



# Uncovering Social Stratification:

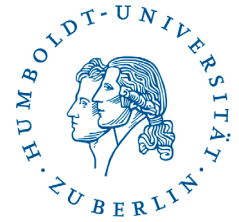
## Intersectional Inequalities in Work and Family Life Courses by Gender and Race

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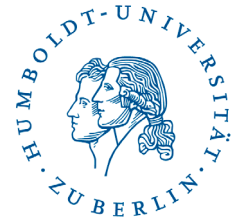
Kanter lecture, Purdue University, March 2024

# Myths or facts about combining work and family?



- 1) Successful stable careers and single parenthood can't be combined
- 2) Black men have unstable careers
- 3) White men can have it all
- 4) Women can't combine a family and a career, women have to "choose"

# Conceptual clarifications: Work-family life courses



**Life course:** timing and sequencing of life events from birth to death, such as education, employment, partnering, parenthood.

**Focus:** young to mid-adulthood (20-44)

Timing and sequencing of work and family events is associated with economic rewards.

# The Life Course: "Stage Ages of Humankind"



Germany, around 1870



# "Stage Ages of Women"



Germany around, 1900

# Work-family interplay



**work events → family outcomes**

(e.g. recessions lead to fertility decline, family demography)

**family events → work outcomes**

(e.g. motherhood penalty, gender and stratification research)

Work and family lives continually affect each other over the life course through causal, selection, and anticipation effects.

**Life courses as a whole**, observed over several decades, enduring and accumulating inequalities

# Intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991)



## Intercategorical approach to intersectionality (McCall 2005):

- Structural inequalities
- Full group comparison (not just White men as reference category)
- Different groups' social positions are related to each other

**Intersectional quantitative life course perspective:** enduring and accumulating inequalities between social groups.

# Motivation and previous research



- In quantitative studies on work-family inequality race is often only a control variable, many studies only focus on women.
- Intersectionality literature centers on identity categories, neglects structural inequalities, often uses non-representative samples.

## Goal

**Big picture:** map combination of work and family life courses from ages 20-44 to assess **structural inequalities** in work and family life courses by gender and race.



# Research questions



- 1) How strong is the interdependence between work and family life courses for Black and White men and women?
- 2) Which work and family life courses typically combine for Black and White men and women?

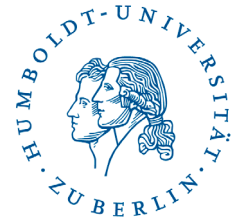
## RQ 1) How strong is the interdependence between work and family life courses for different social groups?

**Strong work-family interdependence** implies that events in work and family lives **mutually condition and constrain** each another.

**Black men and women's** on average lower initial socioeconomic positions more strongly constrain their family lives than for Whites  
**(stronger work → family links)**

**Women's** family lives on average have stronger repercussions for their work careers than men's **(stronger family → work links)**

# RQ1) Hypotheses on work-family interdependence



	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
<b>White</b>	weak	medium
<b>Black</b>	medium	strong

**Blacks:** stronger work → family associations

**Women:** stronger family → work associations

**Hypothesis:** Work-family interdependence will be weakest for White men, strongest for Black women, with Black men and White women in between



## RQ2) Three typical combinations of work and family lives: **mutual support hypothesis**

(1) Stable, high-prestige careers and family lives of stable partnered parenthood *mutually support* each other.

**H1: expected for men, stronger for Black men**

- men's occupational success makes them more attractive as partners, support from a care-taking wife at home increases productivity and success at work
- virtuous circle, resource co-production in two life domains
- because of Black men's structural labor market disadvantages, they struggle more to fulfill breadwinner expectations and depend more on resource co-production in the home for occupational success.

## RQ 2) Three types of work-family interdependence across the life course: **competing alternatives hypothesis**

(2) Stable, high-prestige careers and family lives of stable partnered parenthood as *competing alternatives*

**H2: expected for women, stronger for Black women**

- For women gendered norms of care-taking are at odds with ideal worker expectations, career success make them less attractive as partners due do racialized and gendered mating norms.
- **Timing in the life course is key:** if women research stable occupational positions before marriage and motherhood, they can outsource care and sustain careers

# Three types of work-family interdependence across the life course



(3) *Instability spillovers* between interrupted low-prestige careers and family complexity.

**H4: expected for Blacks and White women**

- Stress of unemployment and poverty increase risk of separation and frequent re-partnering for economic reasons, family events as parenthood can increase risk of non-employment
- Will be present among all race\*gender groups but more sizeable among Blacks due to on average greater initial socio-economic disadvantage.



## Data & Methods



National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY 1979)

**Sample:** Men and women born **1957-1964**, interviewed between 1979 and 2008, observed ages 22 to 44.

**Sequence analysis:** method originally developed in biology to study strings of DNA adapted in sociology to study life courses as “sequences”

**Cluster analysis:** life courses are grouped into typologies of life experiences

## Family

□	single, no child
■	single, 1+ child
□	partner, no child
□	partner, 1 child
■	partner, 2 children
■	partner, 3+ children

## Categories of occupational prestige

## Work

□	10/19
■	20/29
■	30/39
■	40/49
■	50/59
■	60/69
■	70/79
■	parental leave
□	education
■	military
■	unemployed
■	gap/out of LF

