

ECSR, Collegio Carlo Alberto and Milan-Turin  
Joint Spring School on  
**Family Complexity and its Implications for Inequality**

Collegio Carlo Alberto, Turin, Italy,  
March the 10<sup>th</sup> - the 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014

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The second edition of the ECSR Spring School, on “Family complexity and its implications for inequality”, is promoted by ECSR, Collegio Carlo Alberto and by the universities of Milan and Turin in the frame of the NASP-West project (Network for the Advancement in Social and Political Studies), with kind support from the Compagnia di San Paolo and the Fondazione Cariplo. It provides high-quality training on leading-edge theories and methodological approaches to the analysis of family complexity in contemporary societies and its consequences for social stratification and inequality.

**Organizing committee:** Gabriele Ballarino (Milan), Filippo Barbera (Collegio Carlo Alberto and Turin University), Fabrizio Bernardi (ECSR and EUI, Fiesole), Juho Härkönen (Stockholm).

**Faculty:** Arnstein Aasve (Bocconi), Gabriele Ballarino (Milan), Pearl Dykstra (Rotterdam), Fabrizio Bernardi (EUI), Enzo Carriero (Turin), Anette Fasang (Humboldt University and WZB, Berlin), Juho Härkönen (Stockholm), Tiziana Nazio (Turin), Chiara Saraceno (Collegio Carlo Alberto), Cristina Solera (Turin), Elizabeth Thomson (Wisconsin and Stockholm).

**Staff:** Cinzia Agliani (secretariat, Collegio Carlo Alberto), Stefano Cantalini (student assistant, Milan), Sandra Capozzi (secretariat, Milan), Elisa Clauser (secretariat, Collegio Carlo Alberto), Nazareno Panichella (teaching assistant, Milan).

The objective of the spring school is to introduce students to both substantive and methodological issues in current research on family complexity and its implications in Europe. The school includes three type of activities: a) lectures on key current issues in the field; b) a short, multi-teacher course on methodological approaches in family life course research (including Event History Analysis, Sequence Analysis, and sibling models); c) students’ presentations, discussed by both faculty members and other students.

**Overview**

	Monday 10 March	Tuesday 11 March	Wednesday 12 March	Thursday 13 March	Friday 14 March
9.30-11	Thomson	Härkönen II	Fasang I	Härkönen III	Dykstra
11-11:30	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
11:30-13	Härkönen I	Presentations 3 (Solera)	Fasang II	Presentations 7 (Härkönen)	Presentations 10 (Carriero)
13-14	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
14-15.30	Presentations 1 (Thomson)	Bernardi	Aassve	Presentations 8 (Ballarino)	Saraceno
15.30-16:00	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
16:00-17:30	Presentations 2 (Nazio)	Presentations 4 (Fasang)	Presentations 6 (Aassve)	Presentations 9 (Dykstra)	Härkönen IV (16-16.30)
17:30-17:45		Break			
17:45-19:15		Presentations 5 (Bernardi)			

## 1. Keynote lectures

### **Elizabeth Thomson: The demographics of family complexity in Europe**

Every European country has experienced changes in partnership behavior – increased divorce, delayed and avoided marriage, cohabitation that is even less stable than marriage and the formation of new partnerships. Such life transitions produce families and households that are increasingly complex, i.e., step-parents, step-children, and half-siblings. In most contexts, family complexity is associated with socioeconomic disadvantage, and may serve to doubly burden the daily lives of poorer families. This paper reviews variation across Europe in the demographic processes that produce family complexity as well as their socioeconomic gradients. Some special attention is given to Sweden, a forerunner in family change.

Key references:

Andersson, G. (2002a). Children's experience of family disruption and family formation: Evidence from 16 FFS countries. *Demographic Research*, 7, 343-364.

Härkönen, J., & Dronkers, J. (2006). Stability and change in the educational gradient of divorce. A comparison of seventeen countries. *European Sociological Review*, 22(5), 501–517.

Kennedy, S., & Thomson, E. (2010). Children's experiences of family disruption in Sweden: Differentials by parent education over three decades. *Demographic Research*, 23, 479-508.

McLanahan, S., & Percheski, C. (2008). Family structure and the reproduction of inequalities. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 34, 257-76

Perelli-Harris, B., Sigle-Rushton, W., Lappegård, T., Keizer, R., Berghammer, C., & Kreyenfeld, M. (2010). The educational gradient of nonmarital childbearing in Europe. *Population and Development Review*, 36, 775-801.

