Multigenerational Perspectives on Pathways of Family Formation

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Abstract

Using data from The Danish Longitudinal Survey of Youth in conjunction with sequence analysis, I generated typological family formation pathways of two generations of Danish men and women. Within each generation four pathways of family formation were identified among men and among women. Although the family formation pathways were similar for men and women in each generation, there were some differences. In addition, within the youngest generation more women than men belong to pathways where educational attainment appears a dominant component, a trend likely initiated by the women in their parents' generation. Moving beyond the descriptive nature of the family formation pathways, I used multinomial regression analysis to predict the membership of each of the identified typologies within the youngest generation. Findings suggest that although the parents' family formation behavior to some degree predicts their children's patterns of forming a family, social mechanisms also operate independently through parental as well grandparental experiences of family dissolution and socioeconomic status. Finally, gender is a strong predictor of family formation behavior within the youngest generation.

Keywords: family formation, family roles, intergenerational, life events and/or transitions, multigenerational, social trends/social change, union formation

INTRODUCION

Over the course of the 20th century the social norms associated with family formation have undergone considerable changes (Billari & Wilson 2001; Furstenberg, 2010; Modell, Furstenberg & Strong, 1978; Hogan & Astone, 1986; Liefbroer, 1999). These changes are reflected in new patterns in the timing and sequencing of important family life transitions such as leaving home, getting married, and becoming a parent (for an overview see Billary & Liefbroer, 2010). Numerous studies show a postponement of marriage and parenthood, and higher levels of non-marital childbearing and re-partnering (e.g. Christoffersen, 2004; Furstenberg, 2010; Matthiessen, 1993; Shanahan, 2000). These documented trends are most often viewed as a result of ongoing social and institutional change such as increased longevity, more symmetrical gender relations in education and labor market participation, as well as new practices of identity formation and intimate relationships (Giddens, 1990, 1991; Van de Kaa, 1987; Lesthaeghe & Surkyn, 2006).

Yet, despite these changes, the family continues to be a primary source of an individual's societal integration. Family life pathways are shaped at the intersection of contemporary social norms and experiences in the family of origin (Bengtson, Biblarz & Roberts 2002). That is, family structure in the origin family remains an important factor in one's own family formation pathway (e.g. Dronkers & Härkönen, 2008; Liefbroer & Elzinga 2012; Murphy & Knudsen 2002; Willoughbi, Carrol, Vitas & Hill 2012). Thus, although new pathways of family formation have emerged, traditional routes through adult life have not disappeared (Brynner, 2005; Thomson, Dworak & Kennedy 2013). Consequently, it is necessary to further develop frameworks that simultaneously consider social change and continuity with regard to family formation behavior.

The study presented in this paper investigates intergenerational patterns of family formation focusing on a holistic conceptualization of family formation events as a process of

partnering, childbearing, and educational attainment. In addition, the roles ofgrandparental family structure and socio-economic resources are considered.

A deeper understanding of family formation pathways is important because the interplay of experiences related to family formation in young adulthood have fundamental implications for individual outcomes later in life (Shanahan, 2000). Moreover, consideration of the interdependency of individual trajectories and transitions in relation to the family in an alternative social and historical context such as Denmark since the late 1960s is valuable for several reasons. First, theories on family formation often mark this period as an essential in bringing about new ways of family life (Cherlin, 2004). Second, the Scandinavian social-democratic welfare state is frequently cited for its general focus on equality through universal access to education, its labor market regulations, and the role of its universal, generous, and family-friendly policies (Esping-Andersen, 2009). Third, the Scandinavian setting, and especially Denmark, is noted as a vanguard nation with regard to non-marital cohabitation, non-marital childbearing, and postponement of family formation (Kiernan, 2001; Lesthaeghe, 2010).

BACKGROUND

The transformed opportunity structure individuals have experienced over the course of the 20th century has not only changed family life, but also led to increased educational requirements, higher expectations of social mobility in the labor market, and overall perceived prospects of a healthier and longer life. In this perspective, the timing and sequencing of life events in its traditional form of leaving home, getting married, and having children is no longer suitable for understanding the diversity of family life documented in recent decades (for an overview see Smock and Greenland, 2010). Instead, it has become more appropriate to approach family life events in a non-linear manner by emphasizing the existence of various family life pathways (Elzinga & Liefbroer, 2007; Furstenberg 2010; Loft, 2011;

Macmillan 2005; Macmillan & Copher, 2005). Thus, to fully understand the variation in family formation behavior it is necessary to observe distinct sub-patterns of family trajectories as well as trajectories in other life domains (e.g. intermittent spells of living alone or educational disruption).

In addition, studies of social inequality continue to show that the family life course is associated with reproduction of socioeconomic resources and personal preferences (e.g. Bengtson 1975; Coneus & Spiess 2012; De Vries, Kalmijn & Liefbroer 2009; Kolk 2013; Lindahl , Palme, Sangreen & Sjögen 2012; Mare & Maralani 2006; McLanahan & Percheski, 2008; Moen, Erickson, & Dempster-McClain 1997). Thus, generational transmission works both through demographic processes as families influence subsequent generations through differential fertility and survival, and marriage patterns, as well as through transfers of socioeconomic resources (Mare 2011).

The Life Course Perspective

The life course perspective is a useful theoretical approach to study family life over time, because it involves a contextual, process-oriented, and dynamic approach to the study of individual lives (Bengtson & Allen, 1993; Hogan & Astone, 1986). As a concept, the life course is defined as *"Pathways through the life span involving a sequence of culturally defined, age-graded roles and social transitions enacted over time"* (Elder, 1985). Roles refer to the positions that individuals occupy within social institutions (for example being a student, a worker, a partner, or a parent), and mostly individuals occupy multiple roles simultaneously (Macmillan & Copher, 2005). In this study, pathways are defined as the interconnectedness of such role configurations, and pathways are assumed to aggregate in a given society in order to define the overall structure of the timing and sequencing of transitions in the life course (Bonetti et al., 2013; Macmillan & Eliason, 2003).

Although gender is less explicitly theorized in the life course perspective, the implicit acknowledgement of diversity of life span transitions allow for identification of individual variability between men and women in the relative timing and sequencing of transitions (Hogan & Astone, 1986). Research suggests that changes in the general structure of the life course in the latter part of the twentieth century have been more prevalent for women than for men (Brückner & Mayer, 2005). Especially, transitions between school, higher education, and work have become less differentiated by gender as societies have moved away from the male-breadwinner family towards a model of higher gender equity (Esping-Andersen, 1999). Nevertheless, even if men and women's life courses may have become more similar with regard to educational attainment and paid employment, the life course is still likely to differ with regard family roles (Fussell & Furstenberg, 2005; Oesterle, David Hawkins, Hill, & Bailey, 2010). For example, relative to men, women have consistently been found more likely to experience marriage and childbearing at earlier ages and to raise children outside of marriage (Seltzer, 2000).