### Occupational Prestige (Treiman SLOPS):

14-19 = e.g. construction and maintenance laborers, assembly laborers

20-29 = e.g. waiters/waitresses, butchers,

30-39 = e.g. office assistant, warehouse manager, mailmen, hairdressers

40-49 = e.g. sales assistants, nurses, midwives, accountants, cashier

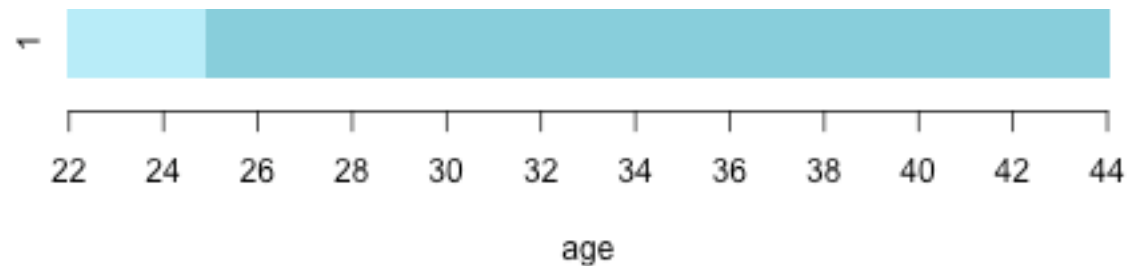
50-59 = e.g. primary school teachers, insurance salesmen, travel attendants

60-69 = e.g. military officers, engineers, government officials, managers (private sector)

