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Gender-related determinants and timing of leaving science

The system of higher education educates an oversupply of scientists. Not all of the PhD graduates can and want to become a professor – nearly the only way to work on a permanent contract in German science and academia. Consequently, the questions are: Who are these junior scientists who drop out of scientific careers? Why and when do they leave? Especially women drop out disproportionately high. Do they leave science for the same reasons as men or is there anything about science at the stage of postdoctoral employment that opposes women?

The life course perspective (Elder et al. 2003) frames the theoretical approach: different spheres of life are interdependent. Past and current events and experiences of the occupational, educational and family context affect each other. Furthermore, Bourdieu's (1982, 1998) concept of the scientific field captures the peculiarity of science as an employment sector. The social-cognitive career theory (Lent et al. 1994) complements the distinctive feature of motivation in scientific careers.

To answer the questions of leaving science, I am using the data of the Careers of PhD Holders survey. It is a panel of PhD graduates, who completed their doctoral degree in Germany in 2014. By using cluster analysis, different types of drop-outs are identified, focusing on communalities and differences between women and men. Event history analysis enables to implement leaving science as a time-dependent process. This method allows analyzing the questions of when and why do junior scientists leave science in consideration of the life course perspective.

First findings will be shown and especially address gender differences and the drop-out of women.

Keywords: academic career; leaving science; postdocs; gender

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