Pathways of Family Formation

As opposed to studying only one family transition at a time (for example, timing of entry into first marriage), a growing body of literature has explicitly drawn on the life course perspective's emphasis on interconnectedness of roles and role configurations, and investigated the diversity of family formation at the individual level from a pathway approach (e.g. Bonetti et al., 2013; MacMillan & Eliason, 2003). Nonetheless, the vast majority of studies of family formation pathways focus only on pathways within a single cohort or generation (e.g Amato et al., 2008; Macmillan & Copher, 2005; Oeserle et al., 2010). In addition, research focusing on intergenerational transmission tends to be limited to parent-to-child transmission, neglecting the influence of grandparents (Bengtson, 2001). This

approach may omit important perspectives on multigenerational continuity of family life pathways, and the social mechanisms that govern these (Alwin & McCammon 2003; Mare 2011).

Literature on intergenerational transmission of family formation has to a large degree been concentrated around single transitions as oppose to a more holistic approach looking at pathways of family transitions in a nonlinear manner observing distinct sub- patterns of family trajectories as well as trajectories in other life domains such as educational attainment or employment. These models have investigated intergenerational transmission associated with fertility behavior (Barber, 2000: Grey et al., 2007; Kolk, 2013; Murphy & Knudsen 2002), marriage (Willoughby et al., 2012; van popel et al 2008), and divorce and family disruption (Amato, 1996; Li & Wu, 2008; McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988; McLanahan & Perchshi, 2008; Wolfinger, 2000).

Most of these studies examine intergenerational transmission as direct transmission (e.g. giving birth to the same number of children as ones parents, or getting married at the same life sage as ones parents. Although such direct transmission is an important contribution to understanding intergenerational transmission of family formation behavior, alternative patterns of transmission must also be examined. It is possible that social mechanisms may relate parental family behavior to a different family behavior among children. In addition, such mechanisms can operate on an individual, a family, or a societal level (Silverstain &Giarrusso, 2011).

Thus, in order to move the debate on generational transmission of family formation forward the present study offers three contributions: (i) to simultaneously map out holistic family formation pathways, (ii) to assess the importance of direct as well as alternative social mechanisms associated with particular pathways of family formation pathways, and (iii) to add a multigenerational perspective by exploring the role of grandparental family structure and socioeconomic resources.

METHOD

Data and Sample

To investigate multigenerational perspectives on pathways of family formation, I used a combination of Danish longitudinal survey data and data from the Danish central population registers. Specifically, survey data from the Danish Longitudinal Survey of Youth (DLSY, DLSY-C) was linked with register data in order to build individual fertility-, partnering-, and educational- - histories for parents (born in 1954[1], N = 2,373) and *all* of their children (born on average in 1982, N= 3,966). In addition, information on socioeconomic resources and demographic characteristics for parents and grandparents was identified in the DLSY/DLSY-C survey data and in the central population registers.

Three generationsare present in the DLSY/DLSY-C dataset, and are referred to as G1 (grandparents), G2 (parents), and G3 (children). Below Diagram A presents the DLSY/DLSY-C data collection efforts.

Diagram A. DLSY/DLSY-C Data collection

Generation	*G1*	*G2*	*G3*
Interviewed in 1968	1968	2010	
	1969	1969	
		1970	
		1971	
		1973	
		1976	
		1992	
		2001	
		2004	
		2014	

Data from the central population registers on G1, G2, and G3 from 1980 and onwards (currently until 2011)

For more information on the DLSY data please visit www.sfi.dk/dlsy.

[1] Strictly speaking this is a cohort of 7th graders, nonetheless in the context of this paper it is reasonable to refer to them as a generation as the study includes their parents and their children too.

Analytical Strategy

The empirical approach of the present study was conducted in two steps. First, I used sequence analysis (SA) to generate typological family life pathways for parents (G2) and for all of their children (G3) by means of age-graded role configurations. In these models all configurations of union status (single vs. cohabiting vs. married marriage), parenthood (not have become a parent vs. have become a parent), and educational attainment (not participating in education vs. participating in education) were examined at discrete one-year intervals between age 18 and 30. This strategy allowed me to consider which configuration each respondent occupied at each age point, and to connect these configurations over time (pathways). In order to explicitly consider differences with regard to gender, I estimated SA models separately for men and women within each generation. Second, I used multinomial regression analysis to examine the sorting of children (G3) into each of the identified family formation pathways using the identified pathways of their parent(s) (G2) as a predictor. In this regression analysis I also considered relevant background variables including grandparental family structure and grandparental socioeconomic status.

Sequence analysis is one among a growing number of procedures to describe life course trajectories and pathways. Another popular approach is the use of latent class analysis (LCA) (see Macmillan & Eliason 2003). Thus, in order to ensure the robustness of my results I also estimated a LCA. Results from my SA and my LCA analyses were close to identical. Similarly, I compared the estimates obtained from my regular multinomial logistic regression with robust standard errors used to correct for clustering within families, against a multilevel modeling procedure. Also between these two multinomial regression analyses results were alike.

Measures

Indicator variables of family formation pathways. To generate family formation pathways among the parents (G2) I relied on four indicator variables from the DLSY survey questions: being in a cohabiting relationship, being in a married relationship, having a child, and participating in education. A binary measure was constructed indicating whether each respondent occupied each of these statuses at age 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30. Indicators for being in a cohabiting or married relationship were obtained from complete union status histories (dynamic status). Respondents were asked to chronologically order and describe all their romantic unions with regard to (a) whether they only lived with the partner or got married, (b) the year each relationship began, (c) the year the relationship ended, and (d) the reason why each relationship ended. This information was used to generate an indicator variable, observing at each age whether a respondent was single (coded 0), cohabiting (coded 1), or married (coded 2).

Because experiencing a first birth is an irreversible event and this study focused on family formation, only the first birth (transition to parenthood) was included. Respondents were asked to chronologically report the year and month in which they had a child. Respondents reporting to have had a child at any given age point was coded 1 for that age onwards and 0 otherwise.

To establish if parents (G2) were attaining an education at any given age point, full education histories were constructed. The respondents were asked to chronologically order and describe all formal education with regard to (a) type of education, (b) the year each type of education began, and (c) the year each type of education ended. Respondents reporting to be attending education at any given age point was coded 1 for that age and 0 otherwise.

All questions used to generate indicator variables, were asked at least in two waves (1992 and 2001). Yet, the majority of these (or similar) questions were also asked in several of the earlier

waves. Due to the risk of recall error, answers to the same (or similar) questions were cross-referenced across each wave of data collection. Virtually no recall error was detected.

To generate family formation pathways among the children (G3) I relied on five indicator variables from the central population registers: family type (married couple, registered partnership, cohabiting with common children, cohabiting with no common children, single), marital status (married, divorced, widowed, registered partnership, dissolved registered partnership), own children, birth year of own children, and participating in education in each given year. These variables were available annually from 1980 and onwards, and were coded as the indicator variables for the parents

Taken together the used indicator variables allow for 12 possible role configurations among parents (G2) as well as among children (G3). These role configurations are described in the below Diagram B.

