

**The Diffusion of Cohabitation among
Young Women in Europe**

A long-term longitudinal analysis

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Abstract

Exploiting the potential of the retrospectively collected data from FFSs, this article analyses the process of the *diffusion of cohabitation* in Europe and discusses its impact upon fundamental changes in the process of family formation. The analyses make use of highly dynamic statistical modelling that take into account both changes occurring along the life course (individual biography) and across birth cohorts of individuals (generational change) in a comparative perspective. Results show that the level of practice with pre-marital cohabitation has grown unevenly across European countries in the last decades, and that differences still persist in the take up of this practice. Empirical evidence is also offered, which supports the hypothesis that a diffusion process of this new practice is underway, and that the mechanism driving the change is linked more to peer-examples than to intergenerational transmission in an early stage of the process.

Introduction

In the last fifty years, we have witnessed a profound transformation in the modes of family formation across Europe: increasingly delayed marriage coupled with extended period of living single or, in the Southern countries, by a prolonged stay in the parental household, non co-residential partnerships (LAT - Living Apart Together) and the emergence and spread of cohabiting unions. Of these recent changes in western societies, cohabitation is undoubtedly the one with the most rapid spread and the most extensive reach. While at the beginning of the 1960s marriage was almost a not questionable option for forming a new family everywhere in Europe, in only forty years cohabitation has become a common alternative in most European countries, particularly among the younger generations. In the course of this change the meaning attached to cohabiting has also rapidly evolved (Axinn and Thornton 2000).

To a certain degree, cohabitation has today become a sort of substitute for marriage in that it has compensated, more in certain countries than others, for a progressively postponed entrance into marriage. In fact, the more informal cohabitation allows for a generally earlier entrance into a partnership. Moreover, across birth cohorts, the timing of cohabitation has delayed to a much lesser extent than that of marriage (Nazio 2004). However, there are still dramatic variations in the take up level and social meaning of cohabitation from one country to another in Europe (Manting 1996; Kiernan 1999 and 2000). In the most Southern regions of Europe, cohabitation is still a rare phenomena, wherein only a small minority of the population adopt it. These are typically selective parts of the population which have a specific convenience in more informal partnership forms: secularised, educated and working young people living in large urban areas, or, in the case of Italy, living in the northern parts of the country. In many Central European countries, like West Germany, Austria or the Netherlands, cohabitation has converted to a socially accepted short-term prelude to marriage, into which is generally converted when couples desire or approach childbirth. In others, such as France, Great Britain, Finland, Norway or (the former socialist) East Germany, cohabitation constitutes a widespread alternative to marriage coupled with a high rate of extramarital births. Finally, in the Nordic Denmark and Sweden cohabiting is by far the most common practice, even as a family setting for having children, and both forms of union

have normatively and legally converged to such extent that the choice between the two seems to be solely a matter of young couples' private preference.

In this article we question the mechanisms driving the diffusion of cohabitation, and seek to understand to which extent different institutional contexts affect the rate and form of the diffusion process. Using longitudinal data from the Fertility and Family Surveys (FFSs) and individual level diffusion models, we study the spreading of cohabitation across women's successive birth cohorts, from a deviant to a widespread and accepted partnership choice. The model we propose is empirically tested on a selection of European countries: the social democratic Sweden, the conservative France and West Germany, the former socialist East Germany, and the familistic Italy and Spain. Due to data limitations, the analyses will be circumscribed to women only.

The article is structured as follows. In the following section we describe the mechanisms thought to drive the diffusion process. Section 2 discusses the expected effects of factors linked to the different institutional contexts. An empirical test of the variables used to test the hypotheses is described in section 3, and the results are presented in section 4. Our diffusion model aims not to establish the relative relevance of traditional explanatory factors against the indicators capturing the mechanisms linked to the diffusion process. On the contrary, results suggest that traditional 'structural' models are complementary, and required, to properly test hypotheses about diffusion processes (Strang 1991, Strang and Tuma 1993, Palloni 2001, Reed and Briere and Casterline 1999). The article concludes with a discussion of the main results in section 5. Here, we explicitly recognise that there can be more mechanisms affecting women's decision process in choosing to adopt cohabitation. We also stress the importance of not neglecting women's embeddedness in the social world because of the not negligible effect played by the diffusion process, through the example of others' previous adoptions.

