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Dynamics of Inequality Across the Lifecourse: structures and process

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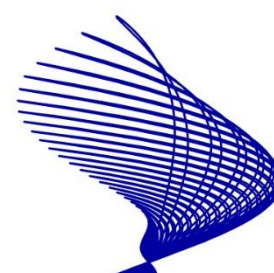
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Intersectional inequalities in work and family life courses by gender and race

Anette E. Fasang[1], Silke Aisenbrey[2]

Abstract

Which privileges and constraints do members of differently empowered groups face when combining work and family? Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY79), we analyze intersectional inequalities in work and family life courses at the intersection of gender and race. We focus on work-family life courses of black and white men and women from an intersectional quantitative life course perspective. Results from recent techniques in sequence analysis show a weak link between work and family lives for white men. They typically have the privilege of possibility to combine any type of family life course with any type of work career. In contrast, family formation processes tend to constrain work careers and vice versa for other groups at the intersection of gender and race. We contribute to the literature by showing the privilege of possibilities for white men and specific constraints that black and white women, and black men face when combining family and work life. Among others, findings also highlight a sizeable group of resourceful black single mothers, who hold stable middle class jobs. They often go unnoticed in previous research with a deficit orientation on a group of black early single mothers who muddle through precarious instable careers and welfare dependence that we also find in our study.

[1] Humboldt University of Berlin, anette.fasang@wzb.eu
[2] Yeshiva University New York, silke.aisenbrey@yu.edu

Introduction

White men in the United States earn higher wages than all other social groups. This is true historically, in all states and across all educational levels. White women, black men and black women earn less with widening differences between racial groups (Pew Research Center 2018). At the same time, groups distinguished by race and gender experience different timing and sequencing of family events across the life course. Black men, for example, on average marry at the age of 27, white women at the age of 22 (NLSY79, own calculations). At the same time, white men wait longest to have children (mean age 26), whereas black women on average have their first child at the age of 20.

Work and family lives are intertwined and social location, defined by the intersectionality of gender and race among others, matters in how these processes are interrelated across the life course. Most research on work-family inequalities focuses on single indicators at specific time points, prominently wage gaps between parents and childless or married and unmarried individuals (England et al. 2016, Budig and England 2001, Killewald and Gough 2013), changes in occupational prestige after child birth (Aisenbrey and Fasang 2010) or the impact of family events on poverty (DiPrete and McManus 2000).

Several recent studies approach the work and family interplay from a life course perspective to assess how labor market (dis-)advantages associated with family events cumulate over time (Aisenbrey and Fasang 2017; Kahn, Garcia-Manglano, and Bianchi 2014, Simiö, Kauppinen, and Martikainen 2017, Florian 2018a, 2018b, Killewald and Zhuo 2019). Studies highlight that employment related consequences of family events are transitory for some, but more enduring for others and depend on the combination of family events over the life course. For example, married residential biological fathers enjoy a fatherhood premium, that does not extend to unmarried, non-residential or step-fathers (Killewald 2013). Despite variation among men, overall men's careers are less constrained by their family life courses than women's (Aisenbrey and Fasang 2017).

The vast majority of (quantitative) studies on work-family inequality focuses on gender difference either among whites only, or on either women or men including race as a "control variable" (Budig and Hodges 2010, England et al. 2016, Kahn et al. 2014, DiPrete and McManus 2000).[3] Separating the effects of gender and race misses the structural power of intersectionality, and the different privileges and disadvantages attached to them (Choo and Feree 2010, Browne and Misra 2003, Moore 2012, Collins 2015).

In this article we combine an intersectional approach with a life course perspective in a longitudinal analysis on the gendered and racial privileges and constraints that black men, white men, black women and white women experience in combining work careers and family life. Specifically, we ask: Is it possible for white men to combine any family life course with

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[3] More generally, based on a sample of articles published in the American Sociological Review between 1937 and 1999, Martin and Yeung (2003: 538) attest an increasingly "broad but shallow" conception of race: race is more often included as a control variable in regression models, without further embedding it conceptually or theoretically, leading to a "racialization of analyses" and simultaneous "analytic deracialization" (p. 543).

any type of work career? Do white women, black men and black women have similar possibilities? Which longer-term life course experiences mark advantage and disadvantage in combining work and family lives for these intersectional groups?

We conceptualize the work-family interplay as a "process outcome" (Abbott 2005, Aisenbrey and Fasang 2017) of parallel work and family life courses between ages 22 and 44. This approach allows us to identify meaningful life course types of joint family-work experiences over time, as well as variations around these types (Brzinsky-Fay and Kohler 2010, Aassve, Billari, and Piccarreta 2007). We complement previous research on more particularistic relationships between, for example, parenthood and wages by mapping a bigger picture of full life course experiences in family and work until mature adulthood.

The life course paradigm (Elder et al. 2003, Mayer 2009, Bernardi et al. 2019) emphasizes the importance of timing and sequencing of life events and the unique experiences of birth cohorts that age in specific socio-historical circumstances defined. Our analysis centers on cohorts born between 1957 and 1964, who were age 22 to 44 in the time period from 1979 to 2008. They entered the labor market during the recessions following the oil crises in the 1970s, and built careers in the context of economic restructuring, de-industrialization, skill biased technological change and labor market polarization in the 1980s and 1990s (Kalleberg 2011). The second wave of feminism and the civil rights movement promised more equality for women and minorities as they were coming of age, and they were the first cohorts for which women surpassed men in educational attainment (Buchmann and DiPrete 2006). They are also the first cohorts that we can follow well into mid-life, thereby including later family events and mid-life careers move – or the lack thereof – in a longer-term assessment of the work-family interplay. Which intersectional inequalities in longer-term work and family lives emerged in these unique socio-historical circumstances?

Inspired by the agenda setting article of Choo and Ferree (2010) we adopt an intersectional approach that pays equal attention to the four intersectional groups of black women, white women, black men and white men[4]. No categories are left "unmarked". The intersection of race and gender is analyzed as much as a privilege of masculinity and whiteness as a constraint for other categories. We avoid implicitly treating white male life courses as a normative reference point and thereby naturalizing and homogenizing male whiteness. Or as Choo and Ferree (2010: 133) put it: "Methodologically, merely including difference often substitutes an implicit norm of whiteness or heterosexuality…".

We present two sets of empirical analyses. First, we study whether linear associations exist between family life courses and work careers using Mantel coefficients, a recently proposed measure to assess the strength of association between different life course domains (Piccarreta and Elzinga 2014, Piccarreta 2017). If linear associations exist, specific work lives, for example high stakes careers strictly go along with specific family lives, for example with stable marriage and parenthood. If no linear associations exist, possibly any family life course can be combined with any work career, a situation we refer to as the "privilege of possibilities". Second, we use multichannel sequence analysis (Pollock 2007), which distills more complex non-linear

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[4] We do not analyze other combinations of race and gender, such as groups that identify as non-binary or other racial or ethnic groups. This is in no way an indicator of the importance of extending the kind of analysis presented here to other groups as well.

patterns of interactions between family and work lives, for example if childlessness polarizes into going along with either very successful careers or precarious instable employment. We do not offer a causal explanation of race and gender-specific work-family trajectories in a statistical sense. Instead, we provide a longitudinal "thick description" (Abbott 1992) of the group specific interplay of work-family life over a long time span of the life course that can be thought of as an inequality outcome it itself.

Findings reveal a constraining link between work-family life courses for all intersectional groups except for white men. White men typically have the privilege to possibly combine any type of family life course with any type of work career. Black men's careers are more constrained by their family lives and vice versa. Black men only have access to careers of high occupational prestige if they are in long-term and stable co-residential relationships, enter fatherhood at later ages and have only one child. For black women we do not even find any group of high occupational prestige in significant numbers. Careers of medium occupational prestige are mainly accessible for black women if they abstain from having family responsibilities by not having a partner and delaying or foregoing motherhood. Our findings show a sizeable group of black women who are relatively late single mothers, but hold stable medium prestige jobs. They often go unnoticed in previous research that has a deficit orientation on black single mothers in precarious unstable employment. For white women, careers of high occupational prestige do occur in sizeable numbers, but tend to be linked to late parenthood and stable partnerships. In contrast to black women, single motherhood for white women only occurs in large numbers in combination with precarious unstable employment careers, not with stable middle class jobs.

Intersectionality: a comparative perspective

We examine the interplay between work and family life courses from an intersectional and life-course perspective to treat gender and race as the intertwined and interrelated social powers they are. This intersectional perspective more adequately captures the complexity and density of privilege and disadvantage compared to research designs that focus on different categories of disadvantage separately, like race, gender, class, age, sexuality or ethnicity (Jones, Kim, and Skendall 2012).

