

Changing Work–Family Equilibria and Social Inequality

STEFANI SCHERER

Abstract

Profound changes in families and in employment patterns challenge the conventional view of work and family as two separate spheres, and finding a balance between them has become vitally important in economic, social, and even demographic terms for today's societies. Current trends also potentially alter families' role in societies' stratification system and overall inequality. Only recently research started to systematically link demographic and employment behavior and the family to the consequences for societies' inequality structure. Often the empirical impact is much less straightforward than parts of the literature suggest, and for a detailed understanding lifetime inequality and stratification rather than distributional inequality will need to gain major attention.

INTRODUCTION

A number of profound changes in families and in employment patterns challenge the conventional view of work and family as two separate spheres, and finding a balance between them has become vitally important in economic, social, and even demographic terms for today's societies. Changing women's (employment) behavior, leading to the (re)emergence of different work–family types and potentially new work–family equilibria, requires innovative welfare solutions to support it. It has been argued that on the societal level, periods of change, starting from some domains, might come with (temporary) instability, frictions, and potentially negative externalities (such as reduced fertility) until broader adaption processes bring back a new, self-reinforcing, equilibrium. Transformation processes and new “equilibria”¹ might go hand in hand with changes in families' role

1. The basic idea is that, induced through external shocks, societies might go through periods of unstable equilibria until they find a new, endogenously reinforcing stable equilibrium. The example might be the transition from a traditional male-breadwinner, female-homemaker model toward a gender-equal, dual-income family. Low fertility is taken as an indicator of the absence of a stable equilibrium

Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Robert Scott and Marlis Buchmann (General Editors) with Stephen Kosslyn (Consulting Editor).

© 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Inc. ISBN 978-1-118-90077-2.

in societies' stratification system, altering their (re)distributing capacities and thus potentially overall inequality. Some scholars (Esping-Andersen, 2007) claim this "silent revolution" brought with it much more profound consequences for economic and social life and societies' inequality structure than the much discussed process of "globalization."

Sociologists and economists have been concerned with changing family forms, women's employment, and its possible drivers. Demographers have concentrated on trends in family formation and fertility. However, an integrated view considering jointly economic, social, and demographic behavior and the concomitant structural and cultural changes is still underdeveloped. Little attention has also been devoted so far to the social consequences of changes in employment and family behavior and the related needs for new welfare responses. This essay focuses on some profound changes in employment and family formation/fertility witnessed by advanced industrial nations over recent decades, and its implications. After a brief presentation of the major changes we review the drivers, and then examine the consequences of these changes in terms of social and economic inequalities. The essay concludes with some promising lines for future research. The focus is on European countries, but most of the results hold for all advanced industrial societies.

SOCIAL CHANGE AND ITS DRIVERS

CHANGING (WOMEN'S) EMPLOYMENT

The move of women into paid employment has been one of the defining economic and social developments of recent decades. With the rise in women's employment and especially of those with family obligations, the majority of European and North American mothers now combine employment and family care (of children and increasingly also of frail elderly) and a further expansion is endorsed by the Lisbon and Stockholm targets (the strategic targets set by the European Council 2000 and 2010). However, differences between European countries are still marked, with female employment ranging from over 70% in the Scandinavian countries or France to around 40% in the Mediterranean countries (European Commission, 2010). The same diversity, accordingly, holds for the distribution of different household employment patterns: dual-income families today account for the vast majority in Scandinavian countries and North America, but only a minority of households in southern Europe.

(Esping-Andersen, Boertien, Bonke, & Gracia, 2013). This systemic macroview, though, easily takes the stand of modernization theories, implicitly assuming a necessary development, uniform to all societies, yet staggered in time. It further assumes the possibility to (normatively) judge which states constitute equilibria and which do not.

One of the main drivers of women's increased participation in paid employment has been educational expansion, and large parts of the persisting country differences (or differences between social groups) can be explained by differences in educational levels. Regarding the macrocontext, family policies and fiscal incentives seem to play a key role in shaping women's labor supply and in facilitating the reconciliation of work and family (Daly, 2000). Despite continuous efforts on the EU level—work–family-reconciliation has been on the political EU agenda since the early 1990s—these policies remain extremely uneven across European welfare states and are notoriously underdeveloped in southern European countries, where the kind of subprotective and pension-biased welfare acts as a systematic disincentive to mother's labor market participation as well as to family formation (Billari, Kohler, Andersson, & Lundström, 2007). More on the demand side, the size of the (market and public) service sector, and the availability of part-time jobs seem to foster mothers' employment.