1. Cohabitation as a diffusion process

In this study we are interested in the pre-marital adoption of cohabitation in the first partnership entered, by which we mean the beginning of a first co-residential

partnership of two individuals involved in a intimate relationship, instead (or before) their first marriage. *Diffusion* is conceptualised here as an individual level process where prior adoption of cohabitation before entry (if ever) into marriage alters the probability of cohabiting for the remaining singles, thus potential adopters, in the population (Strang 1991, Palloni 2001, Montgomery and Casterline 1993, Durlauf and Walker 2001). Diffusion theory identifies diffusion processes by four key elements (Rogers 1985): an innovation (in this case the practice of pre-marital cohabitation), channels of communication by which information about the innovation is spread through the social system (e.g. direct or indirect interpersonal contacts, or the mass-media), time along which the innovation is adopted or rejected (relative speed in the rate of adoption), and a pool of potential adopters (in the case of cohabitation a highly dynamic set, constituted by a succession of births cohorts of young people of different ages, up to their decision to enter a first union).

In this article we show that individuals' assessment of 'costs' and 'benefits' attached to the decision to cohabit is endogenously related to beliefs about others' attitudes and intentions. When choosing to adopt an innovative behaviour, young people face uncertainty about their future conditions and the expected outcomes of their choices. This uncertainty makes them willing to draw information from their environment (Palloni 2001, Manski 1993a and forthcoming, Durlauf and Walker 2001, March and Olsen 1979, Strang and Soule 1998). The previous experience made by others conveys the desired information about the rationale, expected consequences and 'appropriateness' of cohabitation. From a diffusion perspective, the adoption of cohabitation is influenced (also) by the way in which the same choices have been previously taken by other individuals in the same situation (Strang 1991, Strang and Soule 1998, Coleman 1990, Granovetter 1985, Granovetter and Soong 1983). Decisions to cohabit are thought to interact with and reinforce each other. Indeed, when cohabitation is widespread, little stigma, moral or reputation costs are attached to it.

1.1 The mechanisms: peer group and pre-cohort adoption

A key element in a diffusion approach is the identification of the set of 'significant others' whose behaviour is thought to affect the individual's propensity to cohabit (Palloni 1999 and 2001, Casterline 2001, Strang 1991, Greve and Strang and Tuma

1995, Strang and Soule 1998, Manski 1993b and 2000, Coleman and Katz and Menzel 1967). Indeed, young women faced with the decision to cohabit, may draw information and example from the experiences of their peers or from the action chosen and outcomes realised by past cohorts. As time goes by, people grow older and witness and increasing rate of cohabiting unions. Moreover, each successive birth cohort of women will be confronted with a cumulating bunch of previous experiences from both previous cohorts and peer groups, which are being cumulated over a longer period. As we have shown elsewhere (Nazio and Blossfeld 2003), the complex time-related structure of this specific diffusion process suggests two mechanisms through which informative and normative contents about cohabitation are conveyed: knowledge-awareness (measured by *pre-cohort adoption*) and direct social modelling (measured by *peer group adoption*). The first is operationalised as the cumulative rate of practice with cohabitation among the adopters from previous birth cohorts, irrespective of their age, across time. This mechanism points to how every new birth cohort of young women, when they begin to be exposed to the risk of forming their first partnerships, and along with their growing older, will be exposed to increasing levels of cohabitation in the general society, in line with the development of the diffusion process. The rising incidence of the new practice will be associated with a better knowledge and understanding of it, and thus to an accumulation and dissemination of abstract information, which in turn brings about an increasing general acceptance and formal regulation. Later birth cohorts will then experience cohabitation as less deviant (or stigmatised) and more socially accepted right from the beginning. Strang and Meyer (1993) term the information that helps people to understand the new private living arrangement of non-marital cohabitation as 'theorisation'. The two authors suggests that the better theorised an innovative practice is, the less its diffusion will need to be relationally structured. Indeed, an easily communicated, eventually legitimate new behavioural model would require less persuasion and reciprocal sense-making than a practice that is hard to comprehend and motivate. Theorisation shapes and accelerates diffusion in that it 'translates' new practices in abstract general models and causal relationships, and thus renders them clearly framed, salient, familiar and compelling to potential adopters (Strang and Soule 1998). Interpretative frames and 'theorised models' that promote diffusion can be accomplished by previous adopters through promulgating (their own) experience with cohabitation, as by any other agent commenting on the cultural and social change associated to increasing adoptions. In the case of theorised

models of behaviour, the degree of influence will depend upon how compelling these interpretative frames are in the eyes of future decision makers. A better knowledge of the existence of cohabitation through mass media information might also create motivation for its adoption (Hornik and McAnany 2001, Gantz and Krendl and Robertson 1986, Kaufer and Carley 1993 and 1996). In this respect the dissemination of 'knowledge-awareness' on cohabitation can foster new adoptions as well as vice versa.