Crenshaw (1991) first introduced intersectionality as a concept in the context of black women's anti-discrimination lawsuits. It is considered one of the most important concepts originating from feminist theory to date. The early intersectionality literature has been criticized by some as being too strongly focused on intersectional identities and disregarding structural disadvantage associated with intersectional categories (McCall 2005). In this paper, we turn attention to the structural inequalities by overlapping intersectional categories of gender and race that shape different combined work-family life course experiences. Moreover, many of the early studies on intersectionality take an either anti-categorical or intracategorical approach that does not easily bridge into the quantitative stratification and gender welfare state literature focused on structural inequalities. The **anti-categorical** approach assumes that categories are per se too simplistic and problematic, because they reify the inequalities that

they criticize (McCall 2005: 1773). The **intracategorical** approach documents the subjective experiences of one group defined by intersecting categories, for example black women. Rich and insightful ethnographies in this tradition typically lack a comparison group to assess how the specific groups' experiences differ from others (Collins 2005). The third approach to intersectionality, that we adopt in this article, is **intercategorical** (McCall 2002). We follow intersectionality as an intercategorcial analytical strategy to offer a new perspective on structural inequalities in long-term interlocked work and family life courses (Collins 2015). Intersectional inequality in work and family life courses is treated as a hypothesis to ask to what extent and in which way it existed for our study cohorts in the United States.

Intersectionality questions variables as gender and race as "explanatory constructs in and of themselves" (Bowleg 2008: 322), and assumes that they "are not reducible to individual attributes to be measured and assessed for their separate contributions in explaining given social outcomes." (Zinn and Dill 1996: 329, Walby 2009, Choo and Ferree 2010). For example "the experiences of Latinas in the labor market reflect social constructions of gender that are racialized and social constructions of race that are gendered to create a particular experience" (Browne and Misra 2003: 490). In addition, these experiences are not disconnected from the experiences of other social groups, but stand in relation to and are connected with, e.g., the experiences of white men. Garry (2011) underlines the strength of the intersectionality approach as not abolishing identity categories, but allowing for categories to be more complex and messy.

We understand intersectionality not only as a commitment to treat different identity markers as 'messily intertwined'', but also to focus on all social groups equally (Choo and Ferree 2010, Browne and Misra 2003). Too often research focuses on the disadvantaged groups, thereby "normalizing" the privileged groups: "Gender seems to be about women, race seems to be about people of color, and economic inequality seems to be the property of the poor (Sprague 2005: 95)". This perspective diverts attention from the privileges of the dominant groups and inserts a deficit orientation on those experiences of marginalized groups that are considered socially most problematic. As Sprague (2005: 96) summarizes: "conventional quantitative methodologies tend to embody the standpoint of privileged groups". Our research design departs from the default normative/mainstream category and thereby "denaturalizes hegemonic relations, particularly by drawing attention to the unmarked categories where power and privilege cluster" (Choo and Ferree 2010: 146f).

Work-Family Life Courses and Intersectionality

The life course paradigm emphasizes the unique experiences of different birth cohorts and population sub-groups as they travel through time in specific socio-historical opportunity structures (Elder et al. 2003, Bernardi et al. 2019). Rather than mapping trends across historical periods, birth cohorts are followed as they age through historical time. Elder and co-authors (2003) summarize five now classic principles of the life course paradigm. They reflect heuristics to guide research designs rather than a theory in a strict sense (Bernardi et al. 2019, Fasang and Mayer, forthcoming): 1) life-long development: development does not stop with

adulthood, but continues over the entire life course, 2) agency: individuals make choices within constraining opportunity structures, 3) time and place: different macro-structural conditions across historical time and locations shape life courses, 4) timing: causes and consequences of events depend on their timing in the life course, and 5) linked lives: lives are lived interdependently within networks of shared relationships. The multidimensionality of lives, including parallel work, family, residential and health trajectories is occasionally highlighted as an additional 6) principle. Our research design follows individuals until mid-life (lifelong development), emphasizes the specific experience of intersectional groups of specific birth cohorts (time and place), and maps the joint timing and order of events in the work and family domain (timing and multidimensionality).

Parenthood wage gaps, differences in adjusted hourly wages between parents and childless, are the most studied indicator of work-family inequality. Most studies on parenthood wage gaps also use the NLSY79 data and thereby pertain to our study cohorts, albeit usually for shorter age ranges or limited periods of historical time. Findings shows smaller fatherhood premiums and motherhood penalties for black compared to white men and women (Glauber 2007, 2008; Waldfogel 1997; England et al. 2016; Hodges and Budig 2010). Two recent studies use data from the Current Population Survey to examine parenthood wage gaps (Pal and Waldfogel 2016, Glauber 2018) over several decades in the United States. Pal and Waldfogel (2016) only focus on the motherhood penalty and present separate analyses by race/ethnicity. Glauber (2018) includes motherhood and fatherhood wage gaps in separate analyses for high, medium and low earning parents controlling for race/ethnicity, but not presenting separate trends for racial groups.

The average motherhood penalty remarkably declined from 10 percent in 1970 to about 1 percent in 2013, with high fluctuations by race (Pal and Waldfogel 2016). In 1967, motherhood penalties were only 2 percent for black, but 13 percent for white women. For white women, the motherhood penalty continually declined and practically disappeared among high earning women by 2013 (England et al. 2016, Cooke 2014), while lower earning women continue to suffer motherhood penalties (Glauber 2018). Instead, for black women, the motherhood penalty peaked at 10 percent in the late 1990s, exactly in the prime childbearing and career building years of our study cohorts. Our analyses therefore focus on the broader work-family life courses in a time period when the motherhood penalty diverged for black and white women.

Fatherhood premiums also began to increase in the late 1990s, but only for high earning men (Glauber 2018). This could affect men of our study cohorts with diverging trends between higher and lower earning fathers in mid-life careers. Overall, research points to large heterogeneity of parenthood wage gaps both for population subgroups and over time. This questions the standard fare of "controlling" for group difference that risks producing population averages that do not apply to any of the intersectional groups covered.

Recent studies from a life course perspective report a tighter link between work and family lives for women compared to men in most western societies (Aisenbrey and Fasang 2017 2017, Piccarreta and Elzinga 2014), with the exception of the egalitarian Scandinavian welfare states. Here associations between family lives and economic outcomes are stronger for men, while women, irrespective of their family lives, continue to earn far less then men (Jalovaara and Fasang, forthcoming). Using the NLSY97, Kahn et al. (2014) show that motherhood wage

penalties attenuate with age for women with less than three children. Florian (2018a, 2018b) reports that motherhood deters white women's full time employment most, whereas it only has brief and small effects on black women's full time employment over their entire reproductive span (see also Killewald and Zhuo 2019). Among blacks only mothers of three or more children suffer a substantial loss in accumulated full time employment averaging at about 5 years.

To date life course research on work-family inequalities (Kahn et al. 2014, Aisenbrey and Fasang 2017, Killewald and Zhou 2019) in the United States has paid limited attention to race beyond a control variable, with the exception of Florian's (2018a, 2018b) work on motherhood and employment.[5] Most studies focus only on women (Kahn et al. 2014, Killewald and Zhuo 2019, Florian 2018a, 2018b) and thereby miss the full comparison of intersectional groups by gender and race. Aisenbrey and Fasang (2017) compare men and women in Germany and the United States controlling for interaction effects by gender and race on the probability to experience different types of combined work-family life courses identified with sequence and cluster analysis. Findings show that white men and women have equal chances of entering high stakes careers combined with stable partnerships and parenthood. This privilege does not extend to black women or black men pointing to intersectional inequalities in work-family life courses that are not further developed in this paper (Aisenbrey and Fasang 2017).

In this paper, we extend a similar methodological approach using sequence and cluster analysis to more fully assess intersectional inequalities by gender and race. From an intersectionality lens, the analysis in Aisenbrey and Fasang (2017) shares two inadequacies with the bulk of quantitative research on gender and race differences in inequality outcomes. First, the analyses are conducted on a pooled sample of black and white men and women. The majority populations in the overall sample therefore disproportionately drive the resulting work-family life course typologies (the same applies to Killewald and Zhuo 2019). Specific combinations of work-family life courses that are relevant for black men only might get lost in the cluster analysis on the pooled sample. Second, interacting gender and race in the regression is a step forward to studies including race and gender separately. Yet, Aisenbrey and Fasang (2017) also naturalize white men as the default reference category against which white and black women and black men are compared. In this article, we overcome these two inadequacies by analyzing each of the intersectional groups in their own right with group-specific sequence and cluster analyses that allow for identifying typical work-family patterns that are specific to each intersectional group. As a third addition we conceptualize and implement a new life course indicator of social inequality in work-family life courses based on the strength of the link between these two life domains (Mantel coefficients, Piccarreta and Elzinga 2014, Piccarreta 2017). Finally, we pay closer attention to the variability of life courses around the main patterns, that is, classification error in the clusters as an additional substantively interesting descriptive feature.

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[5] Kahn et al. (2014) use fixed effects models on a pooled sample of women of different racial background. Because race is not time-varying, it cannot enter as a control variable and race-specific analyses are not presented.

Institutionalized intersectional constraints and privileges

Social policies are one way of constructing and institutionalizing constraints and privilege for specific social groups when negotiating work and family life. The United States applies a "universal breadwinner strategy" with gender equity legislation in the labor market and state policies that encourages women's employment, but provides little support for childcare (Sainsbury 1999). Previous research on liberal regimes, such as the United States, shows that women have better access to top labor market positions, but are at the same time less protected from poverty, compared to continental European or social-democratic welfare states (Mandel and Shalev 2009, Orloff 2009).