Diagram B. Role Configurations

Single	No child -	No educational attainment	= SNN
Single	No child	Educational attainment	= SNE
Single	Child	No educational attainment	= SCN
Single	Child	Educational attainment	= SCE
Cohabiting	No child	No educational attainment	= CNN
Cohabiting	No child	Educational attainment	= CNE
Cohabiting	Child	No educational attainment	= CCN
Cohabiting	Child	Educational attainment	= CCE
Married	No Child	No Educational attainment	= MNN
Married	No Child	Educational attainment	= MNE
Married	Child	No Educational attainment	= MCN
Married	Child	Educational attainment	= MCE

Determinants of G3 pathways. In order to capture social mechanisms associated with family formation among the children (G3), I relied on six DLSY survey variables. First I identified whether the parents (G2) had ever divorced by 2001. Next, to capture the parents (G2) individual abilities, I included

results from the DLSY's extensive assessments of verbal comprehension at age 14[2]. Similarly the DLSY included an extensive assessment of individual attitudes, including the degree of individual career orientation also measured when the parents (G2) were age 14. In addition, I used a variable indicating the parental (G2) socioeconomic status[2]. As the DLSY also holds information on the grandparents (G1) I was able to include a measure of grandparental family structure (whether the family had remained intact), and grandparental socioeconomic status[3]. To check for birth order, I included the children's (G3) sibling position, which is directly available in the central population registers. Finally, I generated an indicator of the type of parent (G2) – child (G3) gender dyad, and calculated the parent (G2) – child (G3) age difference as a centered measure. Descriptive statistics on all included measures are available in Table 1.

RESULTS

G2 Pathways of Family Formation by Gender

For this generation of Danish men and women, I found strong support for 4 distinct family formation pathways among men and 4 distinct family formation pathways among women. Respondents were assigned to the sequence cluster in which they had the highest probability of membership. The profile of each pathway is presented in Figure 1.

The first family formation pathway was labeled *Standard* (men n = 1,317, 66.8%; mothers n = 1,250, 62.7%). This pathway was distinctive for the relative high prevalence of marriage already from the early 20s combined with a relative early transition to parenthood both among fathers

[2] With the DLSY there was conducted an extensive assessment of the parents (G2) verbal, inductive, and spatial abilities in 1968 (~ age 14). The test scores for each of assessments were highly correlated and thus I include only one of them in my model.

[3] In the Danish context it is common to operate with a standardized measure of socioeconomic status group membership. It is a highly validated measure based on occupational qualifications and prestige relative to the historical context. The measure holds five categories: 1 = elite, 2 = upper-class, 3 = middle-class = lower middle-class , and 5 = working-class.

and among mothers. The prevalence of educational attainment was moderate or low, and cohabitation was never really present. In many respects this first pathway describes the traditional model of family formation; early transition out of education, moving into marriage and becoming a parent within a year or two of marriage.

The second family formation pathway was labeled *Cohabitation* (men *n* = 298, 15.1%; women *n* = 339, 17.0%). Although men as well as mothers in this pathway transitioned out of education at a lower rate during their 20s, this pathway was primarily distinguished by the high occurrence of both men and women's' being in a cohabitating relationship and the very limited prevalence of marriage. In addition, childbearing was initiated within cohabitation. This second pathway describes family formation in which cohabitation plays a central role; not only as an alternative to being single or as a prelude to marriage, but also as an alternative to marriage in which childbearing takes place (Raley, 2001; Seltzer, 2000).

The third family formation pathway was labeled *Educated Standard* (men *n* = 181, 9.2%; women *n* = 206, 10.3%). This pathway was characterized by a low (and later) prevalence of parenthood relative to the Standard pathway, mirrored by a high or moderate probability of spending those years in marriage only and – to some degree – participate in education. This pathway may mirror the choices of a more privileged or capable group of men and women, who still adhere to a more traditional route of union formation, but who may have had the means to pursue education to a larger degree than those in the Standard pathway.

The fourth family formation pathway was labeled *Late Start* (men *n* = 175, 8.9%; men *n* = 200, 10.0%). Both among men and among women this pathway was typified by a high prevalence being single and not pursuing further education (given the Danish historical context it is reasonable to assume that both men and women are working). However, a limited occurrence of attaining education

seem to happen among men until the early 20s, whereas among women this is more concentrated in the early to mid-20s. The most distinctive feature of this pathway was that virtually no union formation or transition to parenthood was initiated until the late 20s. In many respects this fourth pathway describes an extended period of independence from a partner or the standard age-graded norms associated with traditional family formation otherwise typical for this generation.

G3 Pathways of Family Formation by Gender

For this generation of Danish men and women, I also found strong support for 4 distinct family formation pathways among men and 4 distinct family formation pathways among women. However, the identified pathways differed in several ways – as expected - from what was found within the parents' (G2) generation. The profile of each G3 pathway is presented in Figure 2.

The first family formation pathway was labeled *Parenthood* (men *n* = 560, 28.4%; women *n* = 694, 34.8%). This pathway was distinctive as the only one of the identified pathways within this generation included a noticeable transition to parenthood. Cohabitation is initiated during the early 20s and by the mid-20s, as these men and woman transition out of education, they move into cohabitation, become parents, and eventually marry. In many respects this first pathway describes a new schedule of family formation where the onset of union formation and marriage typically is separated by at least five years, and often more. Cohabitation, and sometimes parenthood, occurs in the intervening years, and marriage then become a culminating event (Furstenberg, 2010).

The second family formation pathway was labeled *Cohabitation* (men *n* = 593, 30.1%; women *n* = 353, 17.7%). Although this pathway was as labeled Cohabitation just as the second pathway found within the parents' (G2) generation, the two pathways are quite different. Whereas childbearing took place within the identified Cohabitation pathway within the parents' (G2) generation, there is virtually no transition to parenthood in this pathway among the children (G3). Throughout the

20s this pathway is dominated by cohabitation alone among men, and cohabitation and cohabitation in conjunction with educational attainment among women. During the late 20s a transition to marriage is initiated among women and a similar transition – although very limited - seem to be occurring among the men too. Among the children (G3) this second pathway describes family formation as cohabitation, and is perhaps best interpreted as an alternative to being single (Rindfuss & Vandenhuavel, 1990).

The third family formation pathway was labeled Independent (men *n* = 542, 27.5%; women *n* = 182, 9.1%). This pathway was characterized by the prominent role of single life and indeed single life without pursuing further education. Although some cohabitation does take place, family formation is not a notable component of this pathway and thus children (G3) in this pathway appear to spend their 20s independently from a partner and without children. It is noteworthy that whereas among men there is a transition out of education by the early 20s, this transition seems not to happen among women until their mid-20s. This pathway to some degree mirrors the Late Start pathway identified among the parents (G2) although with educational attainment being more prevalent among the children (G3) during the early years. Thus, just as with the "late Starters" among the parents' (G2) generation, this third pathway describes an extended period of independence from a partner or the standard age-graded norms associated with family formation otherwise typical – not only for the parents'(G2) generation, but from what is found typical for about half of the members of the children's' (G3) generation.

The fourth family formation pathway was labeled *Educated Independent* (men *n* = 276, 14%; mothers *n* = 766, 38.4%). Both among men and among women this pathway was typified by a high prevalence of being single, but different from the Independent pathway in that pursuing further education is a key component. Whereas among men in this pathway who transition out of single life seem to coincide with a transition out of participation in further education during the late 20s. In

contrast, among the women the transition out of single life does not seem to coincide with a move away from pursuing further education. Similar to the Independent pathway, men and women in this pathway do not appear to engage in any traditional family formation behavior understood as marriage or parenthood.