The second mechanism, *peer group adoption*, is operationalised as the cumulative rate of practice with cohabitation amongst the peers of a potential adopter, across age. The peers, most similar for belonging to the same birth cohort and sharing the same age along the same cultural and historical conditions, should constitute a particularly valuable concrete example of the new practice. This mechanism should act as a sort of 'vicarious trial' (see Strang 1991, Kohler 2001, Bernardi 2003), through which young women can indirectly 'experience' how similar others fare with cohabitation. It is not necessarily operated through direct interpersonal contacts, but it rather relates to the perception of the behaviour 'proper' to the occupants of an individual's position (we refer to 'structural equivalent' others, see Burt 1987, Cialdini 1984, Strang 1991). We hypothesise that this is a comparatively more powerful mechanism in the initial phase of take up of the new practice, where a reinforcing influence might be needed to overcome the stigma associated to a innovative behaviour, given the presence of conflicting standards or behavioural models. In fact, abstract information about the existence, acceptability and rationale of cohabitation may not be sufficient for its adoption in practice. In particular at the beginning of the diffusion process, adoptive behaviour is highly susceptible to reinforcement influences (Bandura 1971 and 1977, Bandura and Ross and Ross 1963). In the case of cohabitation, at the beginning of the diffusion process strong normative pressure and traditional role models have to be overcome, the legal framework does not recognise emerging behaviours (i.e. might not entitle to mortgage, welfare provision, tax-payment relieves, and/or may not rule entitlements in case of loss of partner or break up) and the practice may be stigmatised. We thus hypothesise that, at the beginning of the diffusion process, knowledge-awareness about the experiences of previous cohorts should have a rather small or negligible impact on the spread of cohabitation, and increase its effect at later stages.

Hp. 1: We expect 'peer group adoption' to have a positive effect on the diffusion of cohabitation. This effect should be particularly strong at the beginning of the diffusion process. The positive effect of 'pre-cohort adoption' should be comparatively smaller and rather (if at all) more influential at a later stage of the diffusion process, when a general level of social acceptance has already been reached.

But the choice of when to enter a partnership, and then between cohabitation or marriage, is also nested within a variable set of resources and constraints affecting individual's agency. These factors are tied to different institutional contexts and depend upon (changing) individual characteristics. We argue that increasing levels of uncertainty about future prospects make the more flexible option of cohabiting a relatively more advantageous choice for young people (Oppenheimer 1988 and 1994, Blossfeld et al 2005). In this respect the diffusion process is fuelled by a specific interest, an increasing demand and an increasing acceptability of the new practice; this latter brought about by the progression of the process itself. It is worth reminding that the diffusion of cohabitation is also a highly complex time-related process where potential adoption is typically confined to a specific window in the life-course, across which transits a highly dynamic population of potential adopters over time (Nazio and Blossfeld 2003). This peculiar characteristic of the process highlights the need for a dynamic model, which can take into account that both individual and contextual characteristics change along life-courses and across birth cohorts.

2. The institutional contexts

As we briefly mentioned in the earlier section, the prevalence of practice with cohabitation, element envisaged by a diffusion account, is not the only factor affecting individuals' decision to adopt it. The choice to engage in an innovative behaviour is also dependent on the degree of its perceived convenience with respect to other alternative choices. While being influenced (whether consciously perceived or not) by others' example, individuals' considerations about cohabiting take into account the structure of opportunities and constraints set by their respective (and changing) normative and institutional contexts. In each country, there are different sets of incentives and obstacles for the individuals about when (and how) to leave the parental family (Jurado

Guerrero 2001), and when and how to enter a partnership (by marriage or cohabitation). The literature distinguishes several domains where social mechanisms can influence the relative easiness in the choice made between living as a single person, cohabiting or marrying (Blossfeld 1995, Klijzing and Corijn 2002, Marini 1985, Blossfeld and Nuthmann 1989, Huinink 1995 and 2000, Corijn and Klijzing 2001, Blossfeld et al 2005). With respect to partnership formation, previous research has shown that the readiness of young women is influenced by institutional characteristics of the educational and employment systems (Blossfeld 1990, Corijn 2001a).

