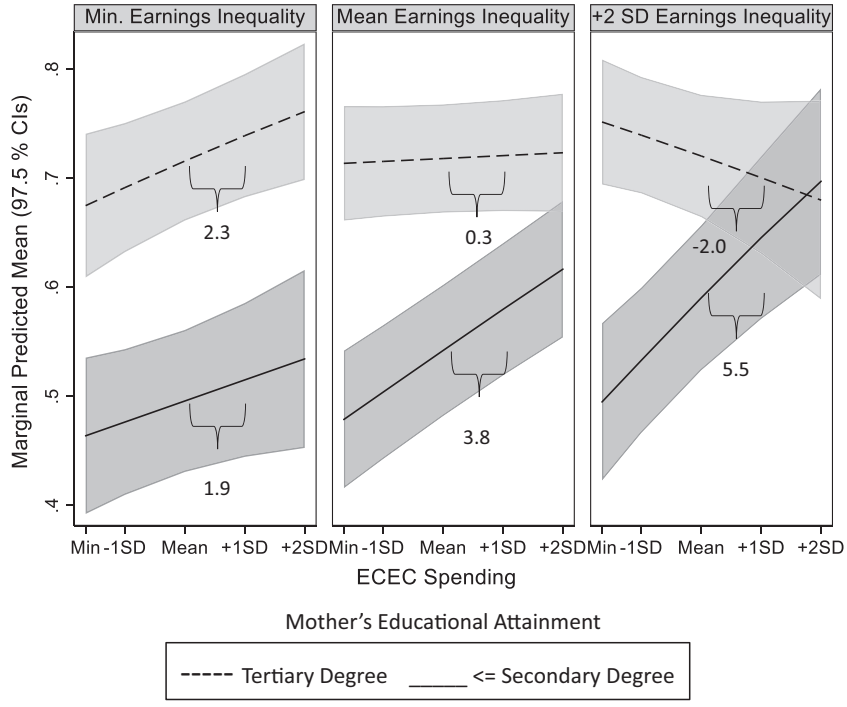


Figure 4. Predicted Probabilities of Employment by Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), and Mothers' Educational Attainment across Three Levels of Earnings Inequality, with 97.5 Percent Confidence Intervals

Note: Predicated probabilities are based on results in Appendix Table A4. Values indicate the difference in predicted probability for a one standard deviation (SD) increase in ECEC spending. They are calculated for the minimum observed values of earnings inequality and ECEC spending because the minimum values are less than –2 SD. Confidence intervals are set to 97.5 percent to adjust for pairwise comparisons between educational levels.

months. Results are inconsistent with both hypotheses. For LFP we observe no interaction between paid leave greater than six months and earnings inequality. The relative position of educational groups is inconsistent with H_{LEAVE1} (opportunity costs; Panel D of Figure 1) and is more consistent with H_{LEAVE2} (need narrative; Panel E of Figure 1), such that less-educated mothers are less affected by leave length, but this does not vary across levels of inequality. We do observe, however, an interaction between leave length and earnings inequality for employment and full-time employment. Mothers appear to have more difficulty converting LFP into employment and full-time employment in higher-inequality contexts. We propose an explanation for this finding in the Discussion section.

We also find that paid leave greater than six months is positively associated with employment and FT for mothers without a tertiary degree in lower-inequality settings. Mothers with lower attainment in low-inequality settings, however, are the least likely to be FT at about 20 percent. We speculate that this is a select group of lower-educated mothers (e.g., regarding familial resources or work commitment) who are better able to maintain attachment to employment and FT with more parental leave (which is coded as employed if the mother was employed prior to leave and is still on job-protected leave).