CHANGING FAMILIES

Among the most documented changes regarding the family is the decline in fertility (notwithstanding nonnegligible country differences) due to the general postponement of family formation, often combined with fewer children. This lead to an increase in single households and, together with the increased life expectancy, a general aging of the populations of advanced societies (OECD, 2000). Other well-documented trends regard the increasing diffusion of “new” family forms side with traditional marriage, the increased instability of partnerships, and the consequently increasing overall plurality of family forms and more heterogeneous family life courses. These fundamental changes in the demographic structure of populations put the equilibrium of current societies under pressure, and changes in families come with major implications and consequences for inequality, as we shall see.

Family trends are mostly explained in terms of changes in personal values and preferences (not least driven by increased education and structural changes). Especially, the theory of the second demographic transition has received considerable attention. Recently, cultural explanations for employment and family behavior have become increasingly popular, even in research streams traditionally more concerned with structural effects (Fernández, 2014; Fernández & Fogli, 2009; Polavieja, 2015). That cultural aspects prove to be relevant with regard to family and employment is hardly surprising. However, increasing efforts are being made to quantify these “cultural effects,” mainly through the innovative idea of importing epidemiological methods in social sciences. The basic assumption is that cultural traits are transmitted stably across and within generations and

(therefore) differ systematically between groups. By comparing migrants, who carry their cultural traits to different contexts, to the native population, it becomes possible to identify the effects of culture. Focusing on individual values and preferences, this approach easily misses the aggregate level of culture and its socially built character. Further, the interplay between cultural and structural factors and their change over time (and generations) becomes particularly interesting in order to understand not only when and through which channels cultural diversities translate into macrolevel differences, but also how the intergenerational transmission of cultural traits in turn leads to cultural and values change.

However, when it comes to children, family preferences appear to have remained relatively stable and are more similar across countries than realized fertility, leading to lower birth rates than citizens would desire (Fahey, 2008), and suggesting external drivers rather than individual value change (Esping-Andersen & Billari, 2015) at the roots of (some of) the observed changes in family behavior. The explanation of family behavior thus increasingly points toward the effect of macrocontextual factors, both normative, such as gender norms, and structural, such as the availability of childcare facilities (Ahn & Mira, 2002; Arpino, Esping-Andersen, & Pessin, 2015; Guetto, Luijkx, & Scherer, 2015). A considerable amount of research has shown that welfare state policies can favor maternity by simplifying work–family reconciliation and thus reducing the opportunity costs of motherhood. Some research underlines the heterogeneity of these policy effects (Del Boca, Pasqua, & Pronzato, 2009), showing how they vary among different groups of women and are of particular relevance for the less advantaged and the less-well-educated women. Being aware of these heterogeneous effects is a substantive step forward to better target policy interventions.

WORK AND FAMILY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CONTEXT

Many advanced industrial countries, in particular in Europe and Northern America, experienced simultaneously an increase in women’s employment and the decline in fertility, resulting in an apparent trade-off between the two, and the assumption that women either limit their fertility in order to accommodate their labor force activity or adjust their labor force behavior to their fertility choices. This is in line with the argumentation of Becker (1991), who expected women’s increased earning power to result in reduced fertility due to increased opportunity costs for child-rearing. However, opportunity costs (particularly high for high-educated women) can be significantly lowered, for instance by policies, or by more collaborative behavior of the

partner. Indeed, since the mid-1980s, there is a positive macrolevel correlation between female workforce participation and fertility rates (Ahn & Mira, 2002): women have (more) children where they can combine work and family. The positive (macro) correlation has been attributed to the reduced incompatibility between motherhood and employment due to increasingly supportive social policies—obviously with more success in some countries than in others. The result is that most developed (Myrskylä, Kohler, & Billari, 2009), secularized, gender-egalitarian societies nowadays have the highest female labor market participation rates and the highest fertility, while states still obstructing work–family reconciliation are characterized by high rigidity of the family formation process and low fertility levels.