On the one hand, from a gender perspective the United States has long been criticized for not supporting women's careers by lacking social provisions, as parental leave policies and public child care that are common in other welfare states (Gornick and Meyers 2003). On the other hand, the United States can be understood as a "distinctive alternative gender regime" (Orloff 2009) that provides few social provisions, but more regulations to ensure gender neutrality (Zippel 2009) and in that sense is a "leader not a laggard, in removing discriminatory occupational barriers" (Orloff 2009: 145). Evidence is accumulating that this alternative gender regime might be more supportive of gender equality in the family and on the labor market compared to welfare states with extensive social provision for families (Orloff 2009, Cooke 2011, Aisenbrey and Fasang 2017). Concerning work-family policies, two important instruments that stratify access to more privileged work careers depending on gender and race are parental leave policies and welfare policies. Comparing parental leave policies of 21 high income economies Ray, Gornick, and Schmitt (2009) found the US to be the only nation that doesn't provide any financial support for parental leave times (Ray et al. 2009).

The two policies that had a major effect on combining work and family lives in the last decades are the Family/Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the first nationwide option for unpaid parental leave in 1993 and in 1996, the welfare reform (Pal and Waldfogel 2016).

Our cohorts were between 31 and 38 years old in the mid-nineties. Assuming occupational maturity is reached on average during the mid-thirties (Aisenbrey and Brückner 2008), the 1996 welfare reform took place right when our sample reached their occupational maturity. On the other hand, taken that the mean age for becoming a parent is 24 (Mathews and Hamilton 2002), the introduction of the FMLA came too late to have a major effect on the whole sample.

The 1996 welfare reform eliminated the entitlement status of welfare and established time limits on receiving aid and work requirements without providing childcare. These changes put low income earners and especially low income single parents at risk of living in poverty and not being able to establish occupational careers, and will have affected our study cohorts in mid-life after most of them already had childre (Fang and Keane 2004, Iceland 2013, Mazelis 2017). Before 1996, federal social policy at least guaranteed a minimum level of aid to those in poverty. With the new policies welfare eligibility ended "after two years, regardless of whether they had found jobs by that time. It also set a lifetime limit on assistance at five years." (Iceland 2013: 126). The impact of these reforms is income- and thereby also race-specific (Pal and Waldfogel 2016). Overall, the 1996 welfare reform is another factor in creating disadvantages for black women and men and putting them at economic risks, thereby

structurally exacerbating privilege as well as the constraints of possibilities for low income, disproportionately black Americans.

In addition to the lack of parental leave and the 1996 welfare reform, access to family planning and health care, as well cultural norms about the economic preconditions for marriage, stratify when people enter parenthood and marriage by gender and race. Collins (1998) explicates how the traditional family ideal in the United States functions both as an ideology and a fundamental principle of social organization that naturalizes hierarchies of gender, race and sexuality. Raley, Sweeney, and Wondra (2015) argue that socioeconomic standing has become increasingly important for marriage over the past decades in the United States. As the cultural imperative to marry has weakened and marriage has become more optional, reaching the marriage bar economically has gained relevance. Not being white continues to be associated with economic disadvantages and, as one result, marriage is increasingly more common among whites compared to non-whites (ibid.). Yet, among our study cohorts, marriage was still considerably wide spread also among blacks. In sum, the lack of welfare state policies, stratification of access to the limited existing entitlements and the ideological construction of specific family ideals in the United States open up possibilities for some groups while, at the same time, other groups get overexposed instead of protected from the forces of the market.

Expectations

Theoretical explanations on the link between work and family life courses usually focus on either the unidirectional impact of education and employment on family outcomes, including fertility and union formation, or the unidirectional impact of family states like parenthood and partnering on employment, wages and occupational prestige (Aisenbrey and Fasang 2017). This article seeks to identify longitudinal "population level regularities" (Goldthorpe 2015) in intertwined work and family life courses. Our goal is to descriptively map intersectional inequalities in intertwined work-family life courses as longitudinal process outcomes (Abbott 2016) over a long time span of the life course. To this end, we conceptualize social inequality in longitudinal joint work and family life courses as the "privilege of possibility" as opposed to the "constraint of possibility". When we refer to groups either having privilege or constraints of possibilities we acknowledge that every individual in this group has the possibility to enter a work family combination of any form. But individuals who are part of certain socially constructed and structurally constrained groups have higher probabilities (privilege) or lower probabilities (constraints) of combining all possible family life courses with all possible work careers. We therefore derive two different sets of expectations for these intersectional groups at the opposite ends of the inequality spectrum:

1) *"Privilege of possibility":* There is no association between family life courses and work careers, that is any type of family life course can be combined with any type of work career.

2) *"Constraint of possibility":* Specific family life courses go along with specific work careers, that is, constraining factors limit the extent to which specific types of family life

courses can be combined with different types of work careers and vice versa. If we find systematic associations between family life courses and work careers, they can take different forms that signify complex inequalities (McCall 2005). The results warrant careful interpretation of the content of different typical combinations of work and family life courses, for example either combining single parenthood with precarious careers, or single parenthood with stable middle class careers.

The most socially equal situation would be, if what we refer to as the "privilege of possibility" was evenly distributed among all social groups. We could speak of high within group inequality in a situation where the "constraints of possibility" and the "privilege of possibility" were unequally divided within intersectional groups, for example, if we would find constraints of possibilities for those with less education, but not for those with higher education in each intersectional group. In this case, we would see high overall inequality, but low intersectional inequality defined on the intersecting categories that define the specific intersectional groups under study. In contrast, we could speak of high between group inequality if, for some intersectional groups, the "privilege of possibility" is the most common experience, whereas all members of another intersectional group are strongly characterized by "constraints of possibility". This would arguably signify the most socially unequal situation from an intersectional perspective, that is, the highest intersectional inequality.

Given the gender and race specific effect of the 1996 welfare reform combined with a legacy of gender and race discrimination in the labor market (Pager 2003, Correll et al. 2007), for our study cohorts we assume that a "privilege of possibility" in work and family life courses will be most pronounced among white men, whereas black women's work and family life courses will face the strongest "constraints of possibility." Black men and white women will take an intermediate position, but we expect different specific dynamics in combing work and family lives for these two intersectional groups.

Research Design, Data and Methods

One reason why intersectional inequalities are relatively understudied in quantitative stratification research are methodological challenges of defining and measuring intersectional categories and modeling their interaction effects on outcomes of social status. As Browne and Misra (2003: 507) assert, "[a]lthough it is challenging to conceptualize and measure these intersecting systems of stratification, systematic and thoughtful attention to how labor market experiences are shaped by the intersection of race and gender is our best hope of truly understanding economic inequality.". Two central challenges concern the complexity of 1) within and between group comparisons, and 2) how to conceptualize outcome measures that capture relevant labor market experiences.

First, concerning group comparisons, as outlined above it is standard fare to either focus on (white) women only or simply control for race. Both approaches neglect full intersectional inequalities by gender and race and could not identify them if they exist. Studies in the stratification literature (e.g. DiPrete and McManus 2000) routinely include interaction effects

between gender and race in panel regression models but usually only focus on the impact of selected family transitions on specific labor market outcomes. In addition, the concept of "cumulative disadvantages" already implies a focus on "the deprived" and "disadvantaged" that is less salient in the more encompassing view on within and between group differences from an intersectional perspective. Following Sprague (2005), we examine each of the four intersectional categories of black men and black women, as well as white men and white women separately. We do not include an "other" race category, as it would be too heterogeneous to generate meaningful results (Browne and Misra 2003).

Second, concerning the outcome, the most used indicator of family wage penalties are aggregate trend outcomes (Abbott 2016), that is, period measures that come with known advantages and disadvantages. They are easy to calculate with small time lags and have a relative intuitive interpretation. But they are highly sensitive to short-term fluctuations, obscure sub-group heterogeneity and do not describe the actual experiences of specific birth cohorts. Short-term fluctuations in wage penalties can arise from many different processes that do not necessarily accurately reflect social advantages or disadvantages that accumulate over individual life courses. Sub-group heterogeneity may cancel each other out in average wage gaps, which is particularly problematic because they vary greatly by age, number of children, education, location in the earnings distribution and race/ethnicity (England et al. 2016, Cooke 2014, Pal and Waldfogel 2016, Kahn et al. 2014).

We complement period measures of family wage gaps, with a cohort measure of inequality, a "process outcomes" (Abbott 2016). Process outcomes reflect the life course experience of given birth cohorts and capture the combination and timing of multiple family and labor market events over time. We use sequence analysis to compare typical life course profiles between intersectional groups providing a longitudinal "thick description" of process outcomes of inequality (Abbott 1992).

Data

The analysis are based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY79) (for a detailed description of the NLSY79 and the NLS data, see Bureau of Labor Statistics 2004). The NLSY79 is a nationally representative sample of 12,686 young men and women born between 1957 and 1964. The sample was first interviewed in 1979, then re-interviewed annually until 1994 and every two years since. We construct complete monthly family and employment histories from ages 22 to 44. Because the oldest NLSY79 cohort (1957) was 22 at the first interview, we observe all birth cohorts from age 22. If individuals had children and married before age 22, they start the observation window in these states. Thereby we include earlier family events, even if we cannot observe when they were entered.