In the following sections, we discuss in more detail the role played by (2.1) the general normative context, (2.2) the effect of a widespread educational expansion, (2.3) the different labour market circumstances for young women, (2.4) the characteristics of the housing markets, (2.5) the influence of women's paid employment and finally, (2.6) the different legal frameworks that regulate cohabiters' reciprocal entitlements and obligations in each country.

2.1 The normative contexts

The range of appropriate and tolerable behaviours with respect to family formation are defined at the societal level by the general normative context of a society. During the process of behavioural change, the normative and cultural context determines the suitable social and economic circumstances under which young people can enter either a marriage or a cohabitation. With regard to cohabitation, beside family cultures and traditions as defined and perceived at the individual level, social norms can operate at the level of the *nation*, religious *communities*, and *local systems* (Rogers 1985).

With respect to the national level, in societies with more traditional family norms, such as Italy or Spain, we expect to be a particularly strong inertial force in the early process of diffusion of cohabitation. As Strang (1990) shows, practices that match with cultural understandings of appropriate and effective action tend to diffuse more quickly than those that do not. This is because the opinion leaders are usually a distinct group of individuals from innovators (see also Castiglioni and Barbagli and Dalla Zuanna 2003), and thus may resist the spread of information or oppose its acceptance. In 'familistic' countries, characterised by a stronger interdependence between family members, there

might also be a more pronounced ‘generational’ resistance to change, where resourceful parents exercise more control over their offspring’s innovative behaviours. As a result, the society should remain comparatively traditional over a longer time. Here, given the higher mismatch between the new practice and the traditional culture, innovators are expected to tend to hide or under-report cohabitation more frequently and to have a harder time to catch the attention of mass media so as to get their experiences disseminated through these channels. We thus expect that, especially at the beginning of the diffusion process, cumulative pre-cohort adoption of cohabitation should be a quite limited force for further diffusion in societies with traditional family systems. Cohabitation should therefore, if at all, further diffuse primarily along horizontal networks of specific innovative peer groups. However, if such innovative groups are not effectively connected to outsiders (i.e., if there are no “strengths-of-weak-ties”, Granovetter 1973), they are unlikely to transmit their experiences to broader groups, so that a failure of the diffusion process of cohabitation might even occur.

With regard to the normative structure of societies, the contrast between East Germany and the other countries is another interesting case for this diffusion analysis. The German Democratic Republic was, in fact, a political system that normatively opposed social change. In this former-communist country the whole public system, politicians and bureaucrats, as well as the mass media in general did not promote social change. This normative structure should therefore have created barriers for the dissemination of knowledge-awareness and fostered a cultural climate resistant to diffusion. In contrast, the situation in France, Sweden or West Germany has been different, in that the capitalistic economy, the society in general, and the mass media in particular, have generally been oriented towards social and economic development. We therefore expect the rate of cumulative *pre-cohort* and *peer group adoptions* to have a smaller effect on the diffusion of cohabitation in East Germany than in these countries.

H_p 2: *Given their more traditional cultural contexts, we expect to find a stronger resistance to the diffusion process in the Southern countries; we also expect the diffusion mechanisms to show a comparatively lower strength in the case of East Germany, because of the stronger control on the information, and the higher resistance to change in this former socialist political system.*

A second relevant normative context with regard to cohabitation is the degree to which people are *religious*. With ‘religiosity’ we refer here to a (self-defined) feeling of being religious, independently from the religion professed. It is known that cohabitation is incompatible with Roman Catholic values of marriage (Wu 2000). We therefore expect that in this cross-societal comparison, religiosity should have a particularly negative effect on the diffusion of cohabitation in the Catholic Italian and Spanish societies. On the other hand, in an atheist society like the (former socialist) East Germany, religion was not normatively relevant and therefore should not have a strong effect on cohabitation. West Germany should have a position in the middle between East Germany and the Southern countries, being a country with mixed religious affiliations and a lower degree of religiosity. For France and Sweden it was not possible to test any hypothesis because no question on religiosity was asked and an indicator is thus missing.

