Women Make Houses, Women Make Homes

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This paper examines the persistent effects of historical labor market institutions and policies on women’s long-term labor market outcomes. We quantify these enduring effects by exploring quasi-experimental variation in Germany’s post-World War II mandatory reconstruction policy, which compelled women to work in the rubble removal and reconstruction process. Using difference-in-differences and instrumental variable approaches, we find that mandatory employment during the postwar era generated persistent adverse effects on women’s long-term labor market outcomes. An increase in marriage and fertility rates in the postwar era and a physical and mental exhaustion associated with manual labor are some of the direct and indirect channels potentially explaining our results.

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