Whereas previous literature comparing family formation behavior of different generations tend to focus on direct similarities of the identified family formation pathways (e.g. De Vries, Kalmijn & Liefbroer, 2009; Soboka & Toulemon, 2008), this seems only to some extent to be a productive approach with regard the pathways identified among the two generations presented here. Indeed the younger generation seems to be on a new and different schedule (Furstenberg 2010; Billary & Liefboer 2010; Shanahan, 2000). While in the parents' (G2) generation the 20s were for the majority still typified by one or more traditional family formation processes (marriage and parenthood), such transitions appear to be something only about one-third of the children's (G3) generation experience during this life stage.

The parents' (G2) generation has been characterized as vanguards with regard to cohabitation and parenthood occurring within cohabitation (Loft, 2011). The children's (G3) generation seems to continue this trend of cohabitation as a separate life stage. However, the family formation pathways identified among the children (G3) also makes it clear that a period of extended independence through single life must also be viewed as a well-established independent life stage.

A key finding in the assessment of prevalent family formation pathways in the two generations presented here is the distribution of individuals in each of the identified pathways. In the parents' (G2) generation about two-thirds experienced a standard pathways typified by transition to marriage and parenthood, and the remaining one-third was somewhat evenly distributed across the other three identified pathways. In addition the percentage distribution into each pathway was close to

identical for men and women. This trend of evenly distributions is not present in the children's (G3) generation. Instead, Isee substantial differences in the distribution of men and women in each of the identified pathways. For example whereas 27 percent of the men follow the Independent pathway, this is only the case for 9 percent of the women. This trend is paralleled in the educated Independent pathway which is followed by 14 percent of the men, compared to 38 percent of the women. This is likely to indicate that among men and women for whom single life signifies the 20s as an independent life stage, women are more likely to participate in further education as an integrated part of this life stage, whereas it may be assume that working is the substantial complementing element of this life stage among men.

Predicting G3 Pathways of Family Formation

In order to understand the multifaceted nature of generational transmission of family formation behavior, I assessed precursors sorting children (G3) into each pathway using multinomial logistic regression. Because the family formation pathways identified in the SA analysis were similar for men and women, I tested to see if results from separate regression models produced significantly different estimates for men and women. None of the produced estimates among men differed significantly from those produced among women (results not shown).Consequently, the regression analysis presented here is a combined analysis of men and women. Results from this combined regression analysis are presented in Table 2 and in the following discussed in terms of relative risk ratios.

Parental family formation pathways, socioeconomic status, abilities, and degree of career orientation were indeed associated with their children's family formation pathways, and so was grandparental family structure. In addition, demographic control variables including a child's sibling

position, the gender dyad between parent and child, and the age difference between parent and child were also highly significant factors in predicting family formation pathways among the children.

Children who have experienced parental divorce (1.39), and come from a home with lower parental socioeconomic status (1.12), are significantly more likely to be in the Independent pathway relative to the Parenthood pathway. In contrast, children with a parent in the Educated Standard relative to the Standard pathway, a parent with higher abilities as measured by the verbal test score (.91) as well as a more career orientated parent (.93) is significantly less likely to be in the Independent pathways. That is, the Independent pathway among children is generally associated with overall less parental socio-economic resources. In addition, being a son is associated with being in the Independent pathway relative to the Parenthood pathway (3.88 and 4.14 respectively for mother-son and father-son dyads relative to mother-daughter dyad).

Parental family formation pathway membership does not seem to be associated with a child being in the Cohabitation pathway. To have experienced parental divorce (1.19) may to some degree be associated with being in the cohabitation pathway, relative to the Parenthood pathway, and similarly so if the child comes from a home with lower socioeconomic status (1.12). Indeed a non-intact grandparental family structure (1.36) is associated with a significant higher likelihood of a child being in the Cohabiting pathways. Again being a son is more likely to yield membership of the Cohabitation pathway relative to the Parenthood pathway (1.85 and 2.51 respectively for mother-son and father-son dyads relative to mother-daughter dyad).

Children with a parent in the Cohabitation pathway or the Late Start pathway relative to the Standard pathway, have a higher likelihood (1.38 and 1.23 respectively) of being in the Educated Independent pathway, relative to the Parenthood pathway. In addition, children with a parent that have ever been divorced are also significantly more likely (1.20) to be in the Educated Independent pathway

relative to the Parenthood pathway. Finally, sons are less likely to follow the Cohabitation pathway relative to the Parenthood pathway (.49 and .36 respectively for mother-son and father-son dyads relative to mother-daughter dyad).

DISCUSSION

From a life course perspective, the present study identified family formation pathways between age 18 and 30 among Danish men and women born in or around 1954 and their children. In addition, the role of parental family formation pathway, divorce, socioeconomic status, abilities and degree of career orientation, together with grandparental family structure and socioeconomic status were assessed as factors in the sorting the children (G3) into each of the identified family formation pathways.

Investigating role configurations related to being single, being in a cohabiting relationship, being in a married relationship, becoming a parent, and participating in educational attainment over time (age 18 to 30) led to the identification of four family formation pathways for both men and women within both generations. Among both men and women in the parents (G2) generation parenthood, cohabitation and participation in education differentiated the identified pathways. Among men and women in the children's' (G3) generation parenthood, single life, and participation in education distinguished the four pathways. Whereas only one pathway among the children (G3) included the transition to parenthood, two pathways - together accounting for close to half of the men and women – was typified by single life. Thus, as cohabitation became established within the parents' (G2) generation as a key component of family formation, the majority of men and women still experienced to form a union and initiate parenthood before age 30, this was not the case among the children (G3). Instead this generation, spend a large part of their 20s in single life, pursuing further education and, perhaps, advancement with the labor market. These results are in line with previous

studies of postponement of family formation (e.g. Buchmann. & Krisi 2011: Elzinga & Liefbroer, 2007).

An interesting finding when comparing the pathways identified among the parents (G2) to those found among the children (G3), is that men and women in the parents' generation seem to be doing evenly alike. That is, not only are the pathways close to identical for men and women, but the share of men and women in each pathway are also very similar. Such an even distribution is in contrast to findings within the children's generation (G3). With the exception of the Parenthood pathway, the distribution of men and women into the pathways appear to be much more diverse. Finally, in comparison to the American setting, it is noteworthy that single parenthood is literally non-existing as a component of family formation in Denmark. Whereas childbirth outside of marriage is likely to lead to single motherhood in the American context, having a child outside partnership remains a minor practice in the Danish setting (Kiernan 2001). Children born outside of marriage in Denmark are born into cohabiting unions.

The generations included in the present study is of particularly sociological interest, as they span from a period of age-graded and standardized schemes of family formation (G1) over to the introduction of cohabitation as a key component in Danish family behavior (G2), to the most recent generation to come of age (G3), A generation which has been widely described as characterized by de-standardization (Bruckner & Mayer, 2005).

The present study also assessed how a variety of social mechanisms play a role in the sorting the most recent generation of men and women into specific family formation pathways. This analysis suggests that children (G3) following the Independent pathway relative to the Parenthood pathway are likely to have less social and economic resources available. While the parents (G2) have been likely to follow a standard pathway not involving further education, but rather transitioned to

marriage and parenthood during the mid-20s, their children (G3) spend the majority of their 20s as single with only limited educational participation. The absence of combining family formation and education is present both among parents and children in this constellation of pathways. If at all pursuing social mobility, this is likely to happen in the labor market for these children.

