



The educational gradient of nonmarital childbearing in Europe:

Convergence towards a
“pattern of disadvantage”?

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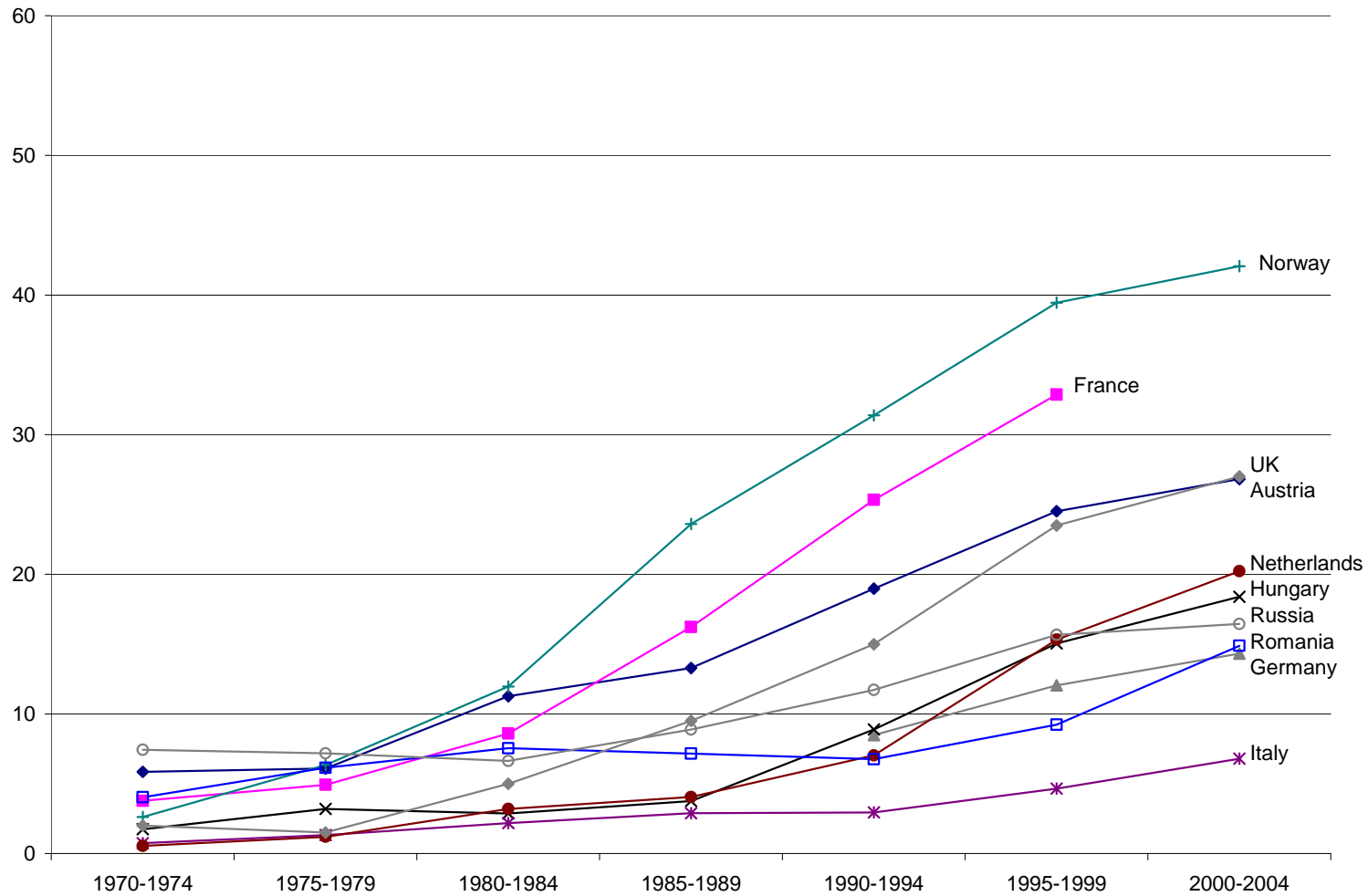
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The increase in childbearing within cohabitation





Educational Gradient

- A reflection of social strata
- A proxy for opportunities and resources
- Reflects different reasons for adopting a new behavior
- Association can change over time



Second Demographic Transition

- Childbearing within cohabitation is one of the key elements of the SDT.
- Ideational change - shifts in values, greater autonomy, and self-actualization (Lesthaeghe et al 2004, 2006)

“...new living arrangements...are the expression of secular and anti-authoritarian sentiments of better-educated men and women who held an egalitarian world view” (Lesthaeghe and Neidert 2006).