Figure 6 shows the slope of paid parental leave greater than six months on the probability of maternal employment. It displays a curvilinear pattern for non-tertiary-educated



Figure 5. Marginal Effect of Three-Way Interaction between Months of Paid Leave over Six Months, Earnings Inequality, and Mothers' Educational Attainment, with 97.5 Percent Confidence Intervals

Note: Marginal effects are calculated from results in Appendix Table A4. They are based on a linear predictor that includes both the fixed and random effects. Confidence intervals are set to 97.5 percent to adjust for pairwise comparisons between educational levels.

mothers as we move from the minimum earnings inequality observed to +2 SD. A one SD increase in months of paid parental is associated with a 2.4 percentage-point *increase* in maternal employment at the minimum observed earnings inequality, a .7 percentage-point *decrease* at the mean of earnings inequality, and a 4.1 percentage-point *decrease* at +2 SD earnings inequality. For tertiary-educated mothers, the decline in maternal employment associated with paid parental leave becomes larger across the three panels. Results are summarized in Table 1.

Robustness Checks

We preformed several additional analyses to confirm the robustness of our findings to alternative specifications. The online supplement includes tables for all the analyses mentioned below, in order, for the outcome employed. It also includes replications for Figures 3 and 5 excluding single countries and country clusters for the outcome employed. Results were robust to (A) three alternative specifications of time including dummy variables, Great Recession period effects, and a cross-classified specification; (B) eight alternative measures of earnings inequality, including women's, men's, and total P90/P10, P90/P50, and P50/P10; (C) exclusion of each one of the 23 countries; (D) exclusion of each one of seven country clusters; (E) inclusion of marriage and cohabitation as separate variables at the micro level; (F) inclusion of a dummy variable for foreign-born individuals at the micro level; (G) exclusion of all macro-level controls; (H) inclusion of average annual wages per full-time employee[15] at the macro level to control

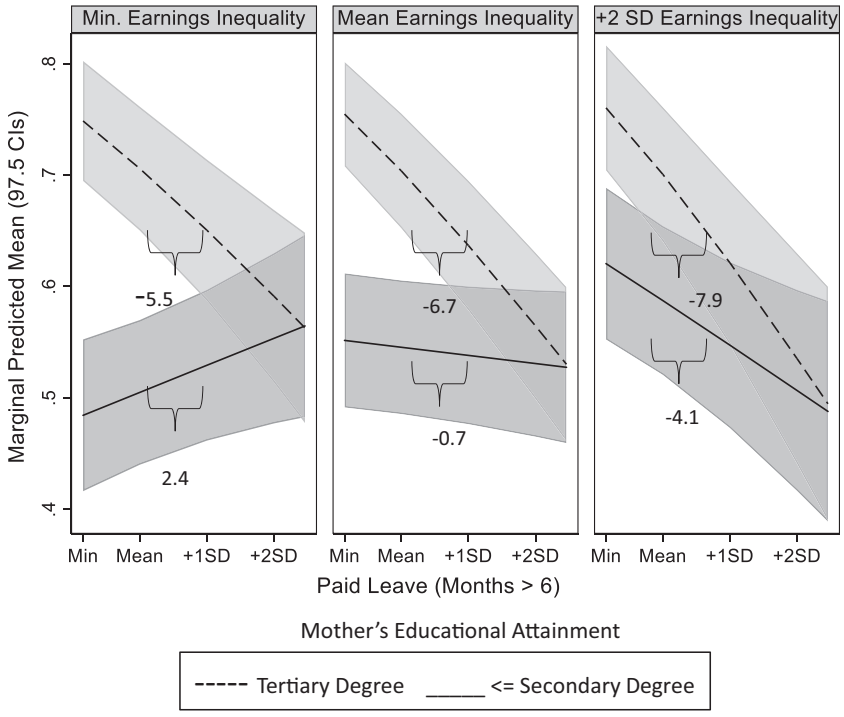


Figure 6. Predicted Probabilities of Employment by Months of Paid Parental Leave over Six Months, and Mothers' Educational Attainment across Three Levels of Earnings Inequality, with 97.5 Percent Confidence Intervals