70-78 = e.g. doctors, judges, university professors, architects

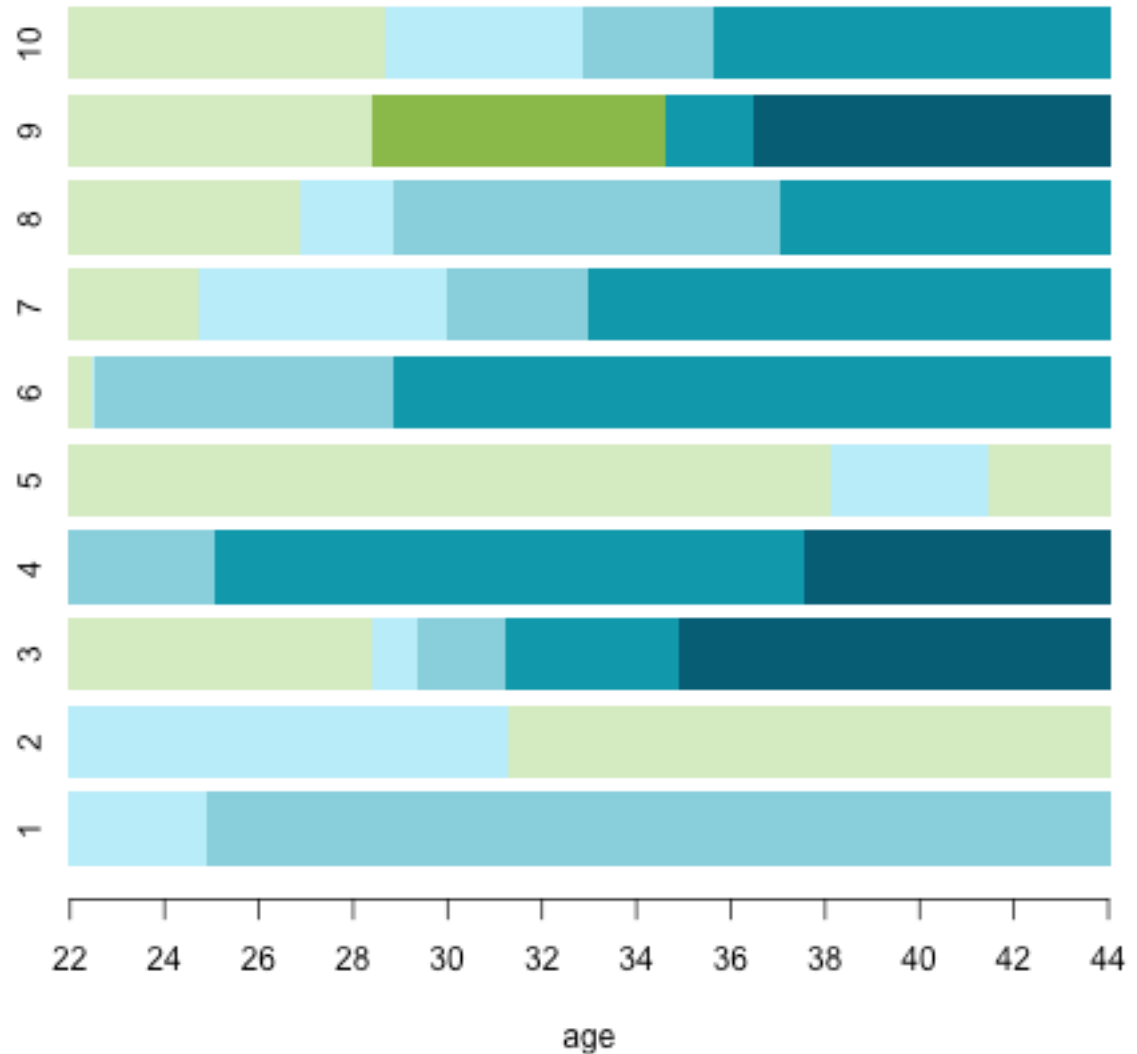
Source: Wolf (1995) 16

# Example: Family Life Courses



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

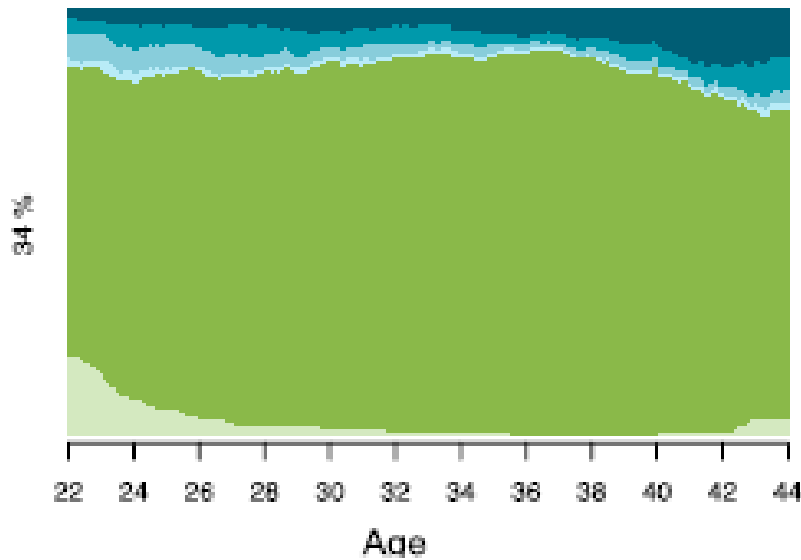
# Example: Family Life Courses



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- single, 1+ child
- partner, no child
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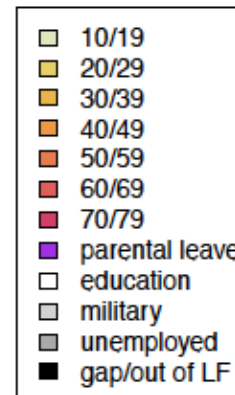
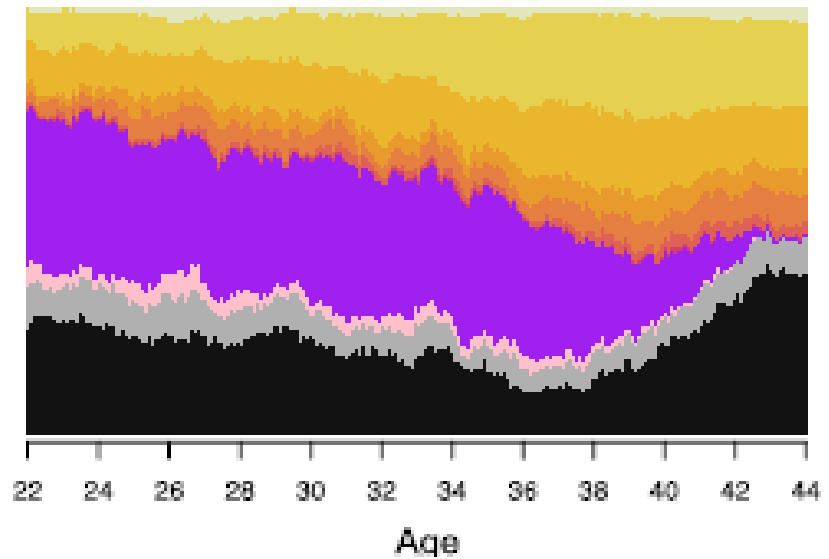
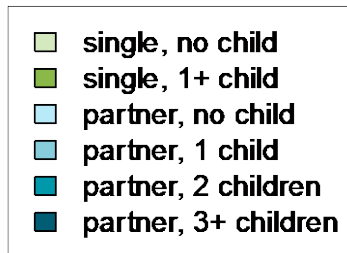
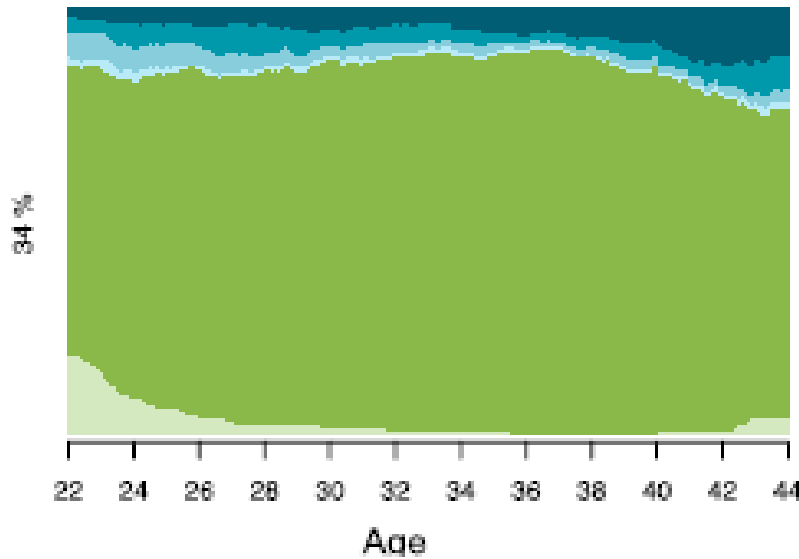
# Example family life course type for Black women

## Early single parenthood



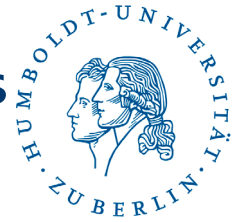
- single, no child
- single, 1+ child
- partner, no child
- partner, 1 child
- partner, 2 children
- partner, 3+ children