The analysis sample comprises 5,283 respondents after excluding individuals who did not participate in all waves, or report "other" race than black African American and white Caucasian. The family sequences include six states "Single, no child", "Single, 1+ children", "Partnered, no child", "Partnered, 1 child", "Partnered, 2 children", "Partnered, 3 children". For our cohorts cohabitation primarily was not a replacement, but only a brief prelude to

marriage (Smock 2000). Separating marriage and cohabitation, or including only marriage yielded qualitatively similar results (available from authors). The final analyses only distinguish whether individuals were in co-residential union or not. Separated or divorced individuals return to the state "Single" with or without children. Their situation of being separated or re-partnered thereby appears in the sequential order of family states, not in a state of "separated".

The employment trajectories are constructed using occupational prestige, which is less sensitive to short-term career fluctuations than income or hourly wages and remarkably consistent across time and countries (Hout and DiPrete 2006, Aisenbrey and Grunow 2016). Occupational prestige is a powerful concept for assessing future career potential and earnings capacities. For mothers, occupational prestige also serves as a proxy for their ability to enact agency (Aisenbrey and Grunow 2016). The employment sequences comprise eleven states including four non-employment states and seven employment states summarizing Treimann prestige scores. The non-employment states are: "education", "parental leave", "unemployed", "gap/out of the labor force". Time in employment is categorized into seven states each summarizing 10 prestige points: "10/19", "20/29", "30/39", "40/49", "50/59", "60/69", "70/79". The lowest prestige category (10/19) includes construction and maintenance laborers and assembly workers. The highest prestige category (70/79) comprises judges, architects and university professors. The Treiman prestige scale captures an additional dimension of social status that does not perfectly correspond with income. Some typically male low prestige occupations are higher paid than typically female medium prestige occupations (England 1979). This is relevant when comparing Treiman prestige across genders, but does not distort within gender comparison between for example black and white Americans.

For an absolute benchmark against which to compare occupational prestige both within and across intersectional groups we aggregate the seven categories of occupational prestige above into high, medium and low prestige. This is necessary because the highest occupational prestige among black women might correspond to medium prestige among white women. We grouped values into high, low and medium prestige based on the distribution and the actual Treiman job behind the numbers. Absolute high prestige includes groups with an average above 48 prestige points, (e.g. Business and administration associate professionals = 48), medium prestige pertains to average prestige between 40 and 47, and occupations below 40 low prestige (Metal workers = 39). We use this classification of high, medium and low prestige as a reference point for interpreting the findings across all four intersectional groups.

Methods

The analysis proceeds in two steps. First we use a recent innovation in sequence analysis, Mantel coefficients (Picarretta and Elzinga 2014, Picarretta 2017), to study whether linear associations exist between the work and family sequences as one indicator of the strength of association between these two life domains. Optimal Matching Analysis, the most common type of sequence analysis (Aisenbrey and Fasang 2010), is calculated separately for the work

and family domain for each of the four intersectional comparison groups.[6] For example, all work sequences of black men are compared to each other yielding a pairwise distance matrix that summarizes for each possible pair of black men how similar their 22 years of work experiences were. The same is replicated for the family domain. Then Mantel coefficients calculate a simple matrix correlation between the two separate distance matrices for the family and work domain. High Mantel coefficients indicate that individuals who are similar in the family domain are also similar in the work domain. This implies that specific family life courses, such as early single parenthood would be uniquely linked to specific work trajectories, such as interrupted low prestige careers ("constraint of possibility"). Low Mantel coefficients indicate that individuals with similar family lives have a wide range of different work careers without any systematic linear association: any family life could occur in combination with any employment life ("privilege of possibility"). We calculate Mantel coefficients separately for the four intersectional groups including bootstrap confidence intervals to assess the statistical significance of between-group differences.

Second, we use multichannel sequence analysis (Pollock 2007, Gauthier et al. 2010) to assess interactive associations between work and family and life courses. Mantel coefficients as "global measures of association" are suitable for identifying linear/deterministic associations between two full distance matrices (Piccarreta and Elzinga 2014), but cannot assess local, interactive associations between two life domains. For instance, long-term single childlessness might polarize into either going along with interrupted low prestige careers or steep upward mobility and generate positive and negative associations in the Mantel correlations in different regions of the two distance matrices that would cancel out in the average.

Multichannel sequence analysis classifies life courses in terms of interactions between several dimensions, in our case family and work (Pollock 2007: 176). Two life courses are similar when they resemble each other in both, the family and the employment domain.[7] The result is one pairwise distance matrix that summarizes similarity on both dimensions and enters into a cluster analysis to identify groups of typical joint work and family life courses.[8] Several cluster cut-off criteria determine whether a meaningful group structure exists, and assess the most appropriate number of clusters for each intersectional group (details below). Some clusters are more homogeneous than others, an additional substantively interesting feature of the work-family lives courses. We explore the variation around the main patterns in each cluster in the appendix using the silhouette width (Studer 2013, Kaufman and Rousseeuw 1990) as an indicator for cluster coherence (appendix Figures A1, A2, and A3) and relative frequency sequence plots (Fasang and Liao 2014) to visualize the main cluster patterns and deviations

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[6] Optimal matching calculates the distance between two sequences as the minimum possible 'cost' of turning one sequence into another based on three transformation operations that are assigned specific costs. We use substitution costs of 2 and indel costs of 1 to calculate a pairwise distance matrix that summarizes the similarity of work and family sequences, respectively. This cost specification proved efficient for identifying similarities both in terms of timing and the order of states (MacIndoe and Abbott 2004, Studer and Ritschard 2016). Sensitivity analyses with other cost specifications (Hamming Distance, Dynamic Hamming Matching) generated qualitatively similar results.

[7] We again use Optimal Matching with substitution costs of 2 and indel costs of 1 in the multichannel sequence analysis. Multichannel sequence analysis combines dimensions by creating combined states of joint work and family situations that are then compared in pairwise comparisons.

[8] We use Partitioning Around Medoids (PAM) cluster analysis that has been show to generate stable cluster solutions (for details see Studer 2013).

from it (appendix Figures A4, A5, and A6). Below, we present a detailed visualization and description of the typical work family clusters including social background variables.

Since all analyses are calculated separately for the four intersectional groups, the final analyses do not apply the NLSY weights, which correct for the oversampling of black Americans. In joint analysis including all groups these weights would be necessary, but they are not essential for sub-group specific analyses. [9]

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[9] Weights might still be important to correct for selective attrition and the probability of remaining in the sample long enough to be included in our analysis sample. Analyses with and without weights provided qualitatively very similar results. All analyses were calculated using the TraMineR package Version (Gabadinho et al. 2011) and Weighted Cluster Package Version (Studer 2013) in R (R Version 3.3.2). The Mantel coefficients were calculated using code provided by Matthias Studer based on Piccarreta and Elzinga's (2014) proposition.

Results

Linear associations between work and family life courses

Figure 1 shows the Mantel coefficients for the four intersectional groups with 95 percent bootstrap confidence intervals based on 100 repetitions. As expected white men of our study cohorts typically have the "privilege of possibility" to combine different types of family life courses with any type of work careers with a Mantel coefficient of 0.01 that is not significantly different from zero. This does not imply that all white men "get what they want". But on the population level there is no systematic linear association between work and family live courses for white men. For white women and black men, we find moderate associations of 0.05 that are significantly higher compared to white men with non-overlapping confidence intervals (Figure 1). As expected, for black women the linear association between work and family lives is highest at 0.09.[10]

Figure 1. *Mantel coefficient to measure (linear) association between work and family life courses (NLSY 1979)*

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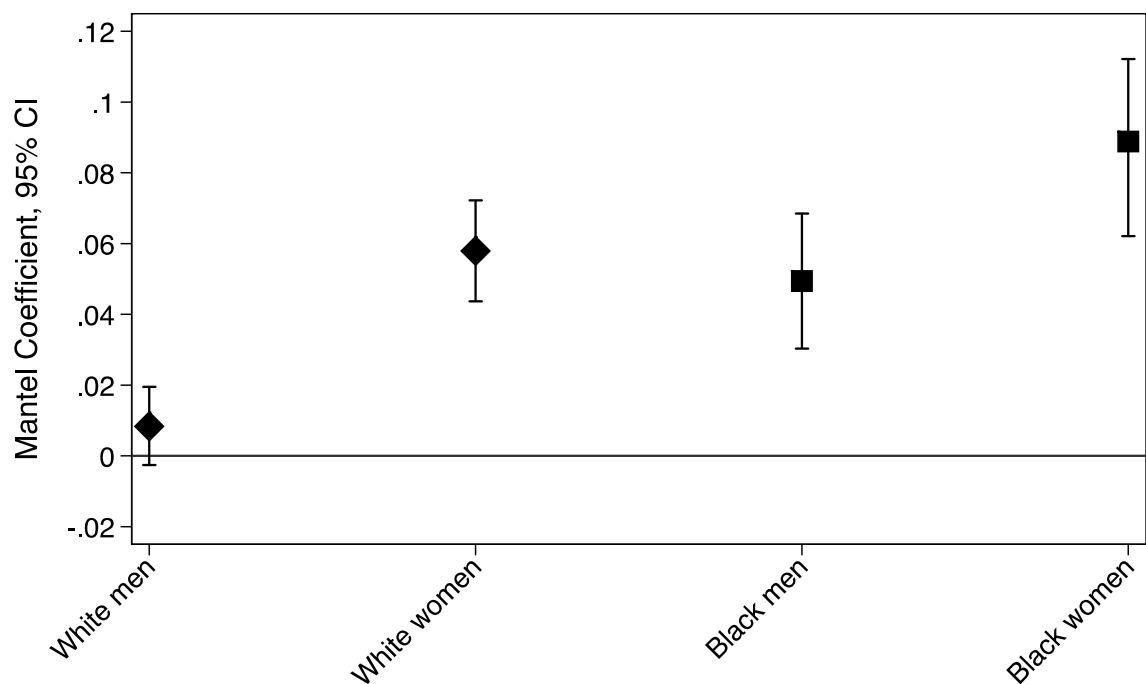
[10] Given that this is a new measure, to date we have little experience in assessing whether the absolute values in the context of work-family life courses can be interpreted as high or low. We therefore only interpret the differences between the four intersectional groups.