These considerations about the work–family interface underline the necessity to adopt a multilevel perspective, going beyond individual’s situation. In addition to institutional and cultural contexts, the family/household level (DiPrete, 2005) needs to gain major attention as decisions on time allocation often take place at the household level and are taken jointly by partners. This brought men back into the focus. Several authors have recently focused on issues of gender equality (Arpino *et al.*, 2015; Esping-Andersen & Billari, 2015; Esping-Andersen *et al.*, 2013), arguing that aggregate levels of gender equity as well as equality in the contributions of work among partners (housework, care, and market work) are vital for establishing new and positive work–family “equilibria.” This literature largely explains the drop in fertility with a “not yet complete revolution”—basically the inadequate adaptation by men to the changes in women’s behavior, and therefore *in nuce* also in society—and posits that only after a completed change in gender roles, leading to higher levels of gender equality and equity a new, work–family “equilibrium,” including higher fertility rates, could be reached. Support for this argument comes from findings showing that men’s involvement in the family differs significantly between social groups, over the life course and across countries, and how a more active role of men within the home increases partners’ well-being and fertility. The very unequal distribution of household chores would then contribute to explaining the particularly low fertility rates of more traditional societies, for example, in southern Europe.

While aspects of employment and the family are separately well documented, their interrelations and the consequences for individuals (micro), families (meso), and society (macro) have received less attention. The developments show that the net division between work and family, even as a topic of research, is out of date² and that a systematic multilevel perspective is

2. These changes also make it difficult to sustain the policy/welfare assumptions based on the traditional model of two stable parents and a net division between a male breadwinner and a female housekeeper.

indispensable. To understand employment and family decisions, a focus on the interdependency of decision-making processes of household members is needed, bringing a meso-level to the forefront. An additional challenge lies in the more systematic investigation and integration of cultural and structural explanations.

INTERCHANGES AND CONSEQUENCES

A multilevel perspective is necessary to understand not only the reasons for social changes but also their consequences. The developments in families and employment have an impact on individuals, their families, as well as on the social and economic inequality structure of societies. Further, an integrated perspective needs to take into account all the three interacting institutions structuring inequalities: state, market, and the family. In many ways, the family is where different institutions meet and combine their effects, as well as being an inequality shaping and generating institution itself. Studying families thus offers a clearer focus on societal changes. The recent research on work–family balances can probably be classified in two categories: those looking at the interaction of different spheres and those investigating consequences for societies' inequality structure.

MARKET, FAMILY, AND WELFARE

The labor market plays a crucial role in affecting people's lives and its changes and related consequences thus have implications for families in many ways. One of the major recent changes regards the so-called process of flexibilization. Most research has focused on the employment consequences for individuals, but recently, demographic aspects and the function of families to buffer market risks has been given more attention. For most of the population, labor income is the main if not the only source of income. Therefore, employment instability of its members will affect entire families with possible severe long-term consequences for future generations. Yet, the overall social and economic consequences of increased market insecurity on families and societies will depend not only on the household (employment) situation but also on the broader welfare context.

The Role of the Family for Risk Coping: Accumulation of Risks or Compensation?
The consideration of the employment situation of households immediately leads to the question whether and to what extent the household/family has the capacity to compensate for specific market risks (such as unstable employment or income loss) or if rather patterns of risk accumulation within

the household prevail. Through the redistribution of economic resources, the family has a certain capacity to cope and compensate for individuals' risks and thus to reduce social inequality. Indeed, taking into consideration the pooling of resources and economies of scale, the distribution of household income is considerably more equal than the distribution of individual incomes. Nonetheless, depending on how individuals group into households (such as through assortative mating), risks might also accumulate and consequently accentuate income inequality and social stratification (Greenwood, Guner, Kocharkov, & Santos, 2014).

Although research on compensation strategies within households is rather rare (DiPrete, 2002), the literature suggests that the rise in dual-earner households has led to an increasing divide between working-poor and working-rich households, not least due to the fact that employment marginality appears to accumulate among partners (Grotti & Scherer, 2014). Research on coupled careers suggests that the way employment situations of the partners influence each other strongly depends on the national context such as the social security situation and the tax system (Blossfeld & Drobnič, 2001). Further empirical investigations are required to determine the extent to which accumulation or compensation prevails, what the drivers might be, and what the (long-term) consequences will be for societies.