# Work-family life course type: Early single parenthood & unstable low prestige work

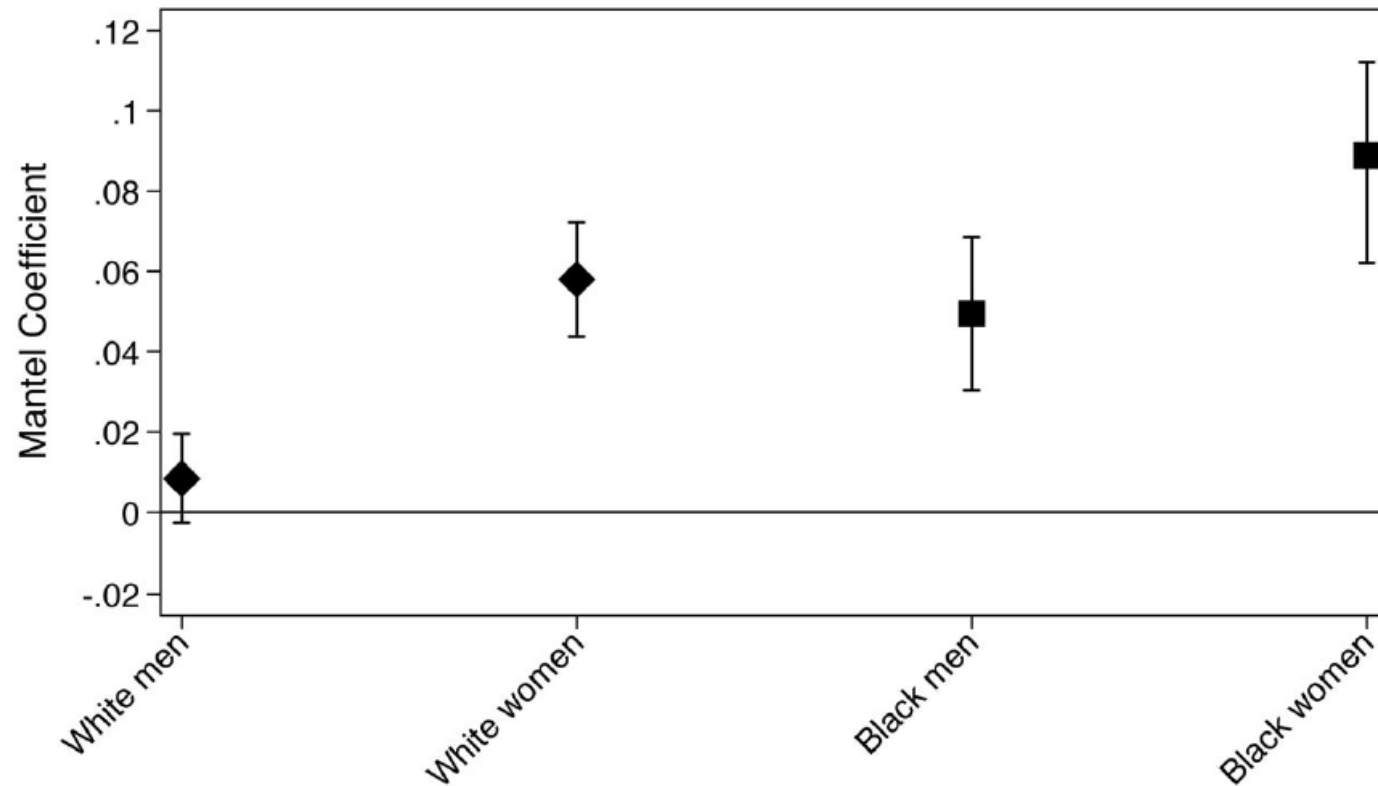




# RQ 1) Interdependence between work and family lives (as expected)



**Figure 1. Mantel coefficients on the degree of work-family interdependence.**

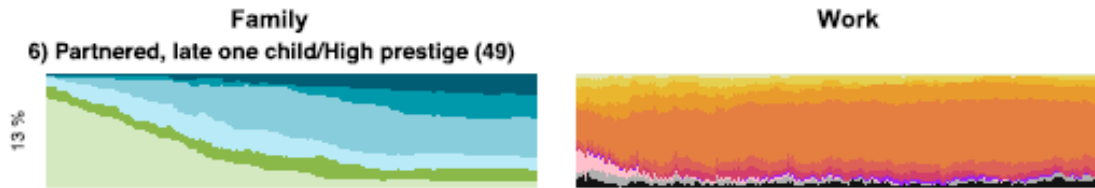


Note: 95% Bootstrap confidence intervals based on 100 repetitions

# Black men



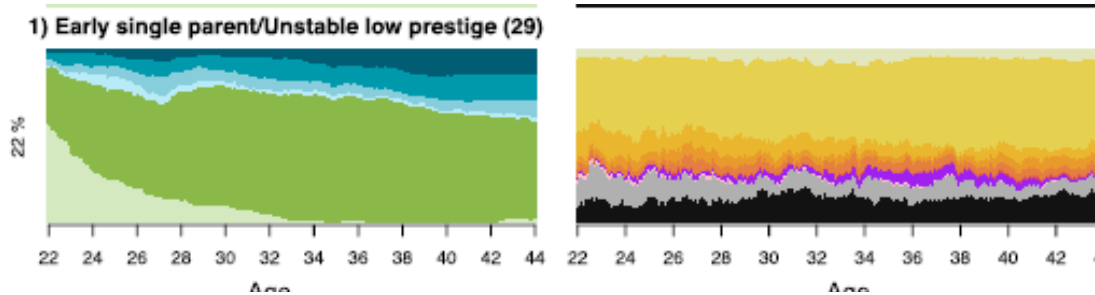
Figure 3. State distribution plots of six clusters of family (left) and work (right) life courses for Black men (view in color, cluster average prestige score in parentheses).



Mutual support hypothesis (19%)

Instability spill-over hypothesis (22%)

