

Entry to motherhood and higher education in three regimes of welfare capitalism

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

There is much interest in the associations between women's gains in educational attainment and timing and eventual levels of completed fertility among women in low fertility countries. Institutional environments are believed to mediate this change (e.g., Pampel 2001). To explore this further, we conduct a cross-national comparative analysis of cohort change in educational attainment and timing of first birth. We do so for 1950s and 1960s birth cohorts in ten countries, representing three "regimes" of family policy and labor market conditions: (1) the strong family-policy regimes in Denmark, France, and Norway; (2) the weak family-policy regimes with dynamic labor markets in Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States; and (3) the weak family-policy regimes with rigid labor markets in Greece, Spain, and Italy. Each of these groups of countries further exhibits a range of prevalence, and of increases in, women's participation in higher education. This allows us to explore in parallel differences in timing and prevalence of entry to motherhood by cohort, by education, and by welfare-capitalist "regime" (Esping-Andersen 1999).

For each country, we estimate annual first birth probabilities by age and achievement of a higher education qualification. To obtain large enough samples of zero-parity women through the end of their reproductive lifetimes, we pool data from survey and population (birth registration and census) sources according to the data availability in each country. Fertility-by-education information from the Fertility and Family Survey (FFS) for Canada, Italy, New Zealand, Spain, and the United States is pooled with later surveys with fertility histories and combined with birth registration data by parity. Constrained logistic regression (Handcock, Huovilainen, and Rendall 2000) is used to incorporate the birth registration information. For Denmark, France, Norway, and the United Kingdom, large linked-record datasets incorporating educational attainment variables are used, while census data containing fertility histories are used for Greece.

References

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