Interactive associations between work and family life courses

Figure 2 shows three cluster cut-off criteria. The "ASW" (Average Silhouette Width), "HGSD" (Hubert's Somer's D) and "PBC" (Point Biserial Correlation) all vary between -1 and 1 with higher values indicating more discriminant/better cluster solutions (Studer 2013: 13).[11] While one should be cautious in interpreting absolute values of these measures, if several indicators share a local maximum for a specific number of clusters, this indicates a meaningful structure in the data.[12]

Figure 2 shows local maxima for black men (6 and 8 cluster), black women (3 and 5 clusters) and white women (5 and 8 clusters). In contrast, there is no clear local maximum for white men, suggesting no discernible interactive grouping between work and family life courses. This further substantiates findings from the Mantel coefficients on no systematic association between work and family life courses for white men, neither linear nor interactive. At the population level white men have the "privilege of possibility" to combine any kind of family life with any working life. For the remaining three intersectional groups, we retain 6 clusters for black men and 5 clusters for black and white women as the best grouping. These groups are more parsimonious and the substantive pay off from the additional groups was low (available from authors). We thereby follow the criterion of construct validity given by the theoretical and substantive interpretability of typologies (Aisenbrey and Fasang 2010).
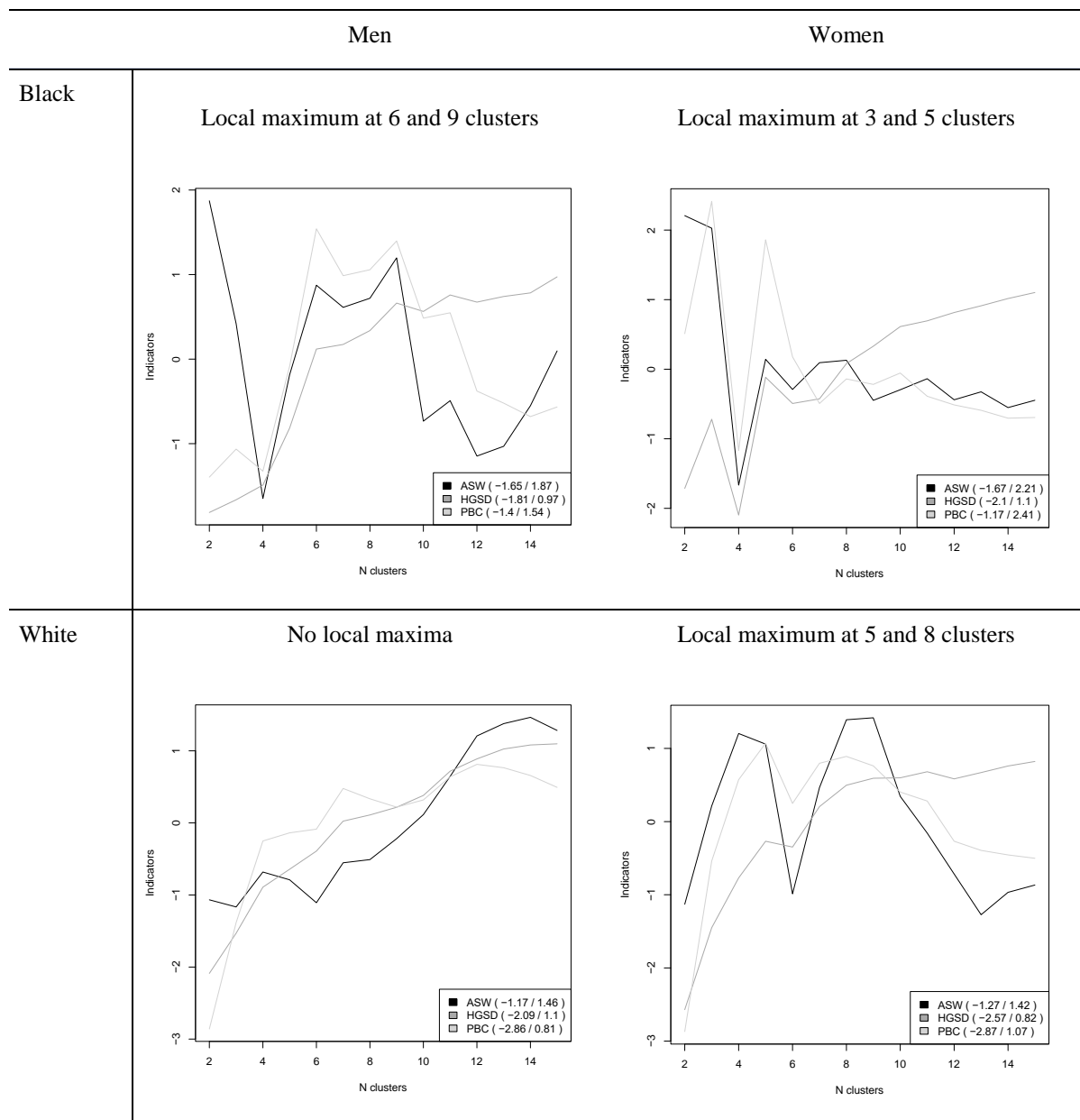
There is considerable variation around the main patterns in all three cluster typologies attesting to the heterogeneity of longer-term work-family life course experiences that we document in detail in the appendix.

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[11] Because the average values for each measure differ, it can be cumbersome to identify local maxima and minima that are supported by all measures. Therefore Studer (2013) recommends inspecting a standardized (Zscore) version of the measures presented in Figure 2.

[12] Some existing rules of thumbs on acceptable absolute values of cluster cut-off criteria (e.g. at least .25 for the ASW, Studer 2013), have been developed in very different fields of applications (Kaufman and Rousseeuw 1990) and are therefore not necessarily transferrable to sequence analysis applications, especially multichannel sequence analysis. Sequence distance matrices are based on complex longitudinal trajectories that are very different from the usual cluster analysis application on a few simple random variables. Consequently, groups identified with sequence analysis will often be quite heterogeneous, even if there is a meaningful underlying structure with rather strong noise around the main patterns. We therefore do not interpret absolute values of the cut-off criteria, but instead focus on whether there are clear local maxima, that are supported by all three cluster-cut-off criteria.

Figure 2. *Cluster Cut-off criteria for PAM cluster analysis based on multichannel sequence distances for four intersectional groups (NLSY 1979)*

	Men	Women
Black	Local maximum at 6 and 9 clusters	Local maximum at 3 and 5 clusters
White	No local maxima	Local maximum at 5 and 8 clusters

Figures 4, 5 and 6 visualize the multidimensional work and family clusters for black men, black women and white women as state distribution plots showing the relative frequency of each group to be in specific life course states at a given age. Figure 3 shows plots for the total population of white men without any clustering as there was no discernible grouping. Family lives are presented on the left and the parallel work trajectories of the same group on the right. The size of the clusters in Figures 4, 5 and 6 reflect their size within the respective intersectional group. The clusters are sorted descending according to their average Treiman prestige, with the highest average prestige cluster at the top and the lowest at the bottom (average prestige for

each cluster in the labels in parentheses). Tables 1 and 2 present descriptive information on average prestige, education, and parental background for the total samples and by work-family cluster. We only present the total for white men in Table 1, because there was no valid clustering for them.