Employment Situations, Demographic Behavior, and Poverty. One of the long-term consequences regards fertility decisions. Commitments, such as marriage or parenthood, usually require some stable occupational and economic basis. The increased instability of employment careers, especially when concentrated among households in the reproductive years, may thus lead to a postponement of fertility decisions. This uncertainty, however, is not unavoidable. The literature shows that it may be mediated by different types of institutional contexts: the nature and generosity of the welfare system, the specific nature of family arrangements and family policies, and even by the market and its regulation (or deregulation). Stable employment seems particularly important in those contexts where neither state nor market provide solutions, and the family remains the main provider of services and well-being (Barbieri, Bozzon, Scherer, Grotti, & Lugo, 2015). The increasing importance of (continuous) labor market attachment of women to guarantee social, psychological and, not least, economic well-being is also due to the increasing poverty risks linked to demographic events—at least in southern Europe. This brings the household situation to the forefront, again, and the importance of the family for risk coping and resource (re)distribution. Research needs to be extended in this direction, in order to better understand

the role of the family as an inequality-generating institution and its interplay with the (labor) market and the (welfare) state.

Research on poverty traditionally pays attention to the families/households by establishing poverty on the basis of equivalent household income. The integration of poverty research with labor market change, welfare state, and the family thus poses an interesting challenge. A step in this direction is research on “in work poverty,” pointing to the importance of a joint consideration of both partners’ employment situation in the household. Another extension lies in the connection of family events and poverty (Vandecasteele, 2015), especially the risk of becoming poor after the arrival of a new family member (Barbieri & Bozzon, 2016). Research on poverty is also among the most obvious examples of how today’s situations affect tomorrow’s societies. There is clear evidence that childhood well-being is a key determinant of how well someone will do as an adult. Furthermore, as children usually grow up in families, families necessarily are at the center of possible causes and interventions. Dual-worker parenthood is the most efficient protection to keep families out of poverty and to protect their offspring against the intergenerational transmission of social and economic risks (OECD, 2008). The inclusion of women/mothers in the labor market, particularly in contexts of less developed welfare, is a viable route to shelter families from economic hardship and to buffer, to some extent, the consequences of employment insecurity. To the extent that the well-being of children is enhanced by living in economically stable families, this will have consequences for coming generations and future societies.

Decades of research on social stratification has confirmed the fundamental role of the family in generating social inequality by providing members with resources and chances. Still in the twenty-first century, the family of origin remains of central importance for shaping life chances of its members, especially of the offspring. This “long arm of the family of origin” does not end with educational or occupational achievement but also intervenes in the process of intergenerational transmission of social risks and economic privileges. Given the increasingly unequal distribution of resources among families and cohorts, this might widen social cleavages.

CHANGING FAMILIES AND SOCIETIES INEQUALITY STRUCTURE

It has been extensively argued that changes in demographic and employment behavior should come with major implications for the inequality structure and therefore with long-term consequences for societies (Blossfeld, 2007). A surge in inequality shall influence not only the distribution of living standards today but also the opportunity structure for subsequent generations. The more unequal family income is, the greater the inequalities

in parental investment in their children. Not without reason, the more equal countries usually perform much better. Against this backdrop, it becomes relevant to identify more precisely how recent changes affect the inequality structure of societies. The increase in economic inequalities witnessed over recent decades (though with substantial differences between countries), and the reconsideration of the cost of inequality, lead to an extensive discussion about the drivers (OECD, 2008, 2011; van de Werfhorst & Salverda, 2012). A series of (macro)economic explanations have been proposed, involving globalization and technological progress. Employment and demographic behavior have been given limited attention so far. Once again, the household constitutes the more adequate unit of analysis. Households pool and redistribute different incomes of its members and have, according to their (economic) composition, very different economic situations and capacities. Societies with identical inequality on the individual level could nevertheless have very different inequality between households depending on how individuals combine in households. Consequently, changes in the population structure (such as the increase of single households), in the sorting of individuals with certain characteristics in households, and variations in the distribution of households due to changes in the behavior of individuals (such as the growth of double income households due to increased women's employment, or the increase in childless households) will affect income inequality and the income structure of societies (Breen & Salazar, 2011).³

The literature dealing with the inequality consequences of social, economic, and demographic phenomena focuses almost entirely on distributional inequality, that is, the unequal distribution of resources at a given point in time. Very few authors touch on consequences for social stratification (Goldthorpe, 2010) and its change, and even fewer combine this with a longitudinal perspective when conceptualizing life-course inequalities and their origin processes and perpetuation mechanisms, though these are, sociologically speaking, the most relevant issues. According to the permanent income theory, life cycle income is defined as the expected long-term average household income and it proves to be of substantive stability over time, despite unpredictability of temporal fluctuations. Yet, societies differ in the extent to which their institutional structure promotes stability in household living conditions over the life course, and in the mechanisms for achieving this stability (DiPrete, 2002). An individual's position in the social stratification is the result of processes of accumulation of (dis)advantages over the life course and the potential compensation mechanisms of family and state.