Note: Predicated probabilities are based on results in Appendix Table A4. Values indicate the difference in predicted probability for a one standard deviation (SD) increase in paid parental leave over six months. They are calculated for the minimum observed values of earnings inequality and paid leave because the minimum values are less than –2 SD. Confidence intervals are set to 97.5 percent to adjust for pairwise comparisons between educational levels.

for absolute income given findings that affluence can suppress family policy effects (Uunk et al. 2005); (I) inclusion of tax rates for second-earner parents entering employment with gross earnings equal to 67 percent and 100 percent of average earnings[16] at the macro level; (J) inclusion of public employment[17] at the macro level; (K) inclusion of strictness of employment protections[18] at the macro level; (L) inclusion of the gender wage gap[19] at the macro level; (M) inclusion of Hofstede's six cultural dimensions[20] at the macro level; and (N) exclusion of single mothers. Unfortunately, there are too few single mothers with tertiary degrees in our sample to stratify the analyses by partnership. Finally, we include (O) the results of Model 1 for all outcomes run on a sample of childless women age 20 to 39. All files necessary for replication (with the exception of the EU-LFS microdata, which must be obtained from Eurostat) are available via the Harvard Dataverse (Hook and Paek 2020).

Limitations

Given our research design, we run the risk of omitted variable bias. Our goal was not to provide a comprehensive explanation of women's LFP, but to test the relationships of interest in a robust framework. To accomplish this, we used a series of control variables and robustness checks. Our research design, however, is unable to support causal claims, and we have been careful throughout the manuscript to describe our findings in terms of associations.

Although the evidence on fertility effects of family policy is mixed (Balbo, Billari, and Mills 2013; Gauthier and Hatzius 1997), a selection effect would occur if some observed policy effect on employment were the result of increased fertility among "work-centered" women caused by the policy. Although this is a possibility, evidence suggests this is not likely to be driving our results. Del Boca and colleagues (2009), using the European Community Household Panel (ECHP), find that the family policies under study here are related to women's employment but not to the probability of a birth.

DISCUSSION

We set out to develop and test the argument that earnings inequality is a key contextual factor for understanding both heterogeneity in effects of family policies among mothers and variation in policy effects across contexts. Drawing on both sociological and micro-economic frameworks, we theorized that state support for out-of-home nonparental care (ECEC) and state support for at-home maternal care (paid parental leaves and home-care allowances) may interact with earnings inequality and mothers' educational attainment to affect employment outcomes. Overall, we find support for the joint importance of earnings inequality and mothers' educational attainment for conditioning the associations between family policies and mothers' employment.

We anticipated that earnings inequality would play a role in women's LFP because it is implicated in several of our narratives about why women work and which ones do so; these include the opportunity-cost framework, the need narrative, and the development of market-based childcare. We find that earnings inequality is associated with mothers' employment and this relationship differs by mothers' educational attainment. Consistent with the need narrative, earnings inequality is associated with higher levels of LFP among lower-educated mothers of young children. That is, earnings inequality appears to pull lower-educated mothers into employment. One explanation is that lower-educated mothers are more likely to be partnered with low-earning men, creating a greater economic need to work if men's wages are inadequate at the bottom of the earnings distribution (Devereux 2004; Morissette and Hou 2008). Lower-educated mothers are also less likely to be partnered; high-inequality contexts may correlate with less support for single mothers, pulling mothers into employment.

We do not, however, find evidence that earnings inequality facilitates tertiary-educated mothers' employment. Implicit in the market care perspective is that earnings inequality between women bolsters the LFP of highly educated women. Evidence from the United States is generally consistent with this idea. The educational divide in women's housework time and service spending is wider where income inequality is higher (Schneider and Hastings 2017), and women at the top quartile of the wage distribution work longer hours, spend less time on housework, and spend more money on domestic services where low-skilled immigration is higher (Cortes and Tessada 2011). Cortes and Tessada (2011), however, find effects on women's propensity to work long hours (intensive margin), but not on women's propensity to be employed (extensive margin). Thus, one explanation of our findings is that although earnings inequality facilitates a better reconciliation of work and family for tertiary-educated mothers across several outcomes, labor force participation is not among them. Future research should explore other outcomes, including wages and occupational integration.