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

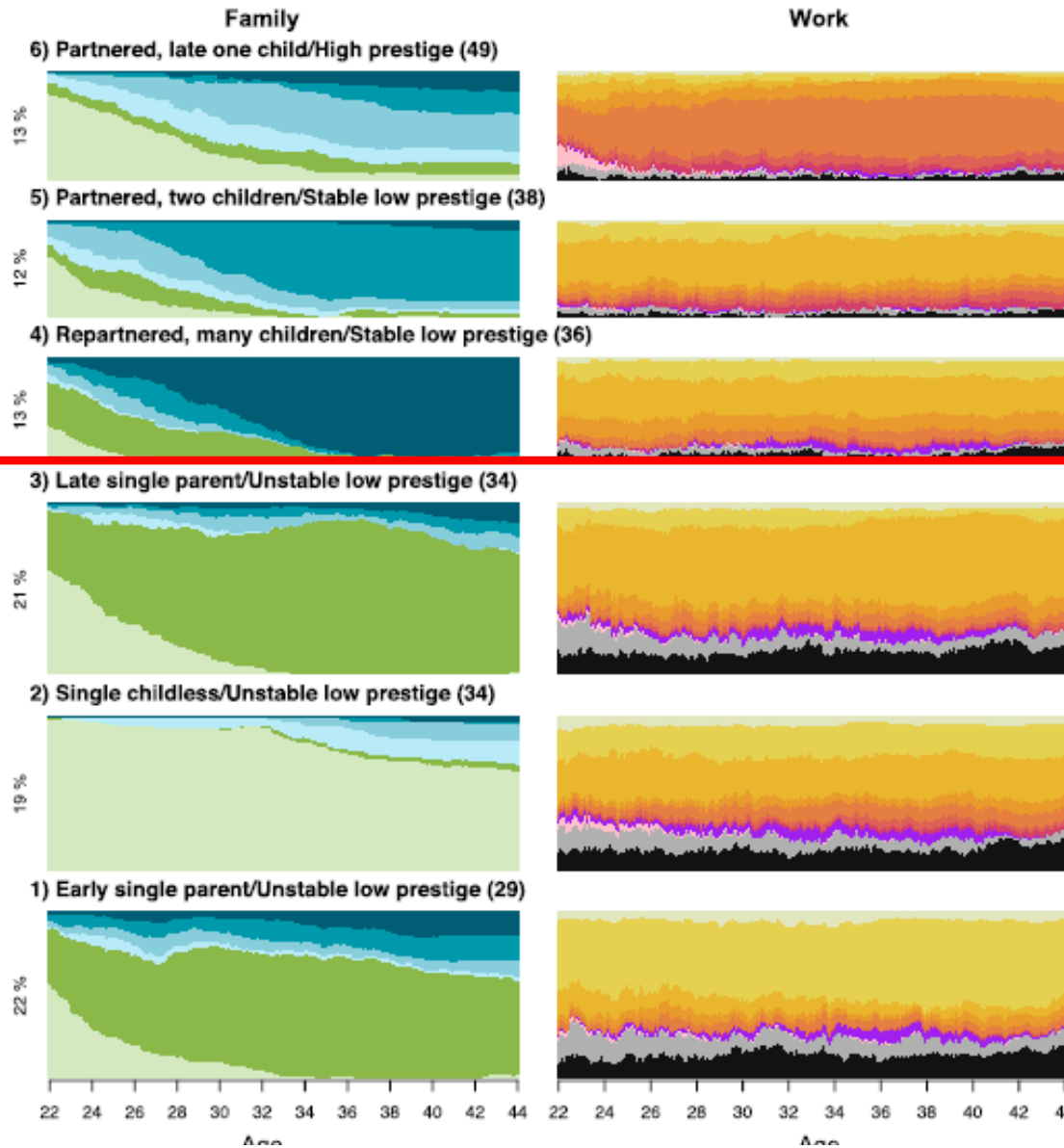


- 10/19
- 20/29
- 30/39
- 40/49
- 50/59
- 60/69
- 70/79
- parental leave
- education
- military
- unemployed
- gap/out of LF

# Black men



Figure 3. State distribution plots of six clusters of family (left) and work (right) life courses for Black men (view in color, cluster average prestige score in parentheses).



62% unstable  
low prestige  
work & single  
(fathers) by age  
44

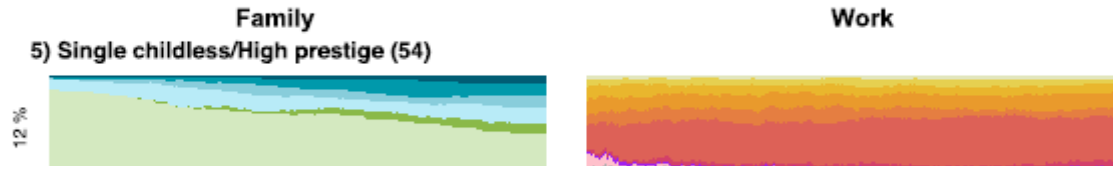
- single, no child
- single, 1+ child
- partner, no child
- partner, 1 child
- partner, 2 children
- partner, 3+ children

- 10/19
- 20/29
- 30/39
- 40/49
- 50/59
- 60/69
- 70/79
- parental leave
- education
- military
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# White women



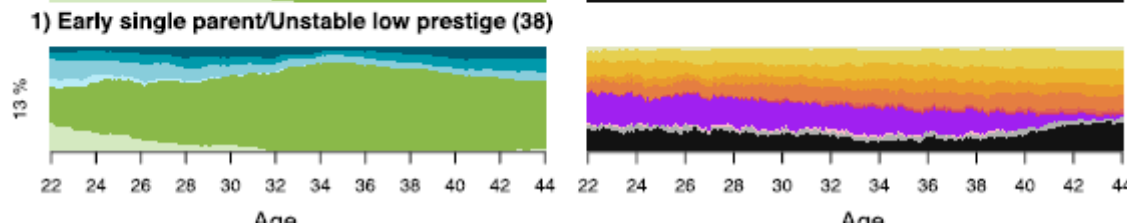
Figure 5. State distribution plots of five clusters of family (left) and work (right) life courses for White women (view in color, cluster average prestige score in parentheses).



competing alternatives hypothesis (12 %)

Instability spill-over hypothesis (13)