3. The standard assumption is that individuals share their resources within the household.

So far, most attention has been directed to economic inequality and the literature has concentrated on the consequences of three aspects related to changes in the work–family equilibrium: changes in the demographic composition of households, the increase in women’s market participation, and the increased similarity among partners.

Changes in Demographic Factors and its Consequences. Demographic changes include the reduction in the size of households originating from a long-term trend of declining fertility, and, more relevant here, the increase in single-member households. The latter is mainly attributed to the increase in people who have never married/cohabiting, or are divorced, separated, or widowed. This trend is widely thought to be an important contributor to the growth in inequality (Esping-Andersen, 2007; OECD, 2008, 2011; Salverda, Nolan, & Smeeding, 2009). Single-headed households, and particularly lone parents, are at a disadvantage compared with couple-headed households because they cannot profit from the redistribution of resources or economies of scale, making them more vulnerable to life-course risks, such as job loss. Furthermore, single-parent families are generally close to the bottom of the income distribution, so that if their numbers increase it is likely to worsen inequality. The changes in the household structure since the 1970s is thought to be responsible for about 20–40% of the inequality increase in the United States (Martin, 2006).

Increased Similarities between Men and Women, Changes in Employment Patterns, and the Consequences. In advanced industrialized countries, men and women have become increasingly similar over recent decades in terms of their education, employment, and earnings. Among the reasons are educational expansion, the increased educational homogamy among partners (Blossfeld, 2009) and (consequently) changing gender roles, and supporting a more equal sharing of housework among partners (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). The fact that earnings represent the main source of household income implies that changes in households’ economic composition have consequences on the distribution of income among households and therefore in societies. Given the family’s role in redistributing resources, increased equality within households, that is, the accumulation of (un)favorable situations has been expected to increase inequality between households. Other things being equal, a positive correlation in earnings among household members (mainly partners) should therefore lead to higher inequality and potentially to a polarization of households. Conversely, negative correlation of earnings among partners—for instance, due to nonemployment of the female partner, in line with Becker’s (1991) idea of economic specialization of

partners—would then imply lower levels of inequality within society (Breen & Salazar, 2011). The way in which the partners' employment and economic situations influence each other clearly also depends on the national, institutional context. Moreover, the detailed outcome in terms of inequality depends on the income concept being investigated (Atkinson & Brandolini, 2010).

The observed increase in women's labor market participation contributes to the changing economic composition and income capacity of households. Several studies deal with the consequences of rising female labor market participation on economic inequality (cf. Harkness, 2013 for an overview). However, whether the increase in female labor market participation alleviates or exacerbates inequality largely depends on the characteristics of those women who have increased their participation. Recent evidence suggests that increasing overall female employment reduces inequality, but results are still inconclusive in that contrasting findings emerge from the literature. Part of this heterogeneous picture is due to the crucial role of national and historical contexts and the use of different income concepts.

The increased similarity between men and women also has to do with the increased similarity in incomes of men and women in general and the incomes of partners in particular. Studies focusing on the consequences of partners' earnings similarity provide mixed findings. Indeed, some authors attribute a relevant role to changes in partners' similarity for inequality (Reed & Cancian, 2012; Schwartz, 2010), while others recognize they only have a trivial role (Larrimore, 2014). So far, few studies have focused on countries other than the United States and they show limited or even equalizing effects (Chen, Forster, & Llana-Nozal, 2016). In sum, empirical results vary between countries and over time. A systematic international and longitudinal comparison is still lacking. In conclusion, while changes in employment and family behavior potentially alter societies' inequality structure, the empirical impact is much less straightforward than some parts of the literature suggest.

KEY ISSUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Understanding macroprocesses and micromechanisms underlying the changing work–family equilibria and the consequences for the inequality structures is of relevance for the future of advanced societies. It implies working through various broader research streams of different disciplines and with different theoretical models. This *systematic integration of interdisciplinary perspectives* presents challenges for the future. The family is the central unit in which the different analytical levels, areas, and spheres combine; it lies at the intersection between welfare, work, and demographic

changes, so that it is vital to systematically and jointly consider the family as (i) the unit of analysis, (ii) a meso-context in which decisions are taken, and (iii) an inequality-generating institution.