Children (G3) with a divorced parent (G2) – and even to a higher degree with divorced grandparents (G1) – are likely to follow a pathway where cohabitation is a key component relative to a pathway typified by parenthood and transition to marriage. Similar to children following the independent pathway, fewer parental socioeconomic resources are also associated with the Cohabitation pathways relative to the parenthood pathway. Further analysis may shed an interesting light to the degree to which these children's cohabiting unions are stable unions.

Following the Cohabitation pathway as well as the Late Start pathway among the parents (G2) was not necessarily associated with lower socioeconomic status and resource availability. Rather, these parents were likely to be a part of a group of resourceful vanguards (See Loft 2011). Children (G3) following the Educated Independent pathway relative to the parenthood pathway are likely to have parents in the Cohabitation pathway as well as the Late Start pathway relative to the Standard pathway and thus have more socioeconomic support available. Here family formation is likely to be transferred as something to be initiated once educational attainment concludes.

Although the holistic and multigenerational level approach to the study of interconnectedness of social role configurations over time allowed for a comprehensive description and rich examination of intergenerational transmission of family formation behavior, the present study also had limitations. In particular, to include data on employment histories and the timing of leaving the parental home would significantly improve this study. The DLSY data does include variables that will allow the addition of these two life domains, and is thus an important next step in the continued

development of this study. To include employment histories, may enable a more concise description of the interplay of family roles and subsequent transitions within the labor market. Also to investigate the presence of interactions effects in the regression model may facilitate significant contributions to the literature on intergenerational transmission of family formation. Finally, to generate predicted probabilities based on the multinomial regression model properly ease the interpretation of these results. Both of these things are also next steps in further develop this study and hence this paper..

In conclusion, the present study provides a useful investigation of multigenerational perspectives on family formation in an alternative context initiated at the onset of significant social change. The results suggests that social mechanisms operating through parental family formation behavior, experience of divorce, socioeconomic status, and abilities, as well as to some extent grandparental family structure jointly shape patterns of family formation during the young adult years in the most recent generation to come of age and forming families. We know that patterns of family formation not only reflect social origin and access to resources, but also play a key role in later life outcomes. This study has underlined a strong and persistent link between social inequality and multigenerational transmission of family formation behavior. An important objective for future family research is to take advantage the contextual, process-oriented, and dynamic understanding offered by the pathway approach, and further examine how family formation pathways may influence or mediate later life outcomes in a multigenerational perspective.

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Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics, N = 3,966

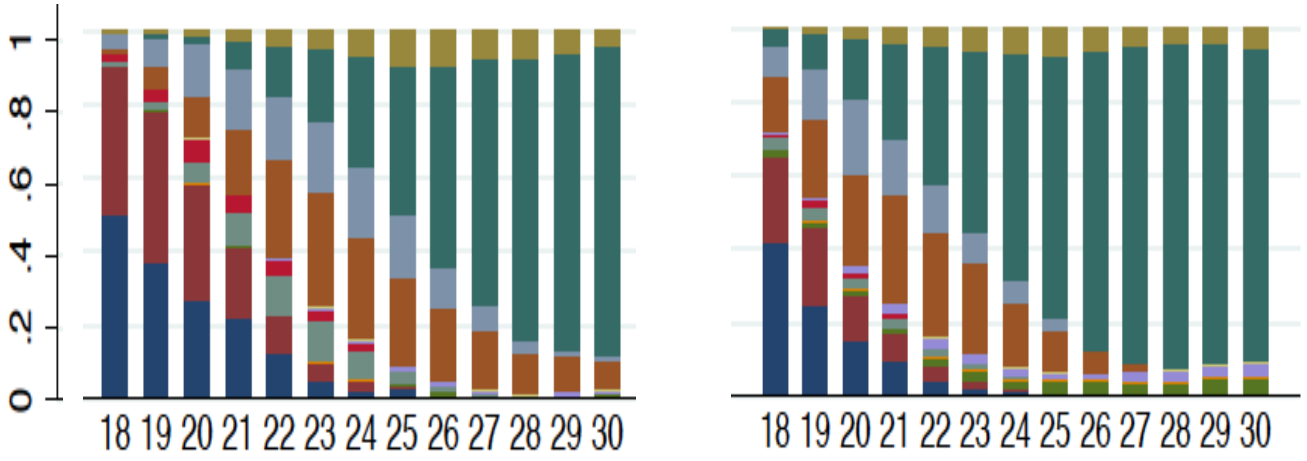
	Men (*n* = 1971, 49.70%)			**Women (*n* = 1995, 50.30%)**		
Variables	*M (%)*	*SD*	*Range*	*M (%)*	*SD*	*Range*
Year of birth						
Child (G3)	1982	5.13	1969 - 1993	1982	5.10	1968 - 1993
Parent (G2)	1954	.45	1950 - 1956	1954	.45	1950 - 1956
Family formation typology, children (G3)[a]						
Parenthood	(28.41)			(34.79)		
Cohabitation	(30.09)			(17.69)		
Educated Independent	(14.00)			(38.40)		
Independent	(27.50)			(9.12)		
Background variables, parents (G2)						
Family formation typology						
Standard	(66.82)			(62.66)		
Cohabitation	(15.12)			(16.99)		
Educated standard	(9.18)			(10.33)		
Late start	(8.88)			(10.33)		
Ever divorced	.34	.47	0 - 1	.34	.47	0 - 1
Socioeconomic status group[b]	2.83	1.09	1 - 5	2.83	1.13	1 - 5
Abilities as verbal test score[c]	7.73	1.70	1 - 13	7.79	1.77	1 - 13
Degree of career orientation[c]	4.35	2.22	1 - 8	4.42	2.27	1 - 8
Background variables, grandparents (G1)						
Family not intact	.15	.36	0 - 1	.16	.36	0 - 1
Socioeconomic status group[b]	3.38	1.13	1 - 5	3.39	1.10	1 - 5
Control variables						
Sibling position, child (G3)	1.73	.84	1- 7	1.70	.81	1 - 7
Gender dyad G2-G3						
Mother-Daughter	N/A			(54.29)		
Mother-Son	(53.83)			N/A		
Father-Daughter	N/A			(45.71)		
Father-Son	(46.17)			N/A		
Age difference G2-G3 (centered)						

Notes: [a] These percentages are different from those in Figure 1 as here they are conditioned on presence of the children (G3). [b] Socioeconomic status group: 1 = *highest socioeconomic status group*, 5 = *lowest socioeconomic status group*. [c] Measured when parents (G2) was attending 7th grade (~ age 14).