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

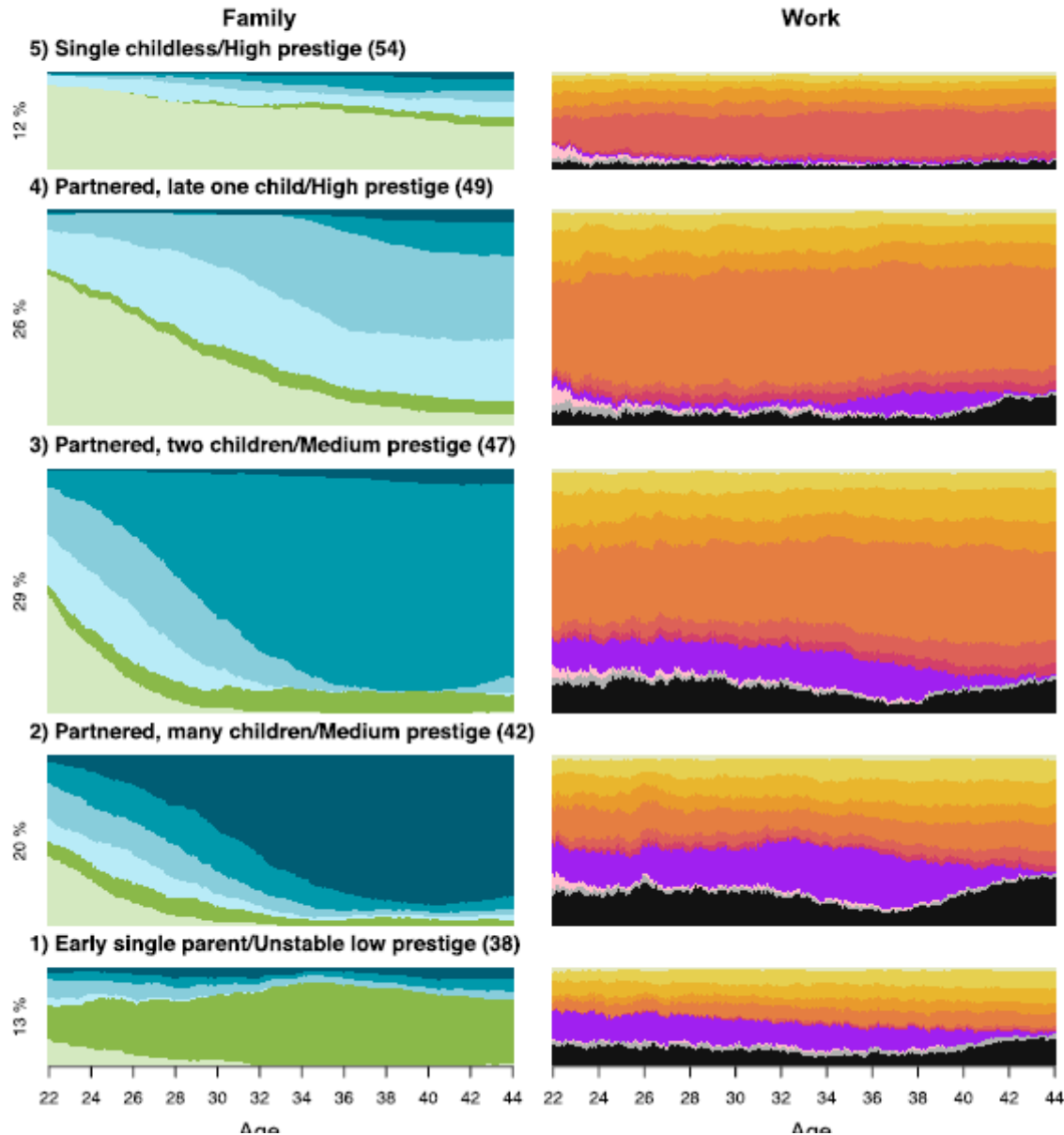


- 10/19
- 20/29
- 30/39
- 40/49
- 50/59
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- parental leave
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- gap/out of LF

# White women



Figure 5. State distribution plots of five clusters of family (left) and work (right) life courses for White women (view in color, cluster average prestige score in parentheses).



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

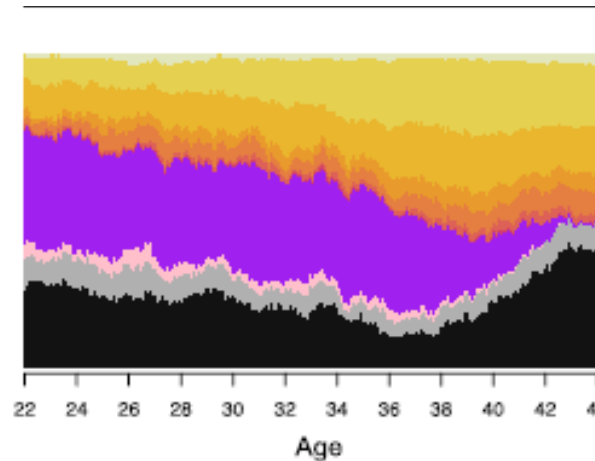
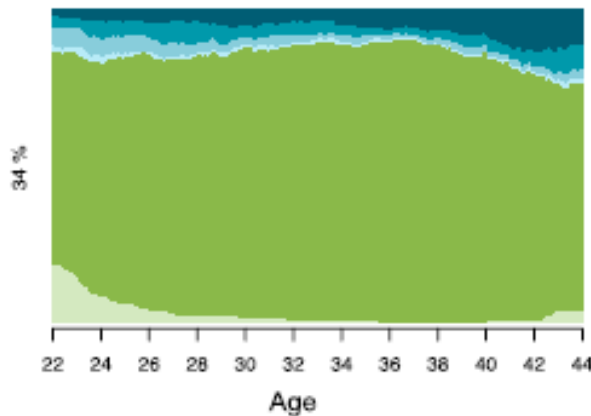
# Black women



## Instability spill-over (34%)

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

1) Early single parent/Unstable low prestige (34)

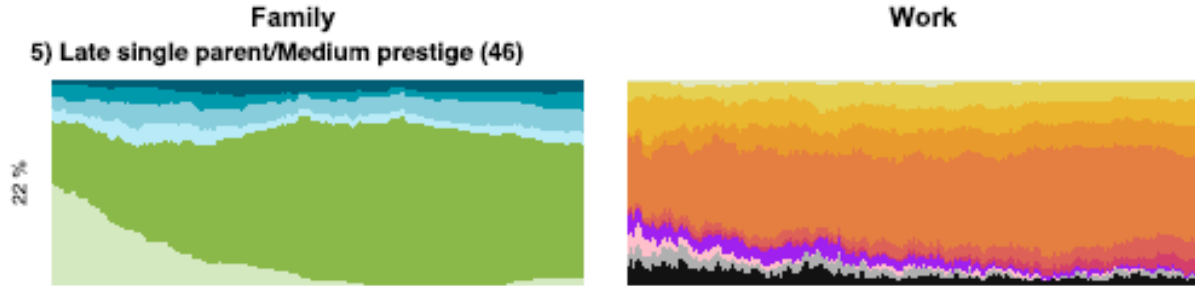


- 10/19
- 20/29
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# Black women