Although it is true that the underlying processes have to be understood at the individual level, it is equally true that individuals cannot be conceptualized as isolated actors but are in fact embedded in a social context, most importantly their family, in which resources are bundled and reallocated. The integration of individual, meso-, and macroinstitutional contexts over time and in the stringent life-course perspective can contribute to our theoretical understanding of both emerging inequalities and the policy instruments to redress them. So far, both an integrative perspective and a straightforward international comparison are lacking. At present, there appear to be two main lines for future research.

The first concerns our understanding of the reasons for ongoing changes and requires an integration of institutional, structural, and cultural explanations, and their interactions. This emerging field is often referred to as *cultural economics* (Fernández & Fogli, 2009), but it extends into sociology as well (Polavieja, 2015), challenging our disciplinary borders. This will not least allow for a better understanding of which social policies work and whom they benefit. While it cannot be the task of policies to alter individuals' values and preferences, it can still be useful to understand in which way incentive structures might be more or less helpful for different social groups with different preference structures.

The second aspect regards the consequences and the detailed understanding of the impact of the new work–family equilibria on the long-term inequality structure of European societies. Most research focuses on economic well-being, but this should be extended to cover more social and subjective aspects. A multidimensional approach is therefore needed.

Further, from a substantive point of view, it is not so much the overall amount of distributional inequality at a certain point in time that is problematic for societies—as long as less favorable situations are only a short transitory stage they might be relatively innocuous. What really matters for individuals' life chances, families' well-being and societies as a whole, are lifetime inequalities (Gangl, 2005) and the long-lasting concentration of social risks on specific subgroups or social classes. This brings stratification rather than distributional inequality in the forefront. Future research on family demography and economic situations will increasingly need to consider the factors, processes, and mechanisms structuring risks and chances in order to assess inequalities in socially meaningful ways, as inequality is inherent in prevailing forms of institutionalized social relations, such as the family (Goldthorpe, 2010). Steps in this direction are studies linking social reproduction and demographic mechanisms (prospective models

of social reproduction, Lawrence & Breen, (forthcoming)), or looking at life course “trigger” events and the stratification of their consequences in context (Barbieri & Bozzon, 2016; Grotti, 2016). In the future, a comparative, multidimensional, multilevel, interdisciplinary, and longitudinal dynamic approach is needed. And great data!

REFERENCES

- Ahn, N., & Mira, P. (2002). A note on changing relationship between fertility and female employment rates in developed countries. *Journal of Population Economics*, 15, 667–687.
- Arpino, B., Esping-Andersen, G., & Pessin, L. (2015). How do changes in gender role attitudes towards female employment influence fertility? A macro-level analysis. *European Sociological Review*, 31(3), 370–382.
- Atkinson, A. B., & Brandolini, A. (2010). On analyzing the world distribution of income. *The World Bank Economic Review*, 24(1), 1–37.
- Barbieri, P., & Bozzon, R. (2016). Labour market deregulation, and households’ poverty risks. An analysis of the risk of entering poverty at childbirth in different European welfare clusters. *Journal of European Policy*, 26(2), 99–123.
- Barbieri, P., Bozzon, R., Scherer, S., Grotti, R., & Lugo, M. (2015). The rise of a Latin model? Family and fertility consequences of employment instability in Italy and Spain. *European Societies*, 17(4), 423–446.
- Becker, G. S. (1991). *A treatise on the family, enlarged edition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bianchi, S. M., & Milkie, M. A. (2010). Work and family research in the first decade of the 21st century. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72(3), 1741–3737.
- Billari, F. C., Kohler, H.-P., Andersson, G., & Lundström, H. (2007). Approaching the limit: Long-term trends in late and very late fertility. *Population and Development Review*, 33(1), 149–170.
- Blossfeld, H. P. (2007). Linked lives in modern societies. The impact of social inequality of increasing educational homogamy and the shift towards dual-earner couples. In S. Scherer, R. Pollak, G. Otte & M. Gang (Eds.), *From origin to destination. Trends and mechanisms in social stratification research* (pp. 275–291). Frankfurt & New York: Campus.
- Blossfeld, H. P. (2009). Educational assortative marriage in comparative perspective. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 35, 513–530.
- Blossfeld, H. P., & Drobníč, S. (Eds.) (2001). *Careers of couples in contemporary society: From male breadwinner to dual-earner families*. Oxford, England: OUP.
- Breen, R., & Salazar, L. (2011). Educational assortative mating and earnings inequality in the United States. *American Journal of Sociology*, 117(3), 808–843.
- Chen, W. H., Forster, M., & Llana-Nozal, A. (2016). Demographic or labour market trends: What determines the distribution of household earnings in OECD countries? *OECD Journal: Economic Studies*, 1, 177–207.