Thomson, E., Lappegård, T., Carlson, M., Evans, A., and Gray, E. 2014. Childbearing across partnerships in Australia, the United States, Norway and Sweden. *Demography* online first

### **Pearl Dykstra: Intergenerational family relations: linked lives and lives in context**

Life course theorists have emphasized the need to recognize that people's lives are linked to others around them (Elder, 1994). Family members are "fellow life travellers", people with whom individuals travel through life as if in a convoy. In families, a great deal of learning occurs, and members function as significant others from whom cues are taken and whose reactions are integral to decisions people make. Family members serve as resources available during times of need, but they are also recipients of help and care. Other life course scholars, particularly in Europe, have also emphasized that where people live affects how lives unfold (Mayer, 2009). Political systems, educational systems, labour market arrangements, housing markets, laws, entitlements, and social services in the country of residence contour the life course and structure interdependence. This presentation connects these two theoretical strands: the notions of "linked lives" and "lives in context". The concept of interdependence, which emphasizes the dynamic interplay between being embedded in a meso context of interconnected family ties and living in a macro context of policy arrangements will be elaborated. An example from research on changing impacts of parental divorce will serve to illustrate the ways in which historical context shapes generational interdependence and by extension, inequality.

Key references:

Elder, G. H. Jr. (1994). Time, human agency and social change: Perspectives on the life course. *Social Psychological Quarterly*, 57, 345-360.

Mayer, K. U. (2009). New directions in life course research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 35, 413–433.

### **Chiara Saraceno: How social norms and regulations concerning the family may create, strengthen or reduce inequalities**

Intergenerational obligations – who is responsible for whom and what within families and kinship – are an important structuring dimension of family relationships and more specifically of intergenerational relationships. They are often embedded in relationships of affection, but are also independent from them. Obligations refer to norms that have complex and multiple roots: in expectations developed in individual and family biographies, in long standing family and social cultures and norms and in legal norms of different kinds. These include, in fact, civil law norms that explicitly regulate family relationships and obliged kin and social security norms that may or may not define entitlement to benefits also in reference to expected family obligations. In particular, through civil and family law the state regulates a) what constitutes a family; b) who belongs to a family; c) what are the rights and obligations between family members. But the state regulates and constructs “the family” also, so to say, from the outside: through social policies not directly, or explicitly, aimed at the family, but also through education policies and more recently also through labour market policies. In regulating labour relations and conditions, and in defining which needs might be socially acknowledged and (at least partly) supported through welfare arrangements, social legislation and then social policies from the beginning have implicitly regulated, or at least interfered, with family and household formation models: defining relationships of dependence and interdependence between gender and generations, shaping the conditions and costs of reproduction, taking for granted, rewarding, or vice versa disincentiving, particular family patterns and forms of organization.

Both legal regulations concerning the family and the specific “packaging “ of intergenerational obligations vary greatly across countries, shaping different contexts in which gender and intergenerational relationships are played out. In particular, they may strengthen or reduce gender inequality, strengthen or reduce social class inequalities in the ability to satisfy needs, strengthen or reduce the intergenerational reproduction of inequality.

#### Key references:

- Esping-Andersen G., „Education and equal life chances. Investing in children”, in O. Kangas and J. Palme (eds), *Social Policy and Economic Development in the Nordic Countries*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004
- Korpi, W., Ferrarini, T. and Englund, S., (2013), 'Women's Opportunities under Different Family Policy Constellations: Gender, Class, and Inequality Tradeoffs in Western Countries Re-examined', in *Social Politics*, 20, 1, pp. 1-40
- Saraceno C., Keck W.(2010) Can we identify intergenerational policy regimes in Europe?, *European Societies*, 12: 5, 675 – 696
- Saraceno, C. (2010) ‘Social inequalities in facing old age dependency. A bigenerational perspective’, *Journal of European Social Policy*, 20(1) : 1\_ 13.

## **2. A short course on methodological approaches to the analysis of family life courses and inequality**

Teachers: Juho Härkönen (Stockholm University & University of Turku), Fabrizio Bernardi (European University Institute, Florence), Arnstein Aassve (Bocconi University, Milan), Anette Fasang (Humboldt University and Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin)

The objective of this workshop is to give an overview of methodological approaches to the analysis of family life courses and inequality. Family life courses have become increasingly diverse across Europe. How can we best describe the complexity of family lives? How is this diversity structured by socioeconomic inequalities in education, labour market careers, and incomes? Does this diversity, in turn, shape inequalities in adults' and children's living conditions and life chances? These questions are of central interest across the social sciences, and among the general public.