We find that earnings inequality also moderates the effect of family policies on mothers' employment and does so differentially by mothers' educational attainment. Although ECEC spending is generally positively associated with mothers' employment, associations are strongest for non-tertiary-educated mothers in higher-inequality settings. These findings support our hypothesis, which is drawn from work contending that individuals with the least to gain from employment are the most enticed by employment facilitating policies (Del Boca et al. 2009; Korpi et al. 2013) (pulled in), particularly where inequality in

earnings creates greater economic pressure on lower-educated families (need narrative). We also find that associations between ECEC spending and employment are null for tertiary-educated mothers at higher levels of earnings inequality, offering some support for the argument that highly educated women in higher-inequality settings find ways to be employed regardless of ECEC (market care). We found no support for a Matthew effect, even though it is well established that higher-educated mothers are more likely to use ECEC (Pavolini and Van Lancker 2018). Our findings are consistent with the argument that ECEC may substitute for market care, particularly in higher-inequality settings.

Findings from Model 2 on the interaction between length of paid parental leave and educational attainment suggest tertiary-educated mothers' labor force attachment benefits from the availability of short-duration paid parental leave but suffers from long-duration leave. This is consistent with the argument that "generous family policy" hinders gender equality for more advantaged women (Mandel 2011, 2012; Mandel and Shalev 2009), particularly long-duration parental leave (Pettit and Hook 2009). Although the need narrative would suggest tertiary-educated women can afford to take parental leave, research finds little support that access to "other household income" hinders women's employment (Bardasi and Gornick 2003). One possibility is that tertiary-educated women, who are generally more supportive of maternal employment, are most affected by exposure to leave and to norm-setting in the wake of leave extensions (e.g., Gangl and Ziefle 2015). Alternatively, tertiary-educated mothers may experience greater penalties for career discontinuity than other women, whether through the depreciation of human capital or due to greater employer discrimination (Bertrand et al. 2010; England et al. 2016; Glass and Fodor 2011; Judiesch and Lyness 1999). Further research is needed into the micro-level mechanisms underlying this finding.

Findings for the interaction between length of paid parental leave and home-care allowance over six months and earnings inequality are complex and inconsistent with both of our hypotheses. In Model 3, we observe no interaction between paid leave and earnings inequality for labor force participation, but we see an interaction for employment and full-time employment. This suggests mothers have more difficulty converting LFP into employment in higher-inequality contexts, even controlling for women's unemployment rate. We first suspected that a correlation between earnings inequality and public employment (correlation –.23) may explain this relationship, such that larger public sectors better shield mothers from negative employment consequences of lengthy parental leave. We also suspected that a correlation between earnings inequality and the strength of employment protections (correlation –.26) may explain this relationship. We found no support for either explanation. Another possibility, which we are unable to test, is that employers have stronger tastes for discrimination or a stronger ability to enact discriminatory preferences in higher inequality settings. Qualitative evidence from Hungary, a country with long periods of parental leave and higher earnings inequality, indicates strong discrimination against mothers. Glass and Fodor (2011) contend that state policies that make motherhood salient for employers, in the absence of anti-discrimination enforcement, contribute to discrimination. This is an important avenue for future research.

Our findings are potentially useful for reconciling previous studies on the contingent and heterogeneous effects of family policy. For example, Thévenon (2016:491–2) found that spending on ECEC is positively associated with LFP in English-speaking and Southern European countries, but effects are null in Nordic countries and negative in Continental countries. There is no clear explanation for these findings. His results, however, are consistent with our finding that the largest positive association between ECEC and maternal employment occurs in higher-inequality contexts, which are predominantly English-speaking, Southern, and Eastern European countries.

