Cross-national variation in the influence of parental socio-economic status on union formation decisions: What’s the SDT got to do with it?

Anne Brons, Aart C. Liefbroer & Harry Ganzeboom

2-4 December 2015
INTRODUCTION + CONTRIBUTION

- Young adults from high SES families delay their first union

- However, strength of the effect of parental SES on timing union formation varies between countries

- Which country level indicators can explain this between-country variation in the effect of parental SES?
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND (1)

Individualization

- Second Demographic Transition (SDT): in more individualized societies:
  - future chances of a child less dependent on parental background
  - Increased possibilities to make own choices in life, separately from parents

- Individualization varies between countries
  - Started in Northern & Western Europe, followed by Eastern & Southern Europe

- Impact of parental status on timing of union formation weaker in more individualized societies
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND (2)

Structural individualization

- Social-economic change in society
- Intergenerational educational mobility
  - Correlation between educational level of respondent and average educational level of parents

Cultural individualization

- Change in norms & values
- Individualistic values
  - Role of the family & intergenerational support
A weaker impact of parental SES in societies with (1) high level of mobility & (2) Low level of familialism

**Macro level**

**Micro level**

**Parental SES**
- Education & occupation of father & mother

**Individualization**
- Intergenerational mobility
- Familialism

**Union formation**
- First union

Young adults from high status families delay their first union
DATA & METHODS (1)

Data

- Third round of European Social Survey (ESS, 2006)
- 25 European countries
- N = 45,288

Dependent variable

- Age of entry into first union (including both marriage or cohabitation)
- Young adulthood: between the age of 15 and 35
DATA & METHODS (2)

Independent variables

- Parental socio-economic status
  - *International Standard Level of Education (ISLED)* (Schroder & Ganzeboom, 2014)
  - *International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (ISEI)* (Ganzeboom & Treiman, 1996)

- Macro indicators
  - *Intergenerational educational mobility*
    - Correlation parental education & individuals education per country
    - ESS round 1 – 6 (2002–2012)
  - *Familialism*
    - Intergenerational support
    - Two questions from European Value Study (2008)
Analysis

- Multilevel discrete-time hazard models
  - Person period file
  - Random slope for parental SES at the country level
  - Cross-level interaction between parental SES and macro indicators
  - Focusing on women
DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSES

Median age at entry of first union for women

- Ireland
- Spain
- Switzerland
- Netherlands
- Slovenia
- Portugal
- Belgium
- Germany
- United Kingdom
- Estonia
- Latvia
- Poland
- Cyprus
- Austria
- Norway
- Finland
- Russia
- Slovakia
- France
- Sweden
- Denmark
- Romania
- Ukraine
- Hungary
- Bulgaria
## RESULTS FIRST UNION FOR WOMEN

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Effect of parental SES

For example, Bulgaria & Portugal

For example, Estonia & Denmark
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INCLUDING OWN EDUCATION

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A weaker impact of parental SES in societies with (1) high level of mobility & (2) low level of familialism

**Macro level**

**Micro level**

**Parental SES**
- Education & occupation of father & mother

**Union formation**
- First union

**Individualization**
- Intergenerational mobility
- Familialism

Young adults from high status families delay their first union
FIRST CONCLUSIONS (2)

→ The context in which people live matters!

→ The impact of parental SES on timing first union is weaker in more individualized societies
  - High level of intergenerational educational mobility
  - Low level of familialism (intergenerational support)

→ Remains after including own educational level

Next steps

→ Macro indicators not only per country, also per cohort within countries
  - Extra level for cohort: both between- & within-country variation

→ First union vs first marriage
  - Different impact of parental SES on marriage?
Thank you

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PRELIMINARY RESULTS (1)

Effect parental SES on first union for women

* Controlled for age, age², age³, year of birth, year of birth²
Effect parental SES on first marriage for women

* Controlled for age, age², age³, year of birth, year of birth²
NEXT STEPS (2)

Results first marriage
- *Some countries stronger effect of parental SES on timing first marriage (for example, Spain, Portugal)*
- *Some countries weaker (or no) effect of parental SES on timing first marriage (for example, Norway, Sweden, Finland)*

So, **different impact of parental SES** on first marriage compared to first union

Maybe also different impact of country level indicators?