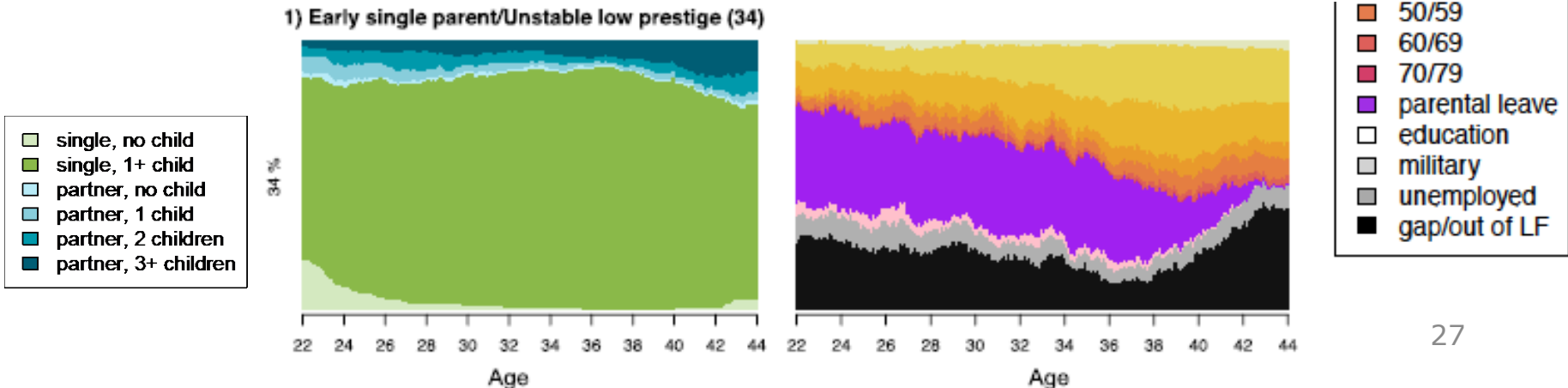
Figure 4. State distribution plots of five clusters of family (left) and work (right) life courses for Black women (view in color, cluster average prestige score in parentheses).



No very high prestige careers among Black women in sizeable numbers (tokens in society)

Single parenthood & stable middle class careers

Instability spill-over (34%)

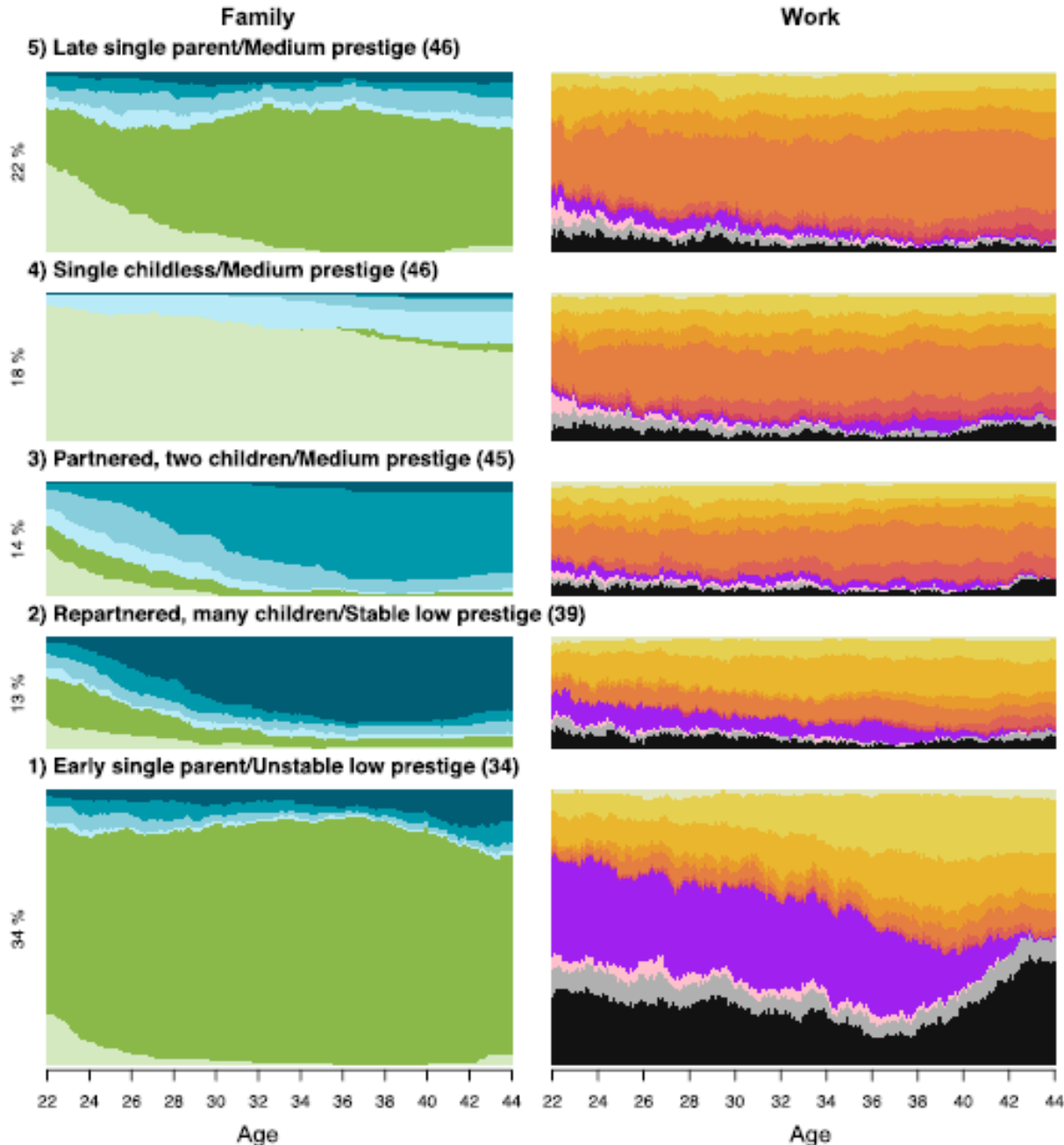


# Black women

Figure 4. State distribution plots of five clusters of family (left) and work (right) life courses for Black women (view in color, cluster average prestige score in parentheses).