Similarly, earnings-inequality-contingent effects could help reconcile inconsistent findings about educational gaps in family policy effects. For example, if a sample was disproportionately composed of lower-inequality contexts, predominately Northern and Western European countries, we may not find an educational gap in the association of ECEC with maternal employment. Conversely, if a sample was disproportionately composed of higher-inequality contexts, we would identify a gap. This suggests placing a greater focus in the cross-national comparative literature on specifying which countries and time periods are examined when extrapolating findings across time and space.

As comparable macro-level data become available for longer spans of time, researchers will have new opportunities to explore the nuances of policy. Our macro-level variables represent broad-brush strokes of complex family policy designs. For example, our paid parental leave and home-care allowance measures obscure nuances in replacement rates, caps on replacement rates, eligibility criteria, and flexibility. These aspects of policy design affect heterogeneity within countries in benefits as well as differences across countries in policy as experienced (Bártová and Emery 2018; Ray et al. 2010).

Another important avenue for future research is to consider other aspects of mothers' social location. Although educational attainment dominates cross-national studies of women's employment, single-country studies document differences in maternal employment and family policy uptake by race, ethnicity, and nativity (Kil et al. 2018; Kil, Wood, and Neels 2018; Lu, Wang, and Han 2017; Vidal-Coso 2019). Given the challenges inherent in incorporating country-specific patterns and meanings of race, ethnicity, and nativity in a cross-national design, most work in this area is in the form of single-country studies or two-country comparisons (Pettit and Hook 2009). Expanding cross-national work in this area is important for future research.

We conclude that earnings inequality matters. Earnings inequality is a key contextual factor for understanding heterogeneity in effects of family policies among mothers within countries and variation in policy effects across contexts. We call for more scholars to develop and test hypotheses about these complex relationships, so we can better understand the multifaceted interactions between the welfare state, inequality, and gender, work, and family.

APPENDIX

Table A1. Surveys

	First Observed	Last Observed	# of Times Observed	Minimum *N*
Austria	2005	2016	12	2,550
Belgium	2000	2016	17	846
Czechia	1999	2016	18	1,529
Estonia	2003	2015	13	157
Finland	2003	2016	14	1,893
France	2003	2015	13	1,899
Germany	1999	2016	18	1,512
Greece	2011	2016	6	2,037
Hungary	2000	2016	17	2,276
Ireland	2006	2016	11	3,893
Italy	1999	2016	18	6,003
Latvia	2009	2015	7	695
Lithuania	2011	2015	5	883
Luxembourg	2003	2014	12	546
Netherlands	2003	2015	13	2,918
Poland	2001	2016	16	1,552
Portugal	2005	2016	12	1,522
Slovakia	2003	2016	14	565
Slovenia	2003	2015	13	421
Spain	2003	2015	13	3,350
Sweden	2009	2014	6	1,706
United Kingdom	2004	2016	13	3,553
United States	1999	2016	18	4,605

Note: "Minimum *N*" lists the *N* from the survey with the smallest number of observations for each country.

Table A2. Intraclass Correlation Coefficients, Empty Model

Variable	Level	ICC	SE	95% CI	
Labor Force Participation					
	Country	.125	.032	.074	.203
	Country-Year | Country	.135	.032	.084	.211
Employed					
	Country	.109	.029	.064	.179
	Country-Year | Country	.116	.028	.071	.184
Full-Time					
	Country	.144	.036	.086	.231
	Country-Year | Country	.151	.036	.092	.236