Typical work-family life courses of black men

For black men Figure 4 shows that high prestige careers (mean occupational prestige = 49) are only attainable in combination with relatively stable partnerships and having only one or two children (Cluster 6). The other extreme is a group of very low occupational prestige (mean = 29) combined with single fatherhood (Cluster 1) (Table 1). Cluster 5 combines much lower occupational prestige compared to Custer 6 at the top, but stable work careers (little unemployment) with stable partnerships and fatherhood. In between there are three groups with similar unstable low prestige employment careers ranging between an average prestige of 34 in cluster 2 and 36 in cluster 4 with high shares of unemployment. Their family lives, however, differ considerably: either single childlessness (Cluster 2), single fatherhood (Cluster 3), or early fatherhood with multiple children outside of co-residential partnerships and later re-partnering into step family arrangements (Cluster 4). These three groups represent associations where one type of work career goes along with multiple types of family life courses, in this case all family lives that deviate from the normative model of a stable marriage with two children.
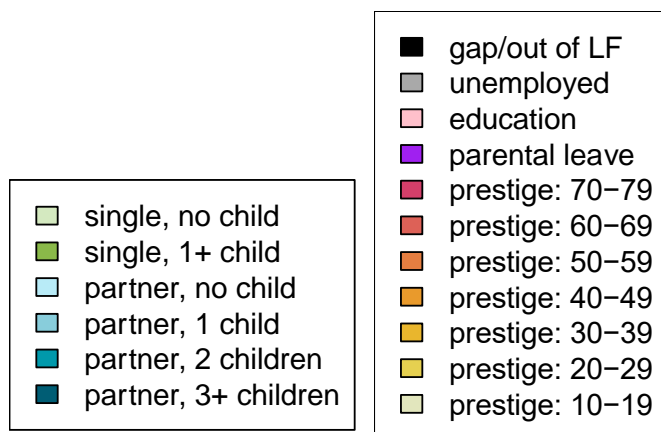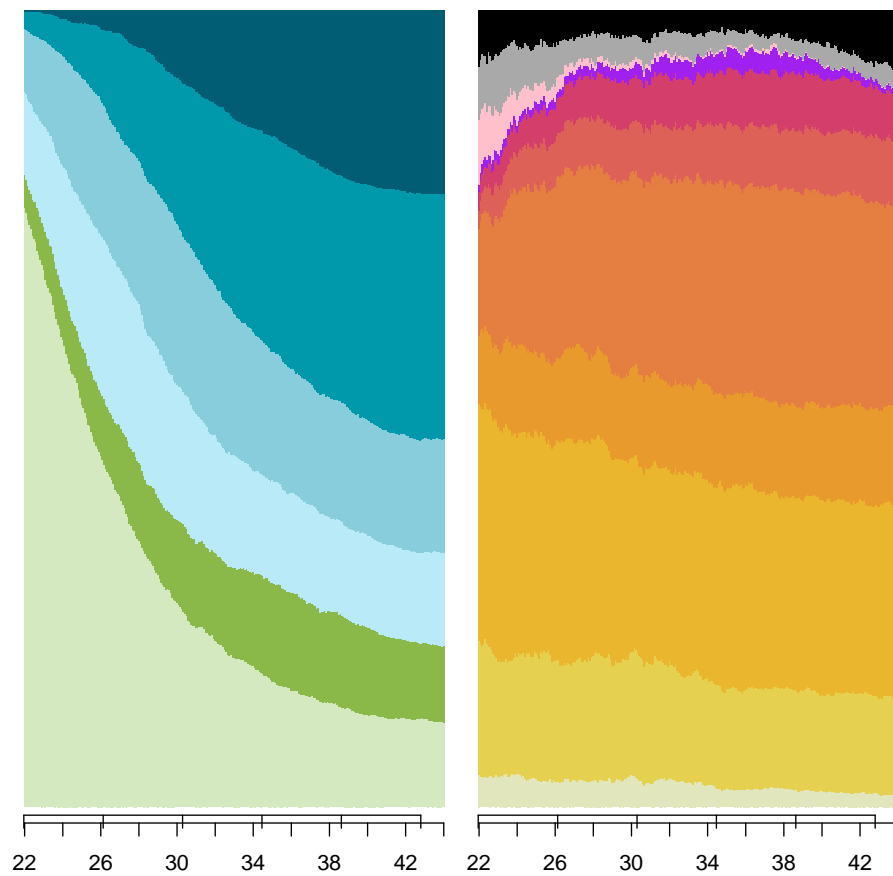
Cluster 6 signifies the only stable high prestige employment career for black men. Together Clusters 5 and 6 support that for black men stable employment careers are only attainable in combination with a normative family life course of no more than one or two children within a relatively stable partnership, although there is considerable variation in the family life courses including separation for some (see appendix Figure A4). Whereas previous research has shown lower marriage premiums for black than for white men (Glauber 2008), our comparison within the group of black men points to the crucial role of stable co-residential partnerships for their career development.

Moreover, for black men childlessness is not a route to upward mobility, but on the contrary associated with low prestige interrupted careers (Cluster 2, see Figure A4), This likely attests to their lower chances on partner markets as they do not fulfill breadwinner expectations. Finally, we also find an association where a specific family life course polarizes into different types of work careers for single fathers. Whereas Cluster 1 signifies a life course of early single fatherhood combined with very low prestige interrupted careers (mean = 29), Cluster 3 shows a pattern of later single fatherhood combined with somewhat higher prestige, yet still unstable careers (mean = 34). Appendix Figure A4 displays selected representative individual sequences that clearly visualize the career instability of these two groups.
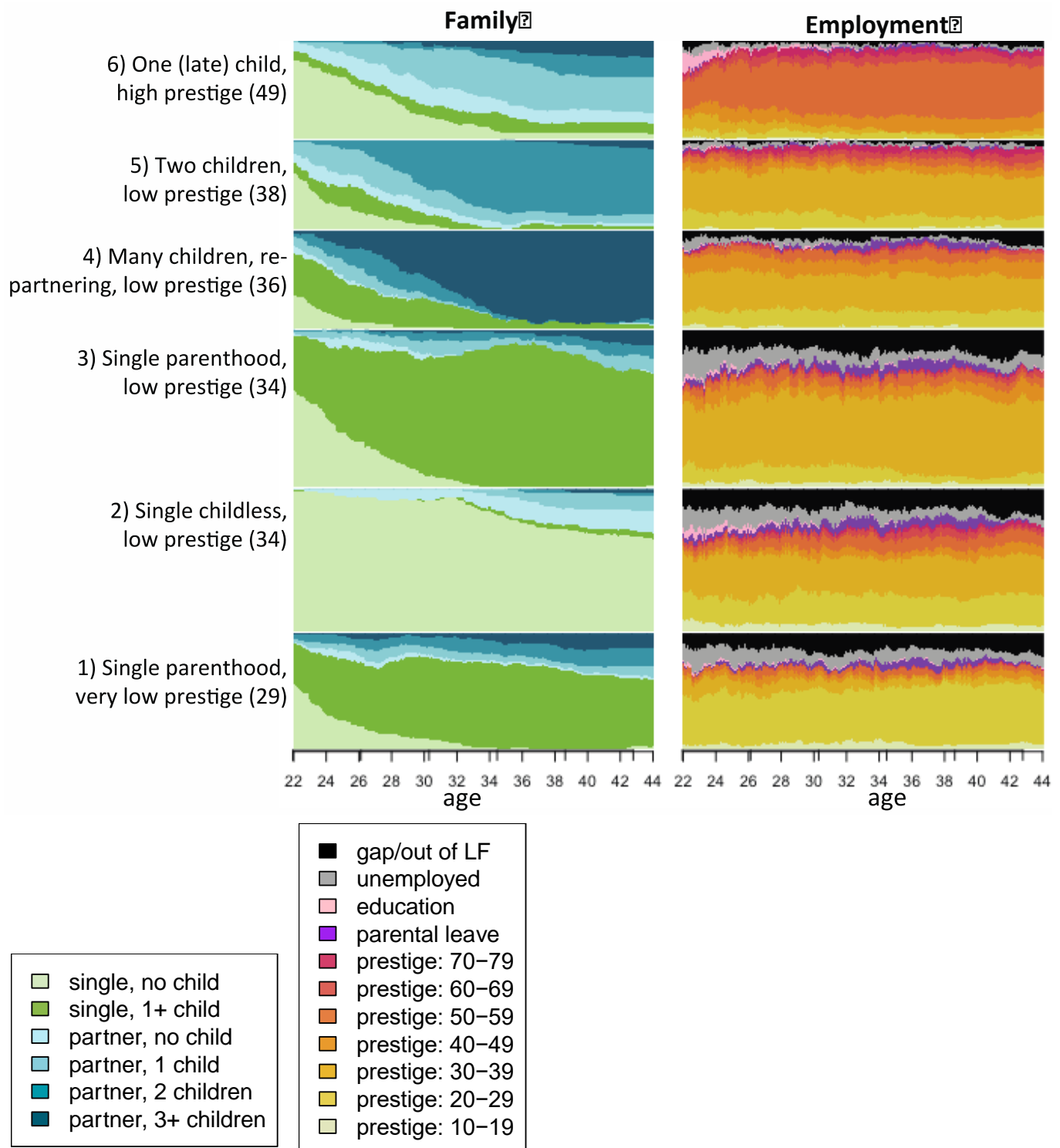
Table 1. *Descriptive information for black and white men, for white men only total due to no discernible cluster structure*

Clusters	Black men							White men
	1)	2)	3)	4)	5)	6)	Total	Total
N	180	158	175	107	98	109	827	1757
%	22	19	21	13	12	13	100	100
Average Treimann	28.9	33.7	34.0	35.7	38.1	49.2	35.6	42.2
% No HS	34.3	29.7	25.7	29.0	18.4	10.1	25.9	17.7
% Just HS	49.4	32.3	49.1	41.1	39.8	19.3	40.3	35.5
Father Edu years	9.3	10.2	10.5	9.5	11.0	11.3	10.3	11.8
Mother Edu years	10.3	10.9	10.9	10.6	10.9	11.9	10.9	11.4
Child start	0.6	0.01	0.5	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.2
Child end	2.2	0.3	2.2	3.5	1.9	1.5	1.9	1.7

Figure 3. State distribution plot of work and family life courses for white men – total population only due to no discernible cluster structure (view in color)

Legend:
- gap/out of LF
- unemployed
- education
- parental leave
- prestige: 70−79
- prestige: 60−69
- prestige: 50−59
- prestige: 40−49
- prestige: 30−39
- prestige: 20−29
- prestige: 10−19

- single, no child
- single, 1+ child
- partner, no child
- partner, 1 child
- partner, 2 children
- partner, 3+ children

Figure 4. *State distribution plots of 6 work and family clusters for black men (view in color), cluster average prestige score in parentheses in cluster labels*

Typical work-family life courses of black women

Figure 5 shows five clusters of typical work-family life courses for black women (descriptive information in Table 2). In addition to the strongest linear association between work and family lives (Figure 1), we find clear associations in the typology of work-family life courses. In particular, there is a polarization of single mothers into either interrupted low prestige careers and extended periods out of the labor force (Cluster 1) or medium prestige upward mobility careers (Cluster 5). The single mothers in Cluster 1 have many children (2.4), enter motherhood very early, almost all before age 22 and are mostly single mothers at birth. In contrast the single mothers in Cluster 5 have fewer children (1.7), enter motherhood later in their twenties and often through separation. The longitudinal process perspective thereby highlights that it is not the status of being a single mother as such, but the timing and life course context (from birth or through separation) that are decisive for career development (Zagel 2013, Zagel and Hübgen 2018).

