

*Divorce Conference:*

# Changing Stability of Cohabiting Relationships and Marriages Across Europe

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# Are Relationships Becoming More or Less Stable?

We know for many countries whether marital stability changed over the last decades

But, hard to interpret giving changing selection into marriage

Marital stability as a measure has become less indicative of the stability of long-term relationships

We therefore know very little about changes in the stability of long-term relationships over time

**Have relationships become more stable in Europe?**



# Theoretical Perspectives

## **Second Demographic Transition:**

Ever decreasing stability of relationships? Personal independence

## **Dependence within relationships:**

Decreasing stability of relationships as women's dependence decreases

*But: Oppenheimer*

## **Adaptation to New Reality and Gender Equality:**

Eventual increases in relationship stability



# Under what conditions can we claim decreasing or increasing stability? (1)

## **Decreasing Stability:**

Decreasing Marital Stability, Decreasing Union Stability

## **Increasing Stability:**

Increasing Marital Stability, Increasing Union Stability

**Are there countries that fit these scenarios?**



## Under what conditions can we claim decreasing or increasing stability? (2)

### **Other Situations Require Assumptions**

*Increasing Marital Stability, No Changes in Union Stability*

*No changes in Marital Stability, Increasing Union Stability*

Stabilization if selection into marriage did not change?

*Decreasing Marital Stability, Increasing Union Stability*

*Decreasing Marital Stability, No Changes in Union Stability*

Destabilization if selection into marriage did not change?

***Increasing Marital Stability, Decreasing Union Stability??***

# *Data and Method*



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## **Data:**

National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 97

Birth cohorts 1979-1985; Aged 28-34 in 2013

## **Outcomes measured in:**

*1997 (ages 12-18):* Cognitive Ability, Substance Use, Delinquency

*2008 (ages 23-29):* Life Satisfaction

*2013 (ages 28-34):* Education, Income, Self-reported Health,  
Unemployment

N ranges from 6,112 to 8,850 depending on outcome studied

N = 4,806 once using constant sample

# Results

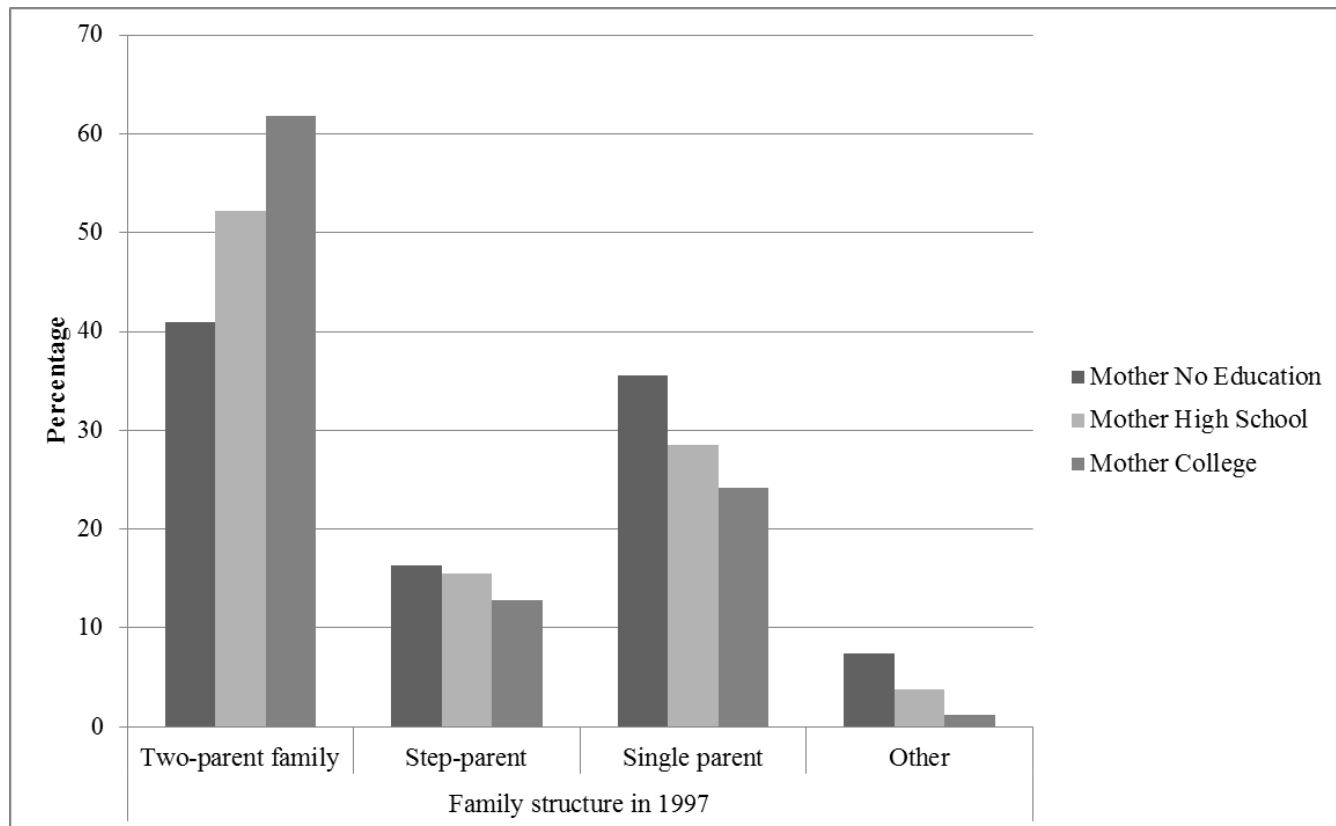


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# Family Structure According to Maternal Education



# Conclusion



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**Whereas family structure is related to outcomes at the individual level, its effects on socioeconomic background differences are nihil**

Small Role When Explaining Gaps In Unemployment and Life Satisfaction

**Is heterogeneity in effects the only reason?**

Do we have observable family characteristics that do manage to explain socioeconomic background differences in education, cognitive ability and income?

# Gràcies.

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