Figure 1. Family Formation Pathways among Parents (G2)

Pathway 1: "Standard"

Men (*n* = 1,317, 66.8%) Women (*n* = 1,250, 62.7%)



Pathway 2: "Cohabitation"

Men (*n* = 298, 15.1%) Women (*n* = 339, 17.0%)

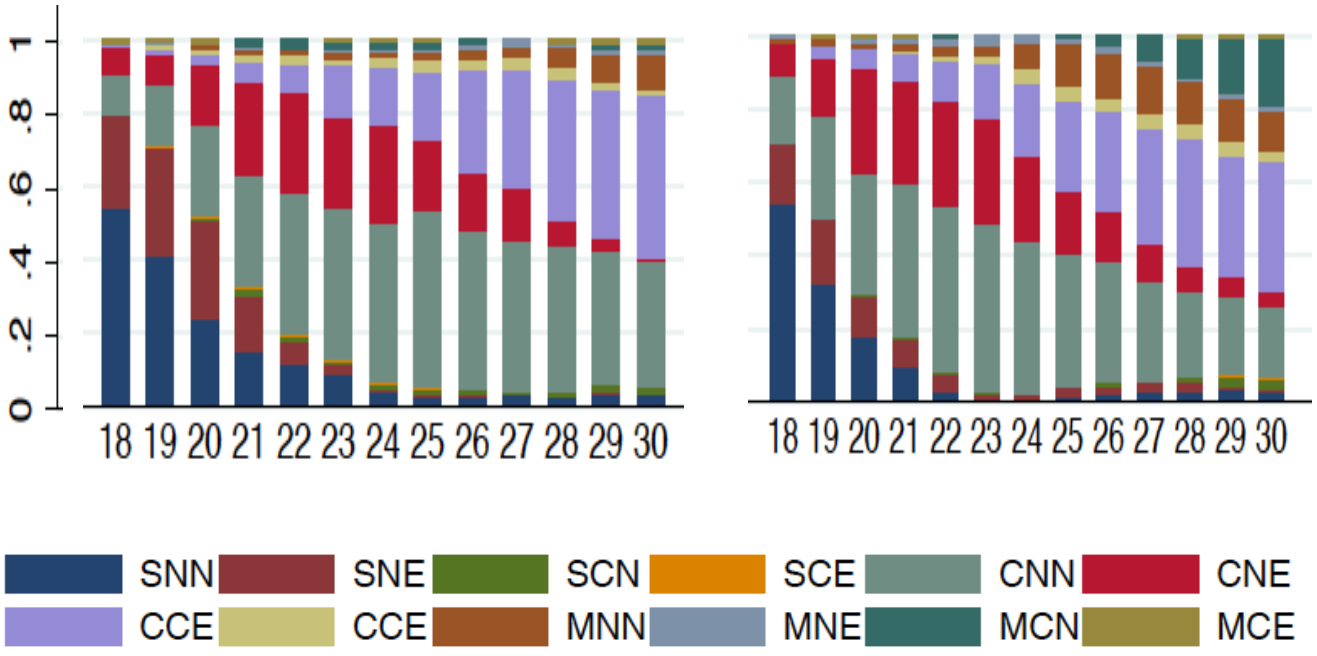
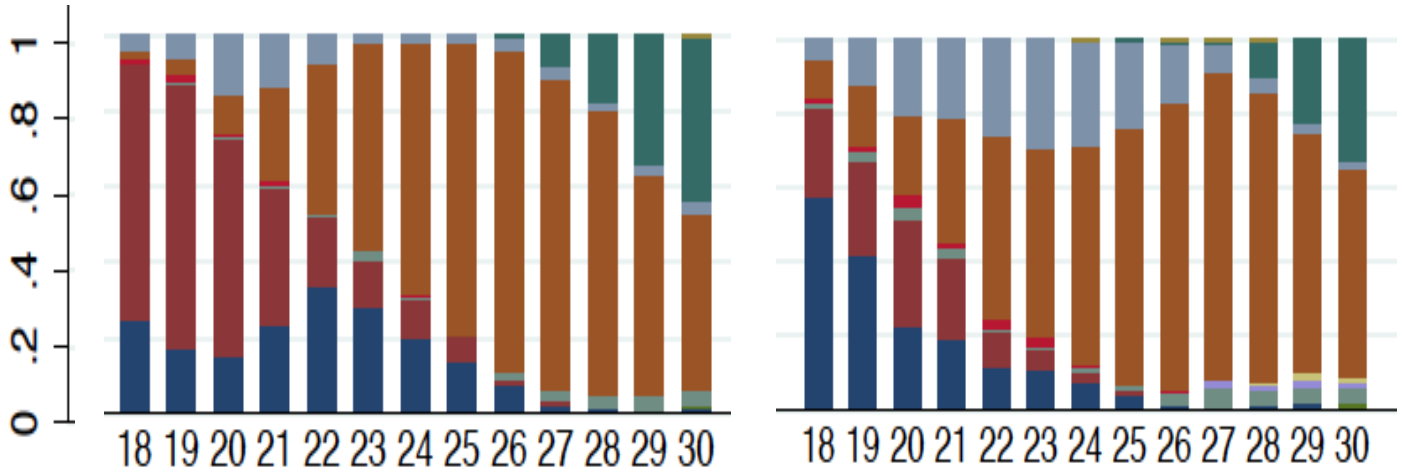


Figure 1. *Cont.*

Pathway 3: "Educated Standard"

Men (*n* = 181, 9.2%) Women (*n* = 206, 10.3%)



Pathway 4: "Late Start"

Men (*n* = 175, 8.9%) Women (*n* = 200, 10.0%)