- Very little individual-level evidence for this association.



The Pattern of Disadvantage

- Historically, nonmarital childbearing (“bastardy”) was outside of social norms - “sexual nonconformism.”
- Social and feminist movements of the 1960s led to the liberalization of attitudes about alternative family forms and gave women the power to reject unsuitable marriage partners.
- The globalization and economic uncertainties of the 1980s-90s made it more difficult to achieve financial stability.
- Education became important in achieving success in the new global labor market.
- This led to postponement of marriage and fertility, and the increase of less stable partnerships, namely cohabitation.
- Marriage has remained a marker of prestige, a status symbol or a life goal (Cherlin 2004).



Pattern of Disadvantage

If cohabitation = uncertainty

Marriage = stability

Least educated = uncertainty

Most educated = stability

Least educated = cohabitation

Most educated = marriage

Relationship most pronounced at time of birth.



Pattern of Disadvantage

- Why do women with low education have children in uncertain relationships?
 - Poor women have children to create meaning in their lives, but their partners do not meet the financial and/or emotional requirements for marriage (Edin and Kefalas 2005).
 - Poor couples may not have the resources to turn their cohabiting union into a marriage.



Pattern of Disadvantage

- Childbearing to single and cohabiting women is associated with lower education in the U.S., the U.K. and Russia.
- Does the Pattern of Disadvantage explain childbearing within cohabitation across Europe?
- Social change has not been uniform across countries.
- Welfare institutions and social policies may mediate the impact of globalization and economic uncertainty.



Data

Country	Survey	Year	Age range interviewed	N women
Austria	Generations and Gender Survey	2008-09	18-45	3001
France	Generations and Gender Survey	2005	18-79	5708
Germany (West)	PAIRFAM	2008-09	35-38	1822
Italy	Istat, Famiglia, soggetti sociali e condizione dell'infanzia (GGS)	2003	0-104	21454
Netherlands	Fertility and Family Survey	2003	18-62	4736
Norway	Generations and Gender Survey	2007-08	18-79	6962
Russia	Generations and Gender Survey	2004	18-81	7019
United Kingdom	British Household Panel Survey	2005-2006	16-79	7846



