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Final Abstract

Childless at age 30

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Research issue to be addressed:

Since the mid-1970s, fertility decline in Finland has levelled off and total period fertility rate has stabilized around 1.7-1.8. A large part of the decrease of TFR can be attributed to the postponement of parenthood among younger cohorts. Maternal age at first birth has increased constantly, in Finland from about 23 in the beginning of 1970s to over 27 in 2000. Postponement of parenthood is believed to relate to individualization and modernization of societies, women's increasing labour force participation and educational attainment. Family formation and childbearing have become only one of options available for women.

Almost 80 percent of women born in 1950 had given birth to a child by their 30th birthday (Finnish FFS 1989). The proportion has decreased considerably, and in 2004, only about a half of 30-year-old women were mothers (Statistics Finland 2005). Although a large proportion of women still childless at age 30 will eventually bear children, increasing age at first birth is related to difficulties in conception and pregnancy, and childlessness is expected to increase in the future. However, later motherhood has become socially more acceptable, and an increasing number of women postponing parenthood past their 30th birthday can be expected to increase heterogeneity in the pathways of family formation. In order to understand childbearing of women aged 30+ and factors related to it, we need to look at what has changed in the group who chooses to stay/remains childless beyond the average age at first birth.

Data and methods to be used:

This study uses a sample of a Finnish register based data set 'PALAPELI' created by Statistics Finland. Original data set includes information on family formation, education, labour force participation and socio-economic status of the reference person, based on population and labour force registers. In this study we focus on female cohorts born between 1950 and 1970, and look at the composition of those still childless or those already parents at age 30 (e.g. at calendar years 1980-2000). Particularly, we look at the differences in educational level and partnership behaviour. In the analysis, we use very

crude measures (means, proportions, survival curves) to examine differences between childless/parents and between cohorts.