- Daly, M. (2000). A fine balance. Women's labor market participation in international comparison. In F. W. Scharpf & V. Schmidt (Eds.), *Welfare and work in the open economy* (Vol. II Diverse Response to Common Challenges). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Del Boca, D., Pasqua, S., & Pronzato, C. (2009). Motherhood and market work decisions in institutional context: A European perspective. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 61, i147–i171.
- DiPrete, T. A. (2002). Life course risks, mobility regimes, and mobility consequences: A comparison of Sweden, Germany, and the United States. *American Journal of Sociology*, 108(2), 267–309.
- DiPrete, T. (2005). Labour markets, inequality and change, A European perspective. *Work and Occupations*, 32(2), 119–139.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (2007). Sociological explanations of changing income distribution. *American Behavioural Scientist*, 50(5), 639–658.
- Esping-Andersen, G., & Billari, F. C. (2015). Re-theorizing family demographics. *Population and Development Review*, 41(1), 1–31.
- Esping-Andersen, G., Boertien, D., Bonke, J., & Gracia, P. (2013). Couple specialisation in multiple equilibria. *European Sociological Review*, 29(6), 1280–1294.
- European Commission. (2010). *Employment in Europe*. Brussels. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/eie/chap1_en.html
- Fahey, T. (2008). Fertility patterns and aspirations in Europe. In J. Alber, T. Fahey & C. Saraceno (Eds.), *Handbook of quality of life in enlarged European Union* (pp. 27–46). Abingdon and New York: Routledge.
- Fernández, R., & Fogli, A. (2009). Culture: An empirical investigation of beliefs, work, and fertility. *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics*, 1(1), 146–177.
- Fernández, R. (2014). Women's rights and development. *Journal of Economic Growth*, 19(1), 37–80.
- Gangl, M. (2005). Income inequality, permanent incomes, and income dynamics. Comparing Europe to the United States. *Work and Occupation*, 32(2), 140–162.
- Goldthorpe, J. (2010). Analysing social inequality: A critique of two recent contributions from economics and epidemiology. *European Sociological Review*, 26(6), 731–744.
- Greenwood, J., Guner, N., Kocharkov, G., & Santos, C. (2014). Marry your like: Assortative mating and income inequality. *American Economic Review*, 104(5), 348–353.
- Grotti, R. (2016). Shaping economic inequality: The starring role of the household in the “welfare triad”, Dissertation, Trento University.
- Grotti, R., & Scherer, S. (2014). Accumulation of employment instability among partners—Evidence from six EU countries. *European Sociological Review*, 30(5), 627–639.
- Guetto, R., Luijkx, L., & Scherer, S. (2015). Religiosity, gender attitudes and women's labour market participation and fertility decisions in Europe. *Acta Sociologica*, 58(2), 155–172.
- Harkness, S. (2013). Women's employment and household income inequality. In J. C. Gornick & M. Jantti (Eds.), *Income inequality: Economic disparities and the middle class in affluent countries* (pp. 207–233). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

- Larrimore, J. (2014). Accounting for United States household income inequality trends: The changing importance of household structure and male and female labor earnings inequality. *Review of Income and Wealth*, 60(4), 683–701.
- Lawrence, M., & Breen, R. (forthcoming). And their children after them? The effect of college on educational reproduction. *American Journal of Sociology*.
- Martin, M. A. (2006). Family structure and income inequality in families with children, 1976 to 2000. *Demography*, 43, 421–445.
- Myrskylä, M., Kohler, H. P., & Billari, F. (2009). Advances in development reverse fertility declines. *Nature*, 460(6), 741–743.
- OECD (2000). *Reforms for an ageing society*. Paris, France: OECD.
- OECD (2008). *Growing unequal? Income distribution and poverty in OECD countries*. Paris, France: OECD.
- OECD (2011). *Divided we stand. Why inequality keeps rising*. Paris, France: OECD.
- Polavieja, J. G. (2015). Capturing culture. A new method to estimate exogenous cultural effects using migrant populations. *American Sociological Review*, 80(1), 166–191.
- Reed, D., & Cancian, M. (2012). Rising family income inequality: The importance of sorting. *Journal of Income Distribution*, 21(2), 3–14.
- Salverda, W., Nolan, B., & Smeeding, T. M. (Eds.) (2009). *The Oxford handbook of economic inequality*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Schwartz, C. R. (2010). Earnings inequality and the changing association between spouses' earnings. *American Journal of Sociology*, 115(5), 1524–1557.
- Van de Werfhorst, H. G., & Salverda, W. (2012). Consequences of economic inequality: Introduction to a special issue. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 30(4), 377–387.
- Vandecasteele, L. (2015). Social class, life events and poverty risks in comparative European perspective. *International Review of Social Research*, 5(1), 61–74.