Competing Risk Hazard Models

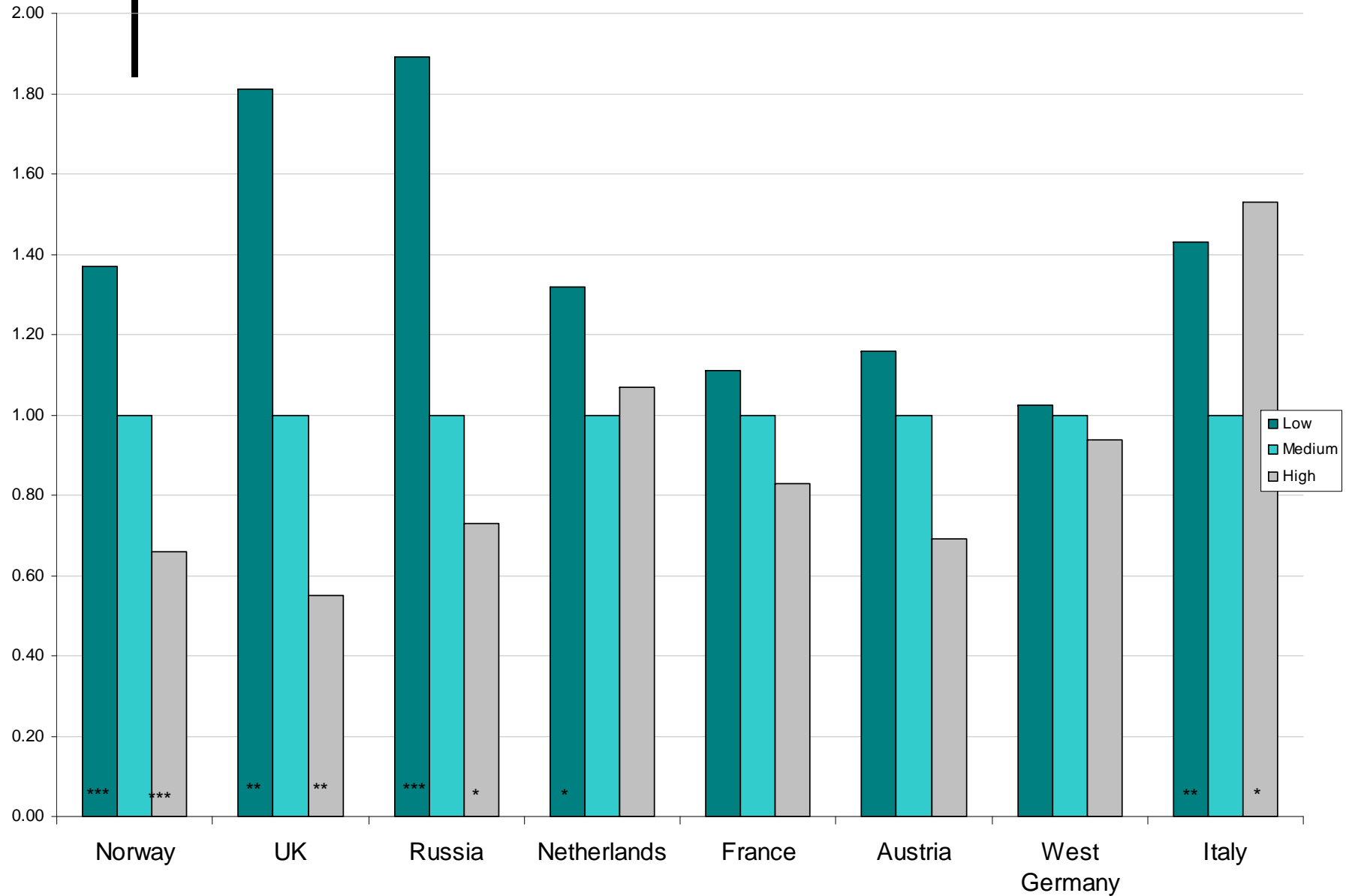
- Discrete-time multinomial logit models
- Four outcomes:
 - single, cohabiting, marital birth or no birth
- Education based on ISCED classifications:
 - low, medium, high
- In some countries, time-varying covariates for education imputed
- Period, school enrollment, age, age-squared



Relative risks of first birth by union status 1970-2004, reference category: no birth

	Austria	France	Germ. (W)	Italy	Neth.	Norway	Russia	UK
Single								
Low	1.73 **	1.56 ***	2.10 ***	1.59 ***	2.46 ***	2.05 ***	1.26	2.27 ***
Medium	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
High	0.31 *	0.72	0.36 *	0.48 **	0.75	0.63 **	0.61 ***	0.48 ***
Cohabiting								
Low	1.43 **	1.14	1.86 ***	2.07 ***	1.48 ***	1.33 ***	1.22	0.76
Medium	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
High	0.61 **	0.82 *	0.78 *	1.41	0.97	0.75 ***	0.60 ***	0.46 ***
Married								
Low	1.24 *	1.03	1.75 ***	1.45 ***	1.13 **	1.01	0.65 ***	1.25 *
Medium	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
High	0.89	0.98	0.72 ***	0.92	0.90	1.19 **	0.82 ***	0.87 *