Cluster 2 signifies work-family experiences of many children at a young age, separation and later re-partnering combined with higher prestige and more stable careers. Cluster 1 shows the lowest average prestige (mean = 34.2) followed by Cluster 2 with a gap (mean = 38.8), the remaining Clusters 3, 4 and 5 display similar medium average prestige scores ranging from 45 to 46. Their family lives differ widely ranging from late single motherhood (Cluster 5), single childlessness (Cluster 4) and two children in a stable partnership (Cluster 3).

Only 14 percent of black women combine a medium prestige career with two children in a stable partnership (Table 2). Either late single parenthood or childlessness are the most common family life courses for black women with medium prestige careers (22 and 18 percent). In contrast, for black men, these family lives coincide with low prestige employment careers (Figure 4). Also unlike black men, there is no high prestige employment cluster for black women. High prestige careers are so rare among black women that they are not identified as a "typical" work-family profile. These findings shed new light on lower motherhood penalties for black women (Glauber 2007). The reference group of childless black women, who do not enjoy the same privileges as childless white women, can drive lower motherhood penalties for black women. Black women thereby suffer a double disadvantage as mothers and childless women due to their limited access to high prestige occupations with high earnings potential. Differences in parenthood wage gaps are just as much driven by the relative position of the childless in the overall wage distribution, which has to be taken into account when interpreting them as an indicator of social inequality.

Our findings highlight gendered dynamics in combining work and family lives that are specific for blacks. Particularly, the heterogeneity of black women's work-family experiences (Figure 5) tends to go unnoticed in previous research that focuses on early single mothers with precarious employment and high welfare dependency, Cluster 1 in our analysis (Edin and Lein 1997, Edin and Kefalas 2011). Displaying the full variety of black women's work-family experiences of our study cohorts highlights a deficit orientation of much previous research that explicitly focuses on "socially problematic" work-family lives of black women and neglects the remarkably resilient and successful careers in Clusters 3, 4 and 5 (Figure 5). This deficit

orientation is partly built in to research designs that oversample the poor black urban population, as in the Fragile Families study (Reichmann et al 2001).

Figure 5. State distribution plots of 5 work and family clusters for black women (view in color), cluster average prestige score in parentheses in cluster labels
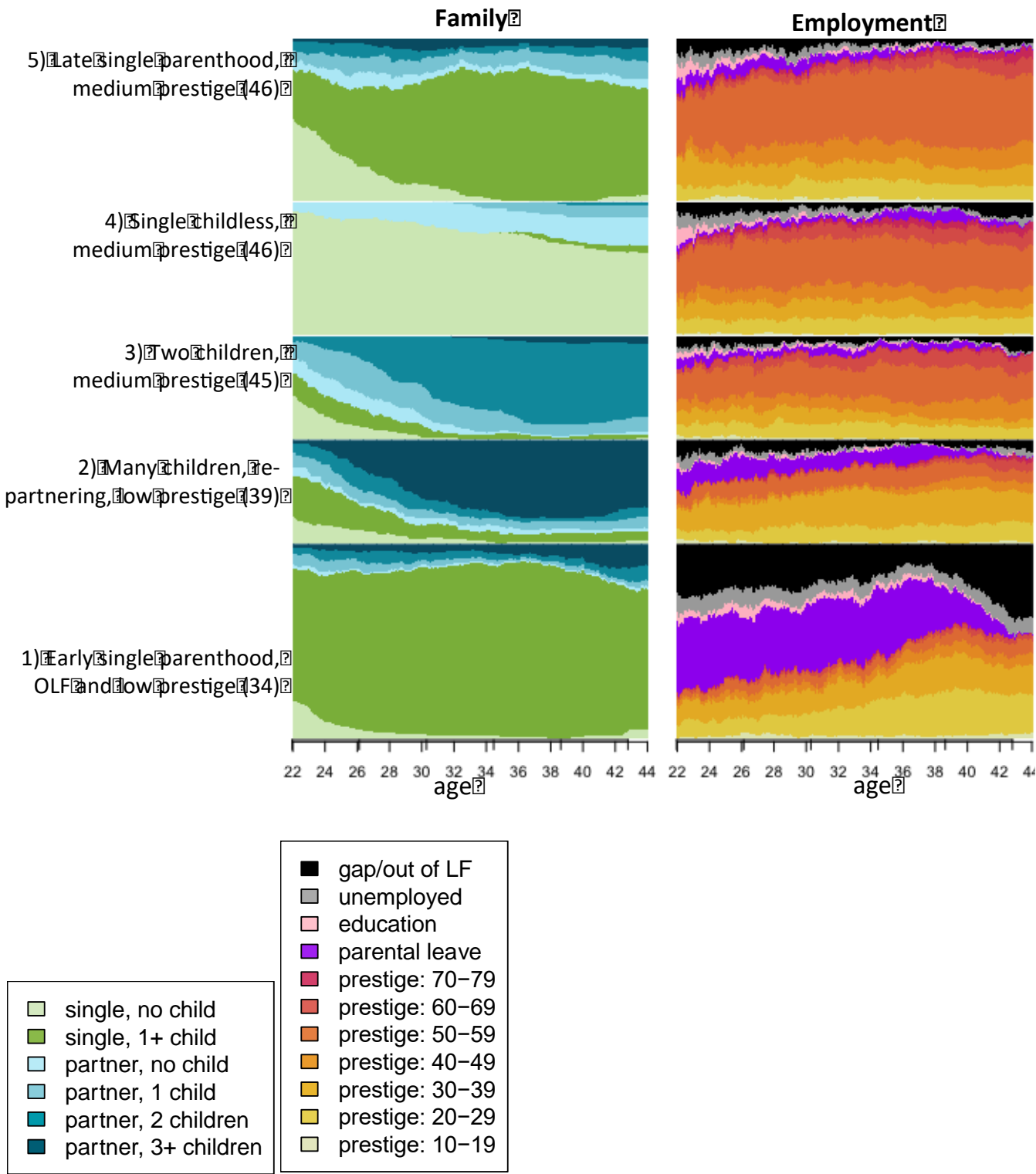
**Table 2.** *Descriptive information for black and white women*

| Clusters | Black women | | | | | | White women | | | | | |
	1)	2)	3)	4)	5)	Total	1)	2)	3)	4)	5)	Total
N	299	115	118	153	188	873	236	372	535	473	210	1826
%	34	13	14	18	22	100	13	20	29	26	12	100
Average Treimann	34.2	38.8	45.2	45.7	46.3	41.1	38.0	42.3	46.7	48.6	53.7	
% No HS	38.5	17.4	1.7	7.2	7.4	18.7	36.0	18.8	14.2	5.7	4.3	14.6
% Just HS	35.8	34.8	38.1	22.2	28.7	32.1	41.9	32.2	35.7	38.3	18.1	34.3
Father Edu years	9.4	10.0	10.7	11.3	10.4	10.3	10.2	11.7	11.5	12.2	12.7	11.7
Mother Edu years	9.9	10.9	11.1	11.2	10.9	10.7	9.9	11.1	11.4	11.7	12.2	11.3
Child start	1.2	0.9	0.4	0.0	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.7	0.4	0.1	0.01	0.4
Child end	2.4	2.9	1.9	0.2	1.7	1.9	2.3	3.2	2.0	0.9	0.7	1.8

Typical work-family life courses of white women

Figure 6 shows typical work-family clusters for white women. In line with the abundant research on this group compared to black men and women, high fertility and single motherhood appear as the prime obstacles to high stakes careers for white women (e.g. Abendroth, Huffman, and Treas 2014, Kahn et al. 2014). Unlike black women, white women have access to the highest prestige careers in sizeable numbers. The highest occupational prestige cluster for white women surpasses the highest prestige cluster for black men by four points on average. In contrast to black women, for white women single motherhood only occurs in sizeable numbers in combination with low prestige interrupted careers, and not with stable middle class careers.