FURTHER READING

- Grotti, R., & Scherer, S. (2016). Does gender equality increase economic inequality? *Evidence from five countries*. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*. doi:10.1016/j.rssm.2016.06.001.

STEFANI SCHERER SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Stefani Scherer is a professor of sociology at the University of Trento. She holds a PhD from Mannheim University. Her main research interests are inequality and social stratification processes in international comparative perspective, the analysis of life courses, the family and labor market dynamics, and quantitative methods. She has been working in several large-scale international comparative projects, for which she received, among others, a large research grant from the European Research Council (ERC). She

currently coordinates the PhD program in sociology within the School of Social Science at Trento University.

RELATED ESSAYS

The Underrepresentation of Women in Elective Office (*Political Science*), Sarah F. Anzia

Rent, Rent-Seeking, and Social Inequality (*Sociology*), Beth Red Bird and David B. Grusky

Stereotype Content (*Sociology*), Beatrice H. Capestany and Lasana T. Harris
 Why So Few Women in Mathematically Intensive Fields? (*Psychology*), Stephen J. Ceci and Wendy M. Williams

Elites (*Sociology*), Johan S. G. Chu and Mark S. Mizruchi

Misinformation and How to Correct It (*Psychology*), John Cook *et al.*

Parenting with Digital Devices (*Psychology*), Pamela E. Davis-Kean and Sandra Tang

Global Income Inequality (*Sociology*), Glenn Firebaugh

Cognitive Processes Involved in Stereotyping (*Psychology*), Susan T. Fiske and Cydney H. Dupree

Controlling the Influence of Stereotypes on One's Thoughts (*Psychology*), Patrick S. Forscher and Patricia G. Devine

Social Class and Parental Investment in Children (*Sociology*), Anne H. Gauthier

Changing Family Patterns (*Sociology*), Kathleen Gerson and Stacy Torres

Family Relationships and Development (*Psychology*), Joan E. Grusec

Globalization of Capital and National Policymaking (*Political Science*), Steven R. Hall

The Future of Employment, Wages, and Technological Change (*Economics*), Michael J. Handel

Divorce (*Sociology*), Juho Härkönen

The Reorganization of Work (*Sociology*), Charles Heckscher

Gender Segregation in Higher Education (*Sociology*), Alexandra Hendley and Maria Charles

Family Formation in Times of Labor Market Insecurities (*Sociology*), Johannes Huinink

Transformation of the Employment Relationship (*Sociology*), Arne L. Kalleberg and Peter V. Marsden

Maternal and Paternal Employment across the Life Course (*Sociology*), Michaela Kreyenfeld

Women Running for Office (*Political Science*), Jennifer L. Lawless

Household Economy (*Sociology*), Laura Lein and Amanda Tillotson

Political Inequality (*Sociology*), Jeff Manza

- The Future of Marriage (*Sociology*), Elizabeth Aura McClintock
- Gender Inequality in Educational Attainment (*Sociology*), Anne McDaniel and Claudia Buchmann
- Gender and Women’s Influence in Public Settings (*Political Science*), Tali Mendelberg *et al.*
- Implicit Attitude Measures (*Psychology*), Gregory Mitchell and Philip E. Tetlock
- Health and Social Inequality (*Sociology*), Bernice A. Pescosolido
- Stereotype Threat (*Psychology*), Toni Schmader and William M. Hall
- Gender and the Transition to Adulthood: A Diverse Pathways View (*Sociology*), Ingrid Schoon
- Family Income Composition (*Sociology*), Kristin E. Smith
- Public Opinion, the 1%, and Income Redistribution (*Sociology*), David L. Weakliem
- Gender and Work (*Sociology*), Christine L. Williams and Megan Tobias Neely
- Recent Demographic Trends and the Family (*Sociology*), Lawrence L. Wu