Relative risks of first birth 1970-2004: cohabiting vs. married

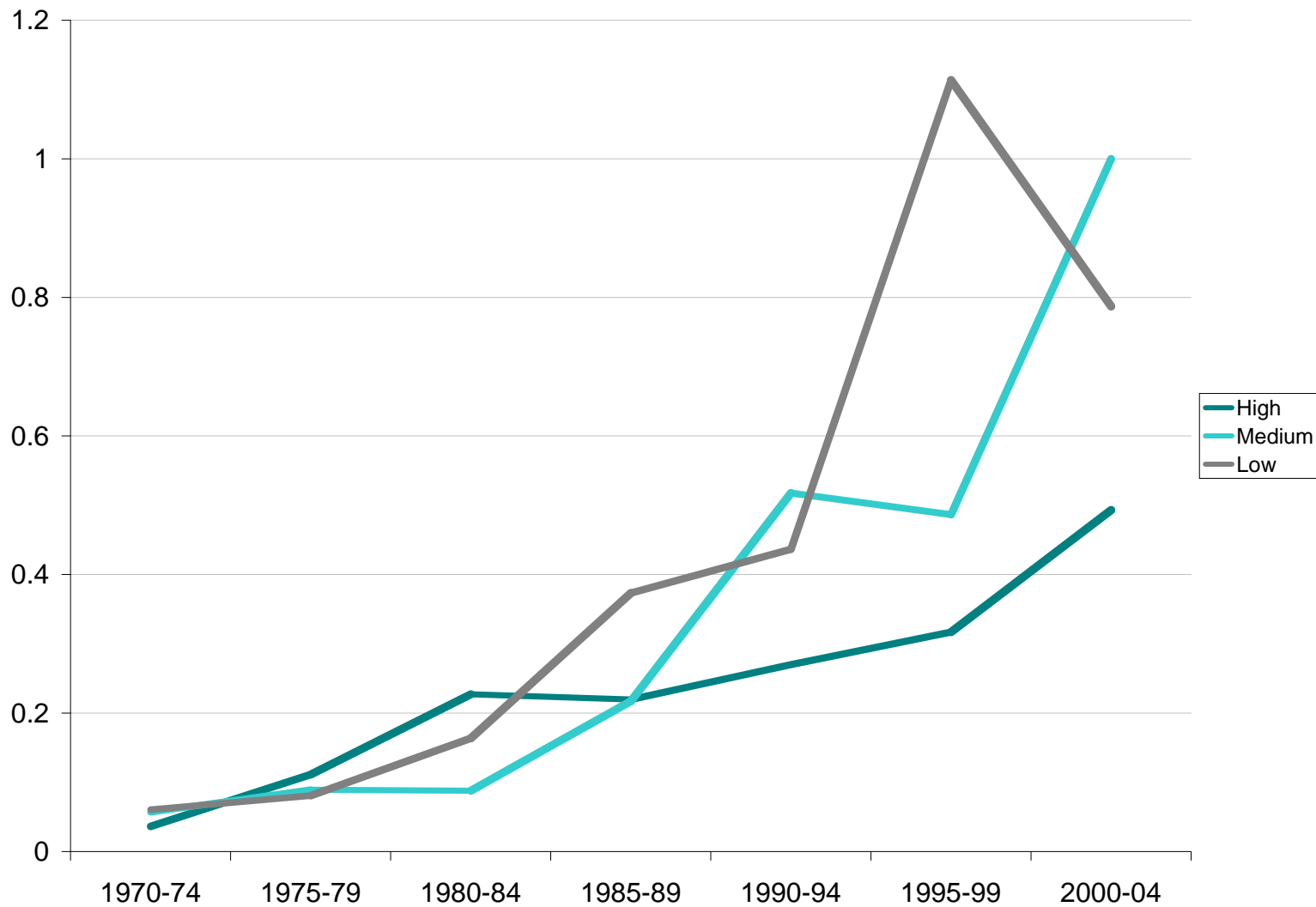




Interactions

- No consistent significant effects for period and education, indicating no change in association over time
- Except for France

France: Relative risks of first birth: cohabiting vs. married





Pattern of Disadvantage

- All countries exhibited a negative educational gradient for childbearing within cohabitation.
- When directly compared with marital birth risks, the negative educational gradient of cohabiting birth risks persisted in all countries except Italy, although the educational gradient was not significantly different in Austria, France, and Germany.
- In Italy, women with the most and least education had a relative risk of childbearing that was higher (compared to medium education) within cohabitation than in marriage.
- In France, the innovators appeared to be the most and least educated, but the least educated quickly overtook them.
- Innovators in the Netherlands may also have been the most educated.



Conclusions

- Intersection between childbearing and cohabitation is important for revealing social strata.
- Are these behaviors indicative of diverging inequality?
- Given that cohabiting unions are more likely to dissolve, can childbearing within cohabitation be considered a “problem”?
- Does the pattern of disadvantage at birth result in negative mother and child outcomes, or is this association mediated by welfare institutions and policies?
- Further research is needed to examine the role of institutions, policies, and culture.