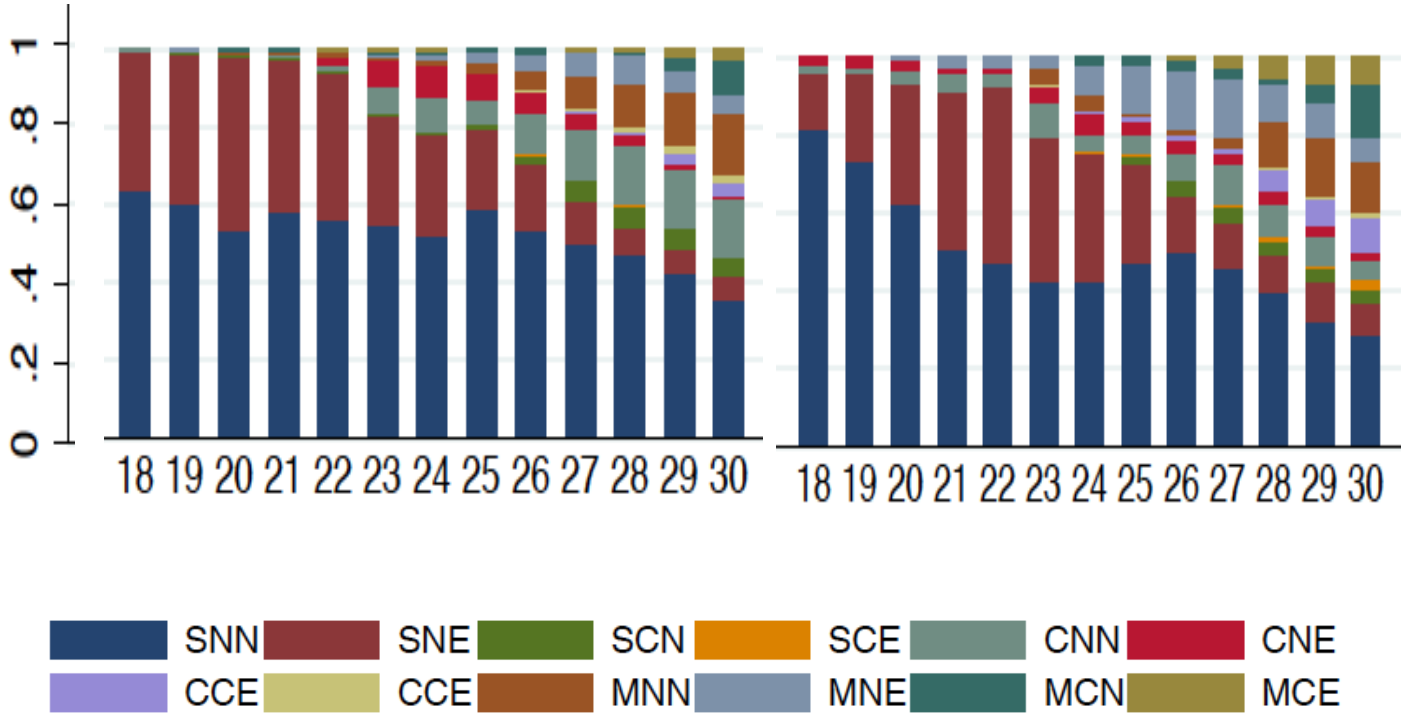
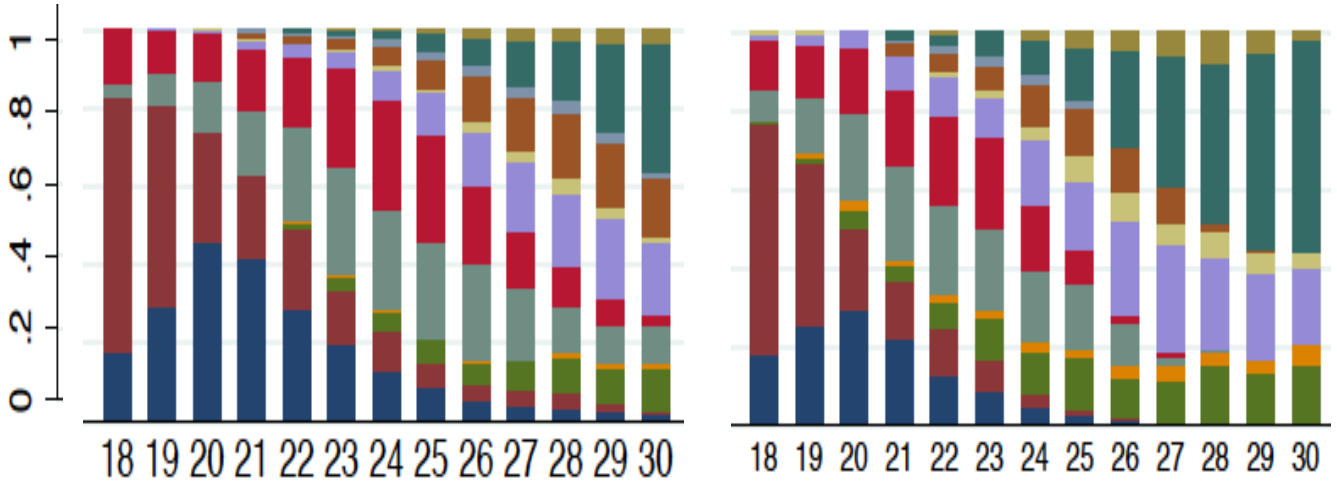


Figure 2. Family Formation Typologies among Children (G3)

Pathway 1: "Parenthood"

Men (*n*= 560, 28.4%) Women (*n*= 694, 34.8%)



Pathway 2: "Cohabitation"

Men (*n*= 593, 30.1%) Women (*n*= 353, 17.7%)

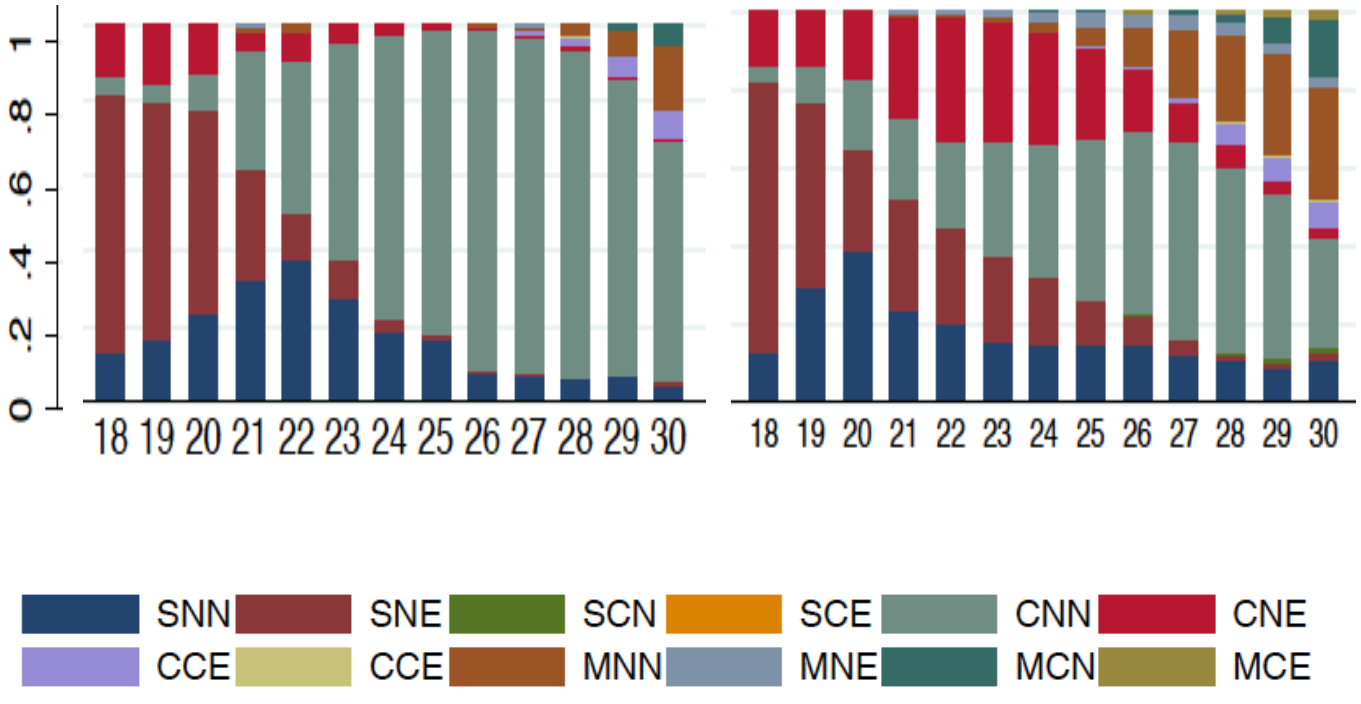
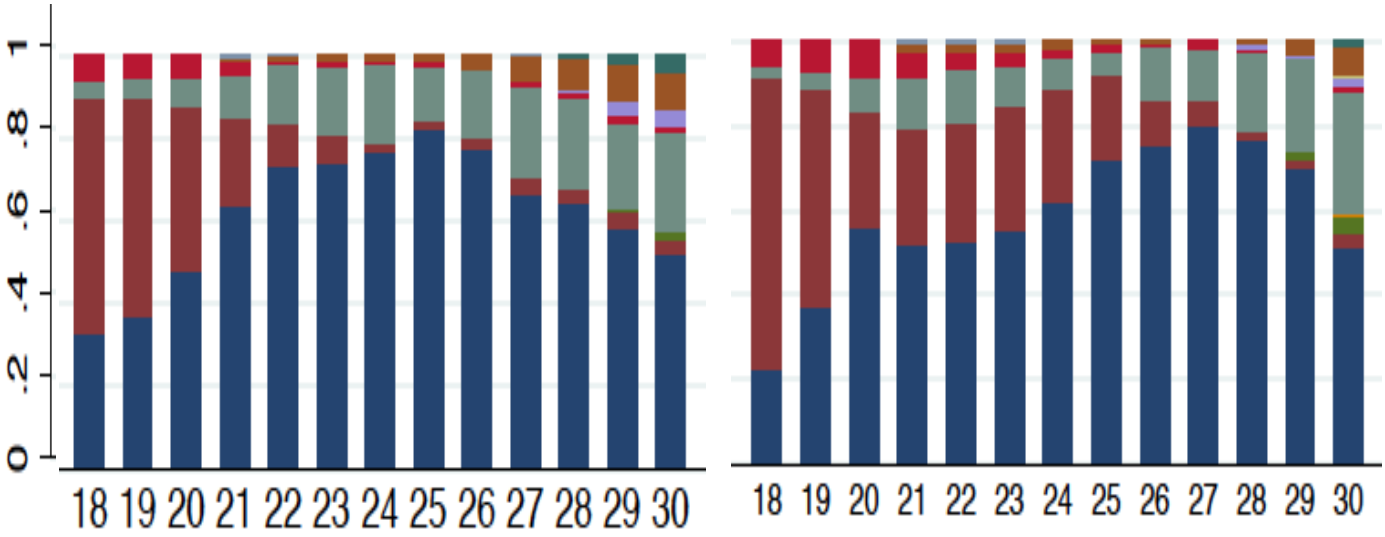