Table A3. Multilevel Logistic Regression, Two-Way Interactions

	In Labor Force	Employed	Full-Time
Tertiary Degree	.762***	.845***	.737***
	(.016)	(.015)	(.015)
ECEC Expend	.073***	.070***	.054***
	(.015)	(.013)	(.016)
Tertiary x ECEC Expend	−.060***	−.068***	−.073***
	(.012)	(.012)	(.011)
Paid Leave ≤ 6M	.032	.003	.017
	(.017)	(.016)	(.019)
Tertiary x Paid Leave ≤ 6M	.096***	.086***	.090***
	(.012)	(.012)	(.011)
Paid Leave > 6M	−.009***	−.008***	−.005**
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Tertiary x Paid Leave > 6M	−.027***	−.024***	−.020***
	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)
Women's P90/10	.040	.074*	.120**
	(.040)	(.037)	(.042)
Tertiary x P90/10	−.171***	−.180***	−.095**
	(.032)	(.032)	(.031)
Unemployment	.021***	−.006**	.003
	(.003)	(.002)	(.003)
GDP Growth	.000	.006***	.008***
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Part-Time Prevalence	.004	.000	−.028***
	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)
Gender Norms	.056	.028	−.055
	(.103)	(.096)	(.111)
Year	−.004	−.005	.000
	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)
Age	.056***	.060***	.041***
	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)
Number of Children	−.481***	−.468***	−.461***
	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)
Partnered	−.098***	.161***	.036***
	(.007)	(.007)	(.008)
Number of Adults Age 65+	.116***	.149***	.169***
	(.013)	(.013)	(.013)
Constant	.765***	.429***	−.540***
	(.138)	(.123)	(.122)
Variance Components			
Country: Intercept	.430**	.343***	.337***
	(.128)	(.104)	(.101)
Country-Year:			
Intercept	.057***	.056***	.054***
	(.006)	(.006)	(.005)
Tertiary Degree	.009***	.007***	.011***
	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)
ICC: Country	.115	.094	.093
ICC: Country-Year	.118	.096	.096
AIC	121021	124933	117855
Δ in AIC (Table 3)	−272	−231	−183
BIC	121204	125116	118037
Δ in BIC (Table 3)	−239	−198	−150

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses.
*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

Table A4. Multilevel Logistic Regression, Three-Way Interactions

	In Labor Force	Employed	Full-Time
Tertiary Degree	.709***	.796***	.698***
	(.018)	(.017)	(.017)
ECEC Expend	.078***	.074***	.055***
	(.015)	(.014)	(.016)
Tertiary x ECEC Expend	–.098***	–.101***	–.101***
	(.013)	(.013)	(.013)
Women's P90/P10	.077	.104*	.136**
	(.047)	(.043)	(.048)
Tertiary x P90/P10	–.185***	–.188***	–.109***
	(.031)	(.030)	(.030)
ECEC Expend x P90/P10	.029	.015	–.004
	(.023)	(.021)	(.024)
Tertiary x ECEC x P90/P10	–.098***	–.092***	–.068***
	(.019)	(.018)	(.018)
Paid Leave ≤ 6 Months	.034	.014	.038*
	(.018)	(.016)	(.019)
Tertiary x Paid Leave ≤ 6 M	.109***	.088***	.105***
	(.012)	(.012)	(.012)
Paid Leave > 6 Months	–.009***	–.009***	–.007***
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Tertiary x Paid Leave > 6 M	–.028***	–.024***	–.021***
	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)
Paid Leave > 6 M x P90/P10	–.002	–.008**	–.013***
	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)
Tertiary x Leave > 6 M x P90/P10	.000	.004	–.003
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Unemployment Rate	.021***	–.007**	.002
	(.003)	(.002)	(.003)
GDP Growth	.000	.006***	.008***
	(.002)	(.002)	(.002)
Part-Time Prevalence	.005	.001	–.027***
	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)
Gender Norms	.049	–.015	–.132
	(.105)	(.097)	(.111)
Year	–.005	–.005	.000
	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)
Age	.056***	.060***	.041***
	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)
Number of Children	–.481***	–.468***	–.461***
	(.003)	(.003)	(.003)
Partnered	–.098***	.161***	.036***
	(.007)	(.007)	(.008)
Number of Adults Age 65+	.116***	.149***	.169***
	(.013)	(.013)	(.013)
Constant	.785***	.435***	–.550***
	(.140)	(.121)	(.116)
Variance Components			
Country: Intercept	.436**	.329***	.297***
	(.131)	(.100)	(.091)
Country-Year:			
Intercept	.050***	.050***	.050***
	(.005)	(.005)	(.005)
Tertiary Degree	.009***	.007***	.011***
	(.001)	(.001)	(.001)