Hp. 3: *We expect religiosity to have a negative effect on the adoption of cohabitation.*

Social norms, values and traditions should also play a role in union decisions in case of the birth of a child. The event of a *pregnancy* is thus expected to influence the decision to enter a union for women in a relationship that does not entail living together with her partner (Blossfeld and Manting and Rohwer 1993, Blossfeld and Klijzing and Pohl and Rohwer 1999, Blossfeld and Mills 2001, Mills 2000). Single, pregnant women may indeed desire to offer their child the social and economic protection that accompanies a co-residential partnership. The higher degree of (legal) commitment required by marriage makes it be generally regarded as a more stable and guaranteed living arrangement than cohabitation. Therefore the strength of this pressure to enter a union is expected to be generally greater in the case of marriage than cohabitation (Goldsheider and Waite 1986, Brien and Lillard and Waite 1999). However, if a union is seen as the proper setting wherein to bear children, a pregnancy may accelerate the entry into a first partnership, especially, but not exclusively, marriage¹. Differences are expected between countries, depending on the meaning attached to cohabitation and

¹ Baizán, Aasve and Billari (2003) also argue that conversely, individuals more prone to have a child may accelerate the entry into a union, considering it as part of their family-building strategy. The authors thus claim that the time order of the events may not always [though often] reflect a causal relationship. They see a strong interrelation (in time and intentions of the individuals) between the entrance in a union and parenthood as being affected by individual’s value orientation and family plans.

marriage and on the legal frameworks that define and recognise rights and responsibilities of the parents, to each other as to their children. If cohabiting couples are no longer a restricted fraction of unions with a low level of social acceptance, being in a union might still be seen as an important precondition to bearing children, but there should be less pressure to marry rather than cohabit (Mulder and Manting 1994).

The effect of a pregnancy on union formation is expected to decrease after the birth of the child, since the pressure on the decision to enter a union has disappeared (Blossfeld and Manting and Rohwer 1993). It may, however, be that an intended marriage or cohabitation could not take place before the birth on various grounds, and it may thus spill over into some months right after the birth. In East Germany in particular, the effect is expected to continue in the period subsequent a birth, due to the entitlements reserved to unmarried mothers in the socialist part of Germany (see section 2.3). In traditional societies as well, the 'normative need' to raise children within a family may produce this effect post-birth, either because those who cannot (or choose not to) marry may want to 'look like' married by living together, or because the partner may move into the woman's (or man's) parents house once the child has been born, until the young couple can establish independently.

Hp. 4: *We expect an ongoing pregnancy to accelerate the entrance into a partnership. Its impact should decrease shortly after the birth of the child.*

The experience of a *parental divorce* should also affect partnership decisions since it reflects an unfavourable family climate (Clausen 1991, Corijn 2001b). Such an event may also question marriage as a long-binding commitment since the failure of a parental marriage constitutes an unsuccessful example. We thus expect that young women having brought up in a broken family to have a higher propensity to cohabit (and a lower to marry).

Hp. 5: *Parental divorce is expected to have a positive effect on the adoption of cohabitation.*

With regard to local systems, we expect ecological effects of *city size* and *region* (Lesthaeghe and Neels 2001). Small and medium sized cities should be more traditional with regard to family values. Cohabitation should therefore diffuse more easily in large cities than in medium ones, and in medium cities more than in small ones, at least in the initial phase of the diffusion process. There might also be differences with regard to region in various countries. For example, it is well known in the literature, that regional differences in countries like Italy are quite pronounced (Billari and Kohler 2002, Castiglioni and Barbagli and Dalla Zuanna 2003). The South of Italy is much more traditional with regard to religious and family values than the northern parts. Moreover, in the South of Italy there is a long tradition of the escape of the young couple from the parental families for a few days (*'fuitina'*): an extremely short period of cohabitation (often under familial control) aimed at forcing a subsequent marriage or at reducing the costs of a marriage, then only seen as a necessary 'remedy' to preserve the bride's honour (Barbagli 1989). In the empirical analysis, these differences are controlled.

Hp. 6: We expect large urban centres to favour the diffusion of cohabitation more than small cities. We also expect the young women living in the more traditional regions of the Centre and, especially, the South of Italy to have a lower propensity to cohabit.

2.2 Educational expansion.

In Europe, a major change affecting the transition to adulthood has been educational expansion, which has resulted in two consequences. First, it has dramatically increased the duration of *educational participation* of young people, in particular young women (Shavit and Blossfeld 1993). With respect to partnership formation, since attaining an education involves a high degree of economic dependency and makes it difficult to adopt long-term binding family roles like marriage and parenthood (Marini 1985), educational expansion has led to an increasing postponement of the transitions to partnership and parenthood across cohorts. Completion of education is an important step in the normative (and economic) conception of the transition to adulthood and thus becomes a significant marker for family formation. We therefore hypothesise that finishing school has a positive effect on women's adoption of cohabitation. However, since cohabiting is less binding and more

flexible than a marriage it should be easier for young women to enter cohabitation as an “interim” strategy when they are still at school (Wu 2000), especially where students’ economic and residential independence is strongly supported, as in the case of Sweden.