Figure 2. *Cont.*

Pathway 3: "Independent"

Men (*n*= 542, 27.50%) Women (*n*= 182, 9.12%)



Pathway 4: "Educated Independent"

Men (*n*= 276, 14.0%) Women (*n*= 766, 38.4%)

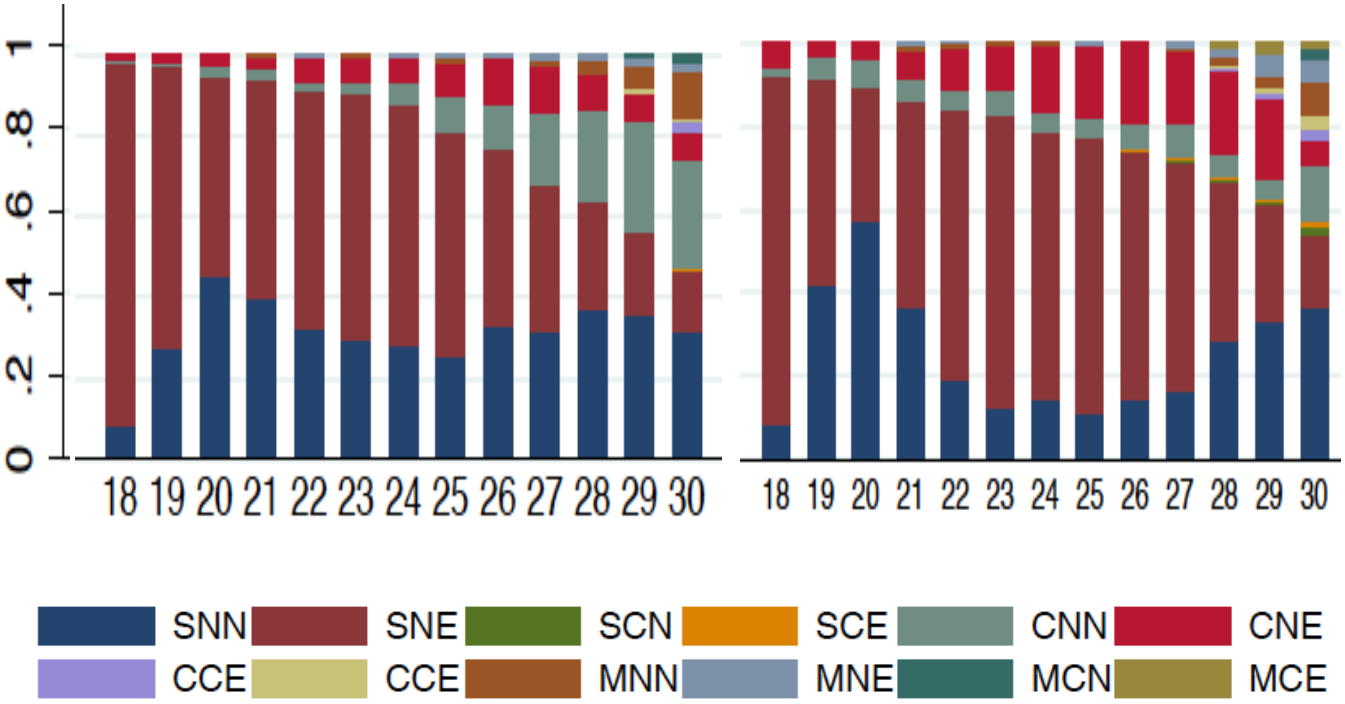


Table 2.

Multinomial Logistic Regression Predicting Family Formation Typology among Children (G3). Reference typology is "Parenthood." N=3966.

	Independent			Cohabitation			Educated independent		
Variables	*B*	*SE*	*RRR*	*B*	*SE*	*RRR*	*B*	*SE*	*RRR*
Background variables, parents (G2)									
Family formation typology									
Standard (ref.)			1.00			1.00			1.00
Cohabitation	.38	.22	1.46	.20	.20	1.22	.32**	.15	1.38
Educated standard	-.31*	.15	.73	-.06	.13	.94	-.01	.13	.98
Late start	.15	.19	1.16	-.11	.19	.89	.21*	.15	1.23
Ever divorced	.33**	.11	1.39	.18+	.10	1.19	.18*	.09	1.20
Socioeconomic status group	.11**	.04	1.12	.11**	.04	1.12	.01	.04	1.01
Abilities as verbal test score	-.09**	.03	.91	-.04	.03	.95	-.01	.03	.98
Degree of career orientation	-.07**	.02	.93	-.01	.02	.99	-.02	.02	.98
Background variables, grandparents (G1)									
Family not intact	.11	.14	1.12	.31**	.12	1.36	.08	.12	1.08
Socioeconomic status group	.07	.05	1.09	.05	.04	1.06	-.01	.04	.99
Control variables									
Sibling position, child (G3)	.23**	.08	1.25	.26***	.08	1.30	.15**	.06	1.16
Gender dyad (G2 – G3)									
Mother – Daughter (ref.)			1.00			1.00			1.00
Mother - Son	1.36***	.14	3.88	.61***	.12	1.85	-.71***	.14	.49
Father - Daughter	-.01	.18	.99	-.15	.14	.86	.10	.11	1.10
Father - Son	1.42***	.15	4.14	.92***	.12	2.51	1.01***	.16	.36
Age difference G2-G3 (centered)	-.07***	.01	.93	-.08***	.01	.93	.07***	.01	1.08
Constant		-1.60			-1.68			-.25	
χ^2					612.43				
df					42				
% in each typology		18.26			23.85			26.27	

Notes: Robust standard errors were used to correct for clustering within families (1953 clusters). *RRR* = relative risk ratio. Model include a control variable (dummy) for whether a child (G3) has reached age 30 by year 2011 (final year of observation).

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.10