(continued)

Table A4. *(continued)*

	In Labor Force	Employed	Full-Time
ICC: Country	.117	.091	.083
ICC: Country-Year	.119	.0928	.0855
AIC	121000	124904	117829
Δ in AIC (Table A3)	−21	−29	−26
BIC	121216	125119	118044
Δ in BIC (Table A3)	12	4	7

Note: Standard errors are in parentheses.
$^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

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Notes

1. Theoretically, the study of women's employment is informed by micro-economic theories emphasizing the importance of human capital, with education a primary indicator. Practically, education circumvents the difficulties of assigning non-employed women a social class (Sorensen 1994), and it is the most available and comparable measure in commonly used data.
2. See Cooke (2011) for equality trade-offs between gender-class groups; Hook (2015) for interaction of familialism and income inequality on couple-level employment arrangements by class; and Mandel and Semyonov (2005) for the role of wage structure in the gender wage gap.
3. Employers are a key player influencing mothers' take up of parental leave and persistence in the labor market; they are not, however, a major source of the family policy provisions examined here. In most European countries, employers' role in ECEC and parental leave is limited or nonexistent (Plantenga et al. 2005). In the United States, few employers offer childcare. Some states and employers offer replacement pay for parental leave (Matos, Galinsky, and Bond 2016), but it is generally meager in duration from a cross-national perspective. An important avenue for research is incorporating variation at the subnational and organizational levels.
4. This does not imply that highly educated women do not face class-specific challenges in the labor market that may create disincentives for employment. Higher-class women experience perceptions of low commitment (Rivera and Tilcsik 2016) and within-couple earnings inequalities (Yavorsky et al. 2019). Although some highly educated mothers may "opt out" of the labor market (Stone and Lovejoy 2004), highly educated mothers are more likely to have access to employment with conditions amenable to continuous employment (Damaske 2011).
5. Del Boca and colleagues (2009) stratified their models by educational attainment and did not test whether differences between models were statistically significant.