The focus is in the suitability of different quantitative methods to the analysis of these questions. Rather than providing hands-on and technical training in these methods, we emphasize their methodological underpinnings and appropriateness for different research problems. In other words, the aim of the workshop is to provide guidance to the choice of methodological approaches suited for particular questions.

Our lectures cover event history analysis, sequence analysis, and approaches to estimating causal effects of family dynamics. The first two are commonly used to analyse family life courses and the factors shaping them. However, they build on different philosophical traditions of life course analysis, one (sequence analysis) taking a holistic view on life courses, whereas the other (event history analysis) focuses on analysis of the specific transitions which constitute these holistic trajectories. They offer complementary approaches into understanding current family complexity and the factors shaping them. Analysts of the effects of family dynamics on the living conditions and life chances of adults and children are often challenged by questions of unobserved variables and endogeneity. Approaches by which these can be dealt with promise more accurate views on how family complexity shapes inequalities. At the end of the workshop, students should be able to understand the types of research questions these methods can be used to answer, how they relate to one another, as well their possibilities and limitations.

### **Introduction to the analysis of family life courses (Härkönen)**

This lecture serves as an introduction to methodological approaches to the empirical analysis of common questions in research on family dynamics and family complexity, as well as an introduction to the rest of the lectures in this workshop. Life course analysis views human lives as coherent wholes, which are affected by biographies and embedded in social networks and societal contexts. This perspective guides much research on families, which can ask how family life courses are structured into sequences (e.g., leaving parental home, living alone, cohabitation, marriage, children), how experiences in earlier life affect family trajectories (e.g., intergenerational transmission of divorce), how transitions in employment trigger changes in families, how social relations within and between generations develop and shape family trajectories, and how institutional contexts influence these patterns. How they are related to social inequalities in other spheres of life—both as causes and consequences—is a guiding principle for much of this workshop.

#### Preparatory readings

- Bengtson, V.L., and Allen, K.R. (1993). The life course perspective applied to families over time. Pp. 469-504 in P. Boss, W.J. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W.R. Schumm, and S.K. Steinmetz (eds.) *Sourcebook of Family Theories and Methods*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Billari, F.C. (2005). Life course analysis: Two complementary cultures? Some reflections with examples from the transition to adulthood. *Advances in Life Course Research* 10: 261-281.
- Thomson, E., Winkler-Dworak, M., and Kennedy, S. (2013). The standard family life course: An assessment of variability in life course pathways. Pp. 35-52 in Evans, A. & Baxter, J. (eds.) *Negotiating the Life Course: Stability and Change in Life Pathways*. Dordrecht: Springer.

#### **Event history analysis of family life courses (Härkönen)**

Event history analysis is used to analyze transitions between discrete states, such as from childlessness to parenthood and from marriage to divorce. “How long does it take for a couple to divorce” and “what is the rate of divorce” are two sides of the same question, which event history analysis can be used to answer. The inherently longitudinal perspective used in event history analysis enables linking transitions in one life sphere—such as the transition to stable employment—to transitions in another, such as family formation. In this lecture, I discuss the basic principles and concepts of event history analysis, paving the way to more advanced discussions on the approach.

#### Preparatory readings

- Andersson, G. & Philipov, D. (2002). Life table representations of family dynamics in Sweden, Hungary, and 14 other FFS countries: A project of descriptions of demographic behavior. *Demographic Research* 7(4): 67-144.
- Blossfeld, H-P., and Huinink, J. (1991). Human capital investments or norms of role transition? How women’s schooling and career affect the process of family formation? *American Journal of Sociology* 97(1): 143-68.
- Cleves, M., Gutierrez, R.G., Gould, W. & Marchenko, Y.V. 2010. *An Introduction to Survival Analysis Using Stata*. Stata Press

#### **Further questions in event history analysis of families (Bernardi)**

This lecture follows up on the first one to cover questions of the interpretation of the coefficient estimates from event history models. How should the results be interpreted, and in particular, should they be interpreted as reflecting effects on timing or ultimate probability of the event occurring? How can one provide a substantive interpretation of the estimates of event history models? Furthermore, the lecture covers cases of competing events, and of selection into the origin state. Does this bias our estimates? Some basic knowledge of EHA is expected. Those with no experience with EHA, should read chapters 1, 2 and 3 of Bernardi (2014)

#### Preparatory readings

- Bernardi, F. (2014). Introduction to Event History Analysis using STATA, unpublished manuscript. These notes provide a very applied introduction to event history analysis using STATA. They are a partial translation of a book written in Spanish.
- Bernardi, F. (2006), *Análisis de la historia de acontecimientos*. Madrid, Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, Colección de Cuadernos Metodológicos del CIS, n. 38.