Similar to black women, the lowest prestige cluster for white women also combines early single motherhood with interrupted low prestige employment and welfare dependence. However, this pattern only applies to 13 percent of white women compared to 34 percent for black women (Tables 2) and their average prestige is 4 points higher for white than for black women (see also appendix Figures A5 and A6). The findings for white women are in line with relatively lower motherhood penalties for high earning women of few children (Glauber 2018, Kahn et al. 2014).

Figure 6. *State distribution plots of 5 work and family clusters for white women (view in color)*
cluster average prestige score in parentheses in cluster labels
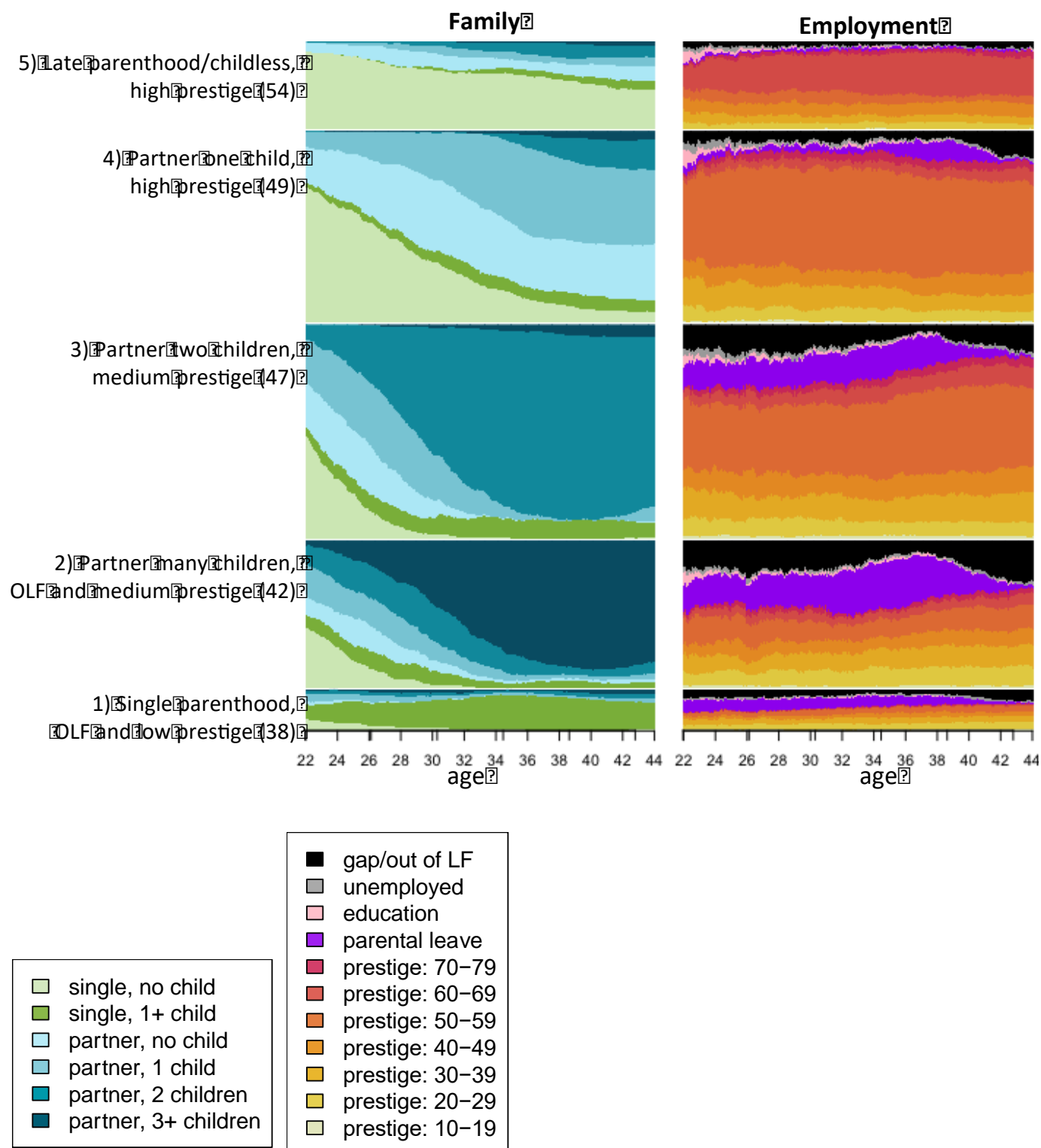
Conclusions

In this paper, we bring together a longitudinal life course and intersectionality perspective to show inequalities in work-family life courses for overlapping categories of gender and race. Findings highlight the wide variety of systematic work-family profiles within each intersectional category – with the exception of white men - and debunk a deficit orientation of previous studies focusing on black men and women's family and work life courses. For example, the Fragile Families Survey[13] (Reichman et al. 2001), a nationally representative sample of non-marital births in urban areas, by design excludes black Americans who do not experience non-marital births and have more resilient and "successful" labor market outcomes, even when combined with single parenthood through separation later in life.

In line with expectations, white men's work-family lives for our study cohorts are characterized by the "privilege of possibility". We neither find significant linear associations between work and family life courses (Mantel coefficients), nor a meaningful structure of typical multidimensional work family profiles (multichannel sequence analysis). In contrast, for black men and white women, findings support moderate linear associations between work and family life. For black men and white women the privilege of high prestige employment is constrained to family life courses of late parenthood and few children. The work-family patterns we uncover for black men polarize into high or low occupational prestige careers, underlining the erosion of the black middle class (Pattillo 2013). There is no common career path for black men in secure middle class jobs, irrespective of their family lives.

Black women's work-family life courses are most constrained with a strong association between the two life dimensions. A stable high prestige employment cluster that exists for black men and also white women is not viable for black women, irrespective of their family lives. Even the highest medium prestige careers are mostly constrained by family life courses with delayed or foregone fertility and not having a partner. Interestingly, stable partnerships promote labor market success for black men, but not for black women, showing how class, gender and race intersect in different class-specific work-family life courses profiles for black men and women (Penner and Sapersetin 2013).

Our results put past findings of lower motherhood penalties and fatherhood premiums for black compared to white women and men (Glauber 2007, 2008) into perspective. A lower motherhood penalty among black compared to white women might suggest that black mothers are less disadvantaged compared to white mothers. Our findings suggest the opposite. Black mothers have a lower earnings gap compared to black childless women, because childless black women are disadvantaged compared to childless white women. Childless white women tend to have high stakes careers that are unattainable to black women of our study cohorts. Future studies should explore how family events impact employment (see Florian 2018a, 2018b), and wage growth with appropriate regression based methods to assess intersectional inequalities in wage development over the life course (see Cheng 2014).

We highlighted how social policies affect intersectional groups of our study cohorts differently, including the welfare reform of 1996 that pushed low-income single black mothers

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[13] https://fragilefamilies.princeton.edu

back into the labor market in high numbers (Pal and Waldfogel 2016). Identifying longitudinal population level regularities in intersectional inequalities in work-family life courses that are not immediately accessible (Goldthorpe 2015), is a precondition for assessing their causes and consequences. Future research should further disentangle the micro mechanisms that link structural and normative/ideational conditions to individual level life course outcomes. The salience of different theoretical mechanisms likely varies for intersectional groups. For white women, employee characteristics, including traditional gender norms, selection into motherhood of less career oriented women, and mother's limited ability to comply with the ideal worker norm might be more predictive. Given frequently high earning husbands, employment is less economically necessary for many middle and upper class white women compared to black women. Among black men and women, employer discrimination might be more relevant for their work-family life course profiles (Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007). Discrimination on combined intersectional categories (e.g. black single mother) is likely much larger than the additive effect of each of these categories separately (Pager 2003). Black parents might also rely more heavily on child care in kinship and neighborhood networks to balance parenthood with unstable, inflexible and irregular work hours (Carrillo et al. 2017).

Following the basic principles of the life course paradigm of the specificity of life course experience to time and place, we focus only on one group of birth cohorts, 1957-1964 that we can observe well into mid-life.[14] We further only analyzed black and white men and women. This is not an indication of the importance of extending the kind of analysis presented here to other combinations of race and gender, including groups that identify as non-binary. Future research should assess how stable the intersectional differences we found are for younger cohorts. Younger cohorts are more racially and ethnically diverse, have experienced more family complexity with the rise of (serial) cohabitation and union instability (Cherlin 2010), increased education and credit debt with diminishing returns to education, the rise of the service sector, the great recession in 2008 and continuing high incarceration rates particularly for black men. The development towards more gender equality in employment has stalled since the 1990s (Blau, Brinton, and Grusky 2006). On the one hand, relative educational disadvantages, deunionization and the continued erosion of typically male well-secured working class jobs could tighten the link between work and family lives also for white men. On the other hand, the structural developments outlined above might further polarize work-family experiences, increasing not decreasing the gap between white men's privilege of possibility compared to the specific constraints in the work-family interplay for black men, black women and (lower educated) white women. Disentangling how specific structural conditions and social policies generate intersectional inequalities in longer-term work-family life courses remains an important task for future research.

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[14] While the NLSY97 would in principle allow for analyzing change over time adding a comparison with younger birth cohorts, this would lead to an excessively complex design of comparison groups. Moreover, we could only observe the oldest NLSY97 participants until age 35 as of now and thereby would miss higher order parities and mid-life career moves, or the lack thereof, for them.

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