

Are There Gender Differences in Family Trajectories by Education in Finland?

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Abstract

Not really.

Background

Previous studies suggest that in some countries socioeconomic differences in family formation are highly gendered, whereas gender-neutral patterns are reported in other countries.

Most previous studies focus on single events. Therefore it is unclear how the gender differences and neutralities in family transitions combine into variation in longer family-formation trajectories.

Research question

See the Title.

Data & Methods

- Finnish register data comprising monthly histories of union dynamics and childbearing. N = 14,072.
- We focus on trajectories of women and men between ages 18 and 39, and birth cohorts 1969 & 1970.
- The trajectories consist of states entered via the formation and dissolution of cohabitation and marriage and the birth of 1st child.
- Sequence representation. Focus on the number and order of family states.

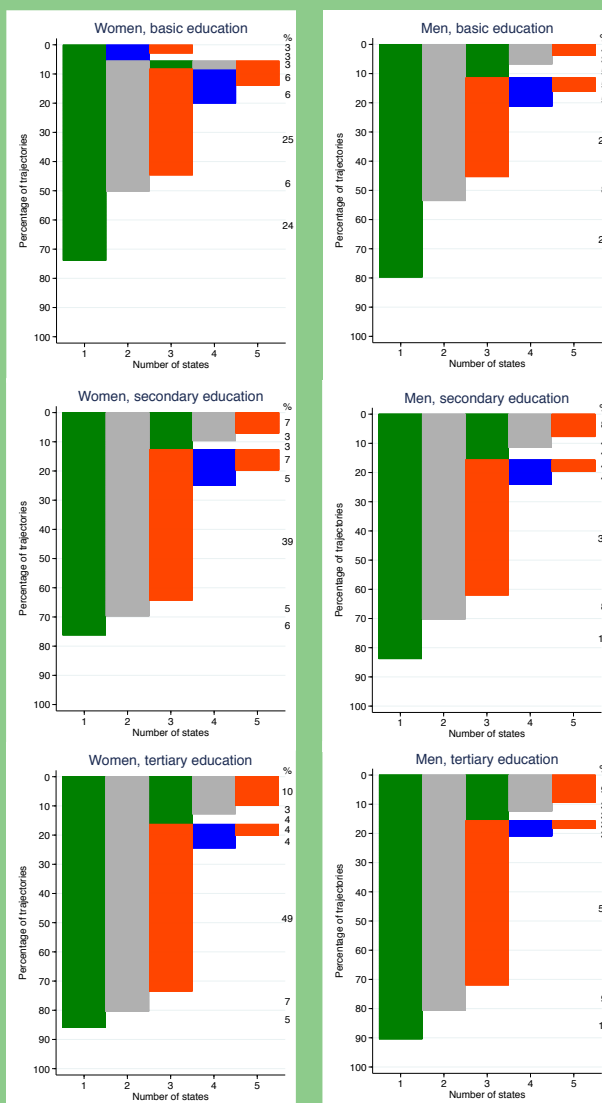
Conclusions

In Finland, an egalitarian Nordic welfare state, longitudinal family trajectories are highly stratified by education but remarkably gender-neutral.

Results

Figure: Eight most common union-status and parenthood trajectories by gender and educational attainment

■ single, childless
■ single, parent
■ partnered, childless
■ partnered, parent



Gender differences in family trajectories are negligible across educational groups, but there are pronounced differences between educational groups. For instance,

- The proportion never partnered and childless at age 39 is largest among the lowest educated, regardless of gender.
- at age 39, highly educated women and men are most likely to live in the union in which they became first-time parents.