All the do file and data files to replicate the examples and to do the short assignments at the end of the chapter will be made available to the participants in the seminar.

- Bernardi, F. (2001). Is it a timing or a probability effect? Four simulations and an application of transition rate models to the study of unemployment exit. *Quality & Quantity*, 3, 231-252.
- Bernardi, F. and Martínez-Pastor, J.I. (2011). Female education and marriage dissolution: is it a selection effect? *European Sociological Review* 26(6): 693-707.
- Erola, J., Härkönen, J., and Dronkers, J. (2012). More careful or less marriageable? Parental divorce, spousal selection, and entry into marriage. *Social Forces* 90(4): 1323-1345.
- Lancee, B. & Radl, J. (2012). Social Connectedness and the Transition from Work to Retirement. *The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences* 67(4), 481-490.

### **Event history analysis of multiple processes (Aassve)**

Many family processes are inherently interdependent. Marriage and childbearing, for example, are not necessarily best considered as separate events in which one influences another, but part of a single process, that is, family formation. Not taking this interdependency into account can lead to misleading conclusions of the relationships between the processes. Multiprocess event history modeling, which combines event history analysis with simultaneous equations and multilevel modeling, has been developed explicitly with such scenarios in mind.

#### Preparatory readings

- Lillard, L.A., and Panis, C.W.A. (2003). aML multilevel multiprocess statistical software, version 2.0.
- Baizán, P., Aassve, A., and Billari, F.C. (2003). Cohabitation, marriage, and first birth: the interrelationship of family formation events in Spain. *European Journal of Population* 19: 147-169.
- Steele, F. (2011). Multilevel discrete-time event history models with applications to the analysis of recurrent employment transitions. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Statistics* 53(1): 1-20.

### **Sequence analysis in family life course research (Fasang)**

This lecture introduces sequence analysis for family research. Sequence analysis, originally developed in biology to analyze strings of DNA, has attracted increasing attention in the social sciences for the analysis of longitudinal data. Most applications in the social sciences study life course processes, such as labor market careers, transitions to adulthood, or family formation. This lecture covers the theoretical underpinnings and basic techniques of sequence analysis for family research. We will discuss advantages and limitations of sequence analysis for family research, as well as its added value over other methods. Topics include optimal matching analysis, dynamic hamming matching, sequence complexity over time, and sequence visualization. Special attention will be given to recent developments proposing dyadic sequence analysis for family related research questions as a promising nascent research field. The workshop closes with a few guidelines on practical application and a brief introduction to stata's SQ and R's TraMineR packages for sequence analysis.

- Abbott, Andrew. 1992. "From Causes to Events: Notes on Narrative Positivism". *Sociological*

*Methods and Research* 20: 428-455.

Gabadinho, Alexis, et al. 2011. "Analyzing and Visualizing State Sequences in R with TraMineR". *Journal of Statistical Software* 40(4): 1-37.

Fasang, Anette. 2014. "New Perspectives on Family Formation: What Can We Learn From Sequence Analysis?" In Blanchard, Philippe, Felix Bühlmann, and Jacques-Antoine Gauthier (Eds.) *Advances in Sequence Analysis: Methods, Theories and Applications*. Springer: Series Life Course Research and Social Policies.

### **Approaches to estimating causal effects of family dynamics (Härkönen)**

Does parental separation increase the risk of school dropout? Does becoming a mother alter women's labour market careers? Questions of causal effects of family dynamics are central for understanding the implications of increasing family complexity for social inequality. Yet their analysis is plagued with methodological challenges. In the absence on randomized experiments, making claims of causal effects of these events is difficult due to the multitude of unobserved variables, which can affect both the event and the outcome. This lecture introduces to common approaches to reducing these problems, and focuses on fixed effects models to the analysis of the effects of family transitions on children's outcomes, which utilize repeated measurements of the same individuals or observations of several siblings growing up in the same family.

Allison, P.D. (2009). *Fixed effects regression models*. Newbury Park: Sage.

McLanahan, S., Schneider, D., and Tach, L. (2013). The causal effects of father absence. *Annual Review of Sociology* 39:399-427.

Pollmann-Schulz, M. (2014). Parenthood and life satisfaction: why don't children make people happy? *Journal of Marriage and Family* 76(2): 319-336.

Sigle-Rushton, W., Lyngstad, T.H., Andersen, P.L., and Kravdal, Ø. (2014). Proceed with caution? Parents' union dissolution and children's educational achievement. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 76(1): 161-174.