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



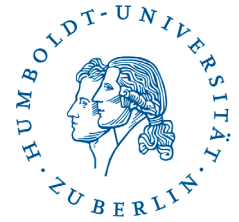
# Summary



For **White men** advantages and disadvantages in work and family lives are largely unrelated – they don't always get what they want, but “can have it all” to some degree.

For **Black men** parenthood in stable partnerships and high prestige careers mutually sustain each other - for the lucky few (19%). Black men with unstable low-paid jobs remain unmarried (62%).

# Summary

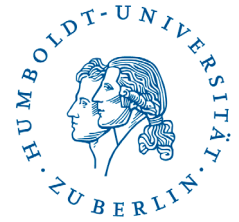


For **Black women** very high prestige careers do not occur in sizeable numbers at all (tokens). Parenthood in stable partnerships and high prestige careers are **competing alternatives**, occupationally most successful black women are unpartnered with or without kids (40%).

For **White women** high-stakes careers and motherhood in marriage are competing alternatives, unless they enter “good jobs” **before** motherhood and have the means to outsource care.

**Instability spillovers:** low prestige careers and single parenthood (34% Black women, 22% Black men, 13% White women)

# Myths or facts about combining work and family?



- 1) “Stable careers and single parenthood can’t be combined” – **Myth** for black women
- 2) “Black men have unstable careers” – **Fact** for 62 percent and they remain unmarried and do not cohabit with partners.
- 3) “White men can have it all” – **Fact**, in principle.
- 4) Women can’t have a family and a career, women have to “choose” – **Myth**, timing in the life course is key: family and a career can be combined, if marriage and motherhood is postponed until after completing education and securing high occupational positions

# Implications



Previous research often focuses on “socially problematic cases/poor” neglecting, for example, sizeable group of stable middle class Black single mothers.

If women have children after attaining “good jobs” they can combine work and family → timing of fertility

Timing of fertility in the life course is more important for women’s careers than whether they are married or not.

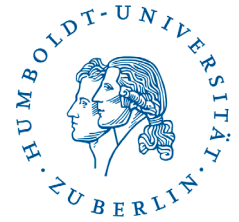
# Implications



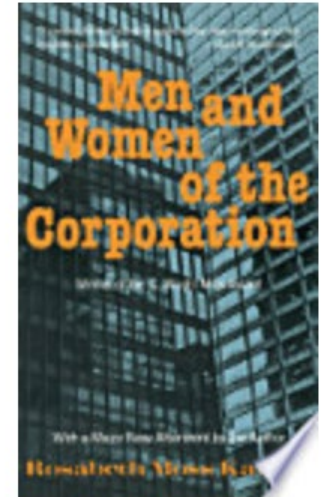
Sorting into specific educational tracks and occupations early in the life course drives much of the intersectional inequalities in work-family lives.

Many of the processes that generate intersectional inequalities in work-family life courses happen prior to entering “the corporation”

# Men and Women of the Corporation



“Productivity, motivation, and career success, I proposed in 1977, were determined largely by the structure of organizations and **the nature of the social circumstances in which people found themselves**. Thus, observed differences in the behavior- and the success- of women and men had more to do with what they were handed by the organization than with inherent differences in ability or drive. **When men and women were dealt similar cards and given similar places in the corporate game, they behaved in similar ways. The problem, though, was that men and women rarely were dealt similar cards.**”



“Men and Women of the Corporation revisited: Interview with Rosabeth Moss Kanter”, *Human Resource Management* 1987



# Black men and women in the stratification system and welfare state



Black and White men and women are rarely dealt similar cards in initial economic starting conditions and this has long-term and enduring effects on their work and family lives

Structural opportunities in education and employment early in the life course drive a large extent of intersectional differences in work-family life courses.

# Black and White men and women in the stratification system and welfare state



Three key (structural) reasons for women's lower success in corporations (Kanter 1977):

- 1) Low **opportunity** positions with little prospect for upward mobility
- 2) Less access to **power**
- 3) If they make it, then in so small numbers that they are **tokens** with associated pressures and burdens

Applies also to Black men's and women's (and lower educated) White women's **position in society** and contributes to the observed differences in work and family lives.

## What to do?

“Instead of blaming individuals for “poor attitudes,” I proposed that we **fix organizations**. This would both help women and alleviate the productivity drain caused by any stereotyped roles or low-opportunity/low-power pockets in a company.”

“Men and Women of the Corporation revisited: Interview with Rosabeth Moss Kanter”, *Human Resource Management* 1987

**Fix “societies” and stratification systems:**

→ “education systems, labor market regulations, work, family and welfare policies.

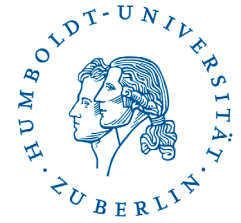
# What to do?



**Policy interventions** should target racial and gender inequalities in **economic starting conditions and economic opportunities** across the life course (parental background, education, hiring, promotion, jobs, and earnings).

Policies should not attempt to intervene in family lives (likely ineffective and normatively contentious).

Work-family equality only possible in low work-intensity, overall egalitarian societies? (Petersen et al 2014)



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