6. The pulled-in hypothesis is also consistent with normative arguments. A long tradition in feminist welfare state research explores how state policies reflect, recreate, and challenge ideals of gender and care (see Kremer 2007). Research on parental leave expansion in Germany, for example, has found that extensions "significantly and swiftly" changed norms about maternal employment and reduced mothers' work commitment (Gangl and Ziefle 2015:554). Given that lower-educated women generally have less supportive attitudes toward maternal employment than do higher-educated women (Shalev 2008; Svallfors 2006), lower-educated mothers may be more sensitive to normative signals created by policy change.
7. Although we do not have separate hypotheses for the three indicators, we test both LFP and employment because they are used somewhat interchangeably in the literature and we want to maximize the comparability of results to other studies. We examine full-time employment as a third indicator because the intensity of maternal employment is heterogeneous across countries. Full-time, arguably, provides a measure of employment with a more consistent meaning across contexts, and it is also generally of interest to gender scholars who examine whether state policies incorporate mothers into the labor market on similar terms to nonmothers.
8. We use tertiary degree versus non-tertiary degree for three reasons. (1) Previous research has largely focused on the division between individuals with a college degree and those without. (2) Lower secondary is a small group in some country-years ($n < 30$). (3) Each additional level of education complicates models very quickly because education is part of the three-way interaction of fundamental interest. Nonetheless, we explored this in greater detail. Parental leave and inequality show a clear gradation with the major cleavage between non-tertiary and tertiary degree. For ECEC, the point estimate for secondary degree is larger than the point estimate for less than secondary degree, but the confidence intervals overlap substantially and both are distinct from tertiary degree. Separating non-tertiary into two categories adds little to the manuscript.
9. To address poorly harmonized and unreliable national data on public childcare enrollment, in the mid-2000s Eurostat and the OECD switched to a measure of formal childcare usage calculated from microdata. Unfortunately, it is a poor measure of publicly subsidized childcare because it includes private, market-based care paid by parents (Keck and Saraceno 2011).
10. The measure was calculated for the first single birth and assumed that parents worked prior to birth and earned 100 percent average gross earnings, met eligibility requirements, had a healthy birth, and made choices that maximized leave length.
11. We last observed six countries (Belgium, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, and Portugal) in 2008 to 2009 because they did not participate in recent waves of the EVS or WVS. We extrapolated values for these countries from previous trends. We also tested carrying the last observed value forward; results were robust. Unfortunately, both the EVS and WVS changed question wording between waves (between 2008 and 2017 for EVS, and between 1990 and 2010 for WVS) to agreement with "When a mother works for pay, the children suffer." Thus responses through 2009 were qualified with "preschool," whereas responses for 2010 onward included no age restriction. Inspection of trends suggested no breaks in the series except in Estonia, Germany, and Netherlands where the change appeared to increase egalitarianism. Results were robust to excluding later waves and extrapolating trends from 2009. Unfortunately, large changes in the gender egalitarianism measures between the 2008 and 2017 waves of the EVS, as well as comparability with the GSS, prevented us from using multiple items to assess egalitarianism.
12. The timing and intensity of the Great Recession (GR) and governmental responses to it varied across countries; so, too, did the GR's effect on women's labor supply (Addabbo, Gálvez Muñoz, and Rodríguez Modroño 2015; Karamessini and Rubery 2013; Peinado and Serrano 2018). The GR adds variation to our model at the individual- and country-year levels.
13. Given concerns about small-*N* designs at the macro level, we omit up to four countries per cluster, testing the robustness of results to removing Southern European countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain), English-speaking countries (Ireland, the UK, and the United States), Nordic countries (Finland and Sweden), Eastern European countries with higher levels of maternal LFP (Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and Slovenia), Eastern European countries with lower levels of maternal LFP (Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, and Slovakia), Benelux countries plus France (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, and France), and Austria and Germany.
14. Because the binary variable *tertiary degree* is centered within clusters, we use the country-year mean value –.34 for no tertiary degree and .66 for a tertiary degree.
15. Per full-time equivalent dependent employee in 2017 USD PPPs and 2017 constant prices; $N = 23$ countries and 299 country-years (OECD 2019e).
16. Where the individual lives in a couple household with two children (age 4 and 6) and a married partner with full-time earnings equal to 67 percent of average earnings; $N = 22$ countries and 257 country-years (OECD 2019f).
17. Employment in general government as a percentage of total employment; $N = 22$ countries and 182 country-years (OECD 2019g).

18. Strictness of employment protection legislation regarding dismissals from regular employment; $N = 21$ countries and 238 country-years (OECD 2019d).
19. Difference between median earnings of men and women relative to median earnings of men among full-time employees; $N = 23$ countries and 299 country-years (OECD 2019d). We detected no main effect of the gender wage gap (GWG) in Model 1, 2, or 3. One potential explanation for null findings is that GWG conflates two things—women's labor supply and women's earnings relative to men. Where states do a better job incorporating mothers it reduces positive selection among women, potentially inflating the GWG. If women are less highly selected on human capital, they are less likely to compare favorably to men.
20. See Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010). We find main effects on maternal employment for individualism-collectivism and uncertainty avoidance, but substantive conclusions are robust.

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