We also expect the positive effect of completion of education on the rate of women’s entry into cohabitation to be smaller in the case of East Germany, where educational participation was not incompatible with family formation and where educational attainment quite straightforwardly determined job placement and position. In the former East Germany, occupations in the labour market were highly structured along educational and vocational certificates (Konietzka and Solga 1995, Solga and Konietzka 1999), provided less room for occupational mobility, and income differences were rather small in the occupational structure (Szydlik 1994). As a result, a postponed entry or a temporary withdrawal from employment would not have strongly harmed women’s career prospects, thus creating little reason to postpone family formation. Furthermore, policies made it easier to combine child-rearing activities with paid employment due to a much higher provision of public day care and women-tailored working schedules, so that educational participation should not have been particularly at odds with family plans and prospects (Kreyenfeld 2000).

Secondly, since more highly qualified young people postpone the beginning of family formation longer, there is a growing probability that they will then quickly ‘catch up’ the delay after leaving school (Blossfeld and Huinink 1991; Blossfeld 1995). Thus, if in the analysis the ‘postponement’ effect produced by a prolonged educational participation is controlled, we expect that with the increasing level of education, women’s rate of entry into cohabitation should increase.

Hp. 7: Educational expansion is expected to translate into a dual effect. We expect women’s enrolment in education to produce a postponement of entry into a cohabiting union (negative effect). This effect should be weaker in Sweden and East Germany. Educational attainment should instead produce a positive effect (due to the ‘catching up’ after an increasingly prolonged postponement), once enrolment is controlled.

2.3 Women’s employment and increasing uncertainty in the labour markets.

A parallel profound change affecting family formation in Europe since the sixties has been women's increasing participation in the labour market. However, despite women's growing investments in human capital and new job opportunities, the responsibilities for social reproduction have still remained disproportionately in charge of young, working women (Borchorst 1994c, Olstner 1994, Olstner and Lewis 1995). Saraceno (1992 and 2003a) stresses how women solve this 'double-burden' conflict between ('their') care responsibilities and paid job with lower average working hours than men, coupled instead with an overall longer time spent in paid, plus unpaid work (see also Hochschild 1989, Finch and Groves 1983, Arnalaug 1990, Zighera 1992). For this reason, it becomes relevant the national-specific degree to which women's paid employment is hindered by domestic and caregiving responsibilities, along with both marriage and, even more markedly, childbirth (Orloff 2002, Jenson 1997, Lorber 1994, Picchio 1992). This is especially the case of the Southern countries where, despite the new generations of women increasingly combine paid with unpaid work (Hochschild 1989, Daly 2000a, Marin Muñoz 2003), they still withdraw from employment when marry and especially for child-rearing (Saraceno 2003a).

Spain and Italy distinguish as the countries with the highest female unemployment rates (overall and youth unemployment, also relative to men's rates), accompanied moreover by the lowest women's activity rates. France, Sweden and Germany contrast instead for the higher proportion of part-time employment among women (see also Rosenfield and Birkelund 1995, Fagan and Rubery 1996). These crude measures already reflect how, due to their commitment to caring responsibilities and reproductive duties, women are far more likely than men to limit (interrupted employment or inactivity) or reduce (part-time) their participation in paid work, as to concentrate on more 'women-friendly occupations' (i.e. the service sector) (see also Jenson and Hagen and Reddy 1988). Indeed, a large share of women's integration into the labour market has occurred in the service sector, through their employment in the reproductive and caregiving occupations, namely healthcare services, education and welfare (Esping-Andersen 1993, Ungerson 1997). Italian and Spanish women are consistently less often employed, enjoy less flexible working-time arrangements and suffer more from unemployment, than their German, French or Swedish counterparts.

Women's lower attachment to the labour market, part-time and interrupted employment create different circumstances for women and men with respect to current economic status and dependence on others' familial (most often the partner's) source of income. Firstly, women's lower attachment to the labour market undermines their capacities to claim employment-based benefits in the present and in the future (pension entitlements are especially affected by interrupted work careers and periods of low income, see Hansen and Larsen 1994, Palme 1990, Quadagno 1988, Hernes 1987, Sainsbury 1994, and Sheiwe 1994 for the German case). Secondly, it also translates into a higher economic frailty, which makes women more vulnerable to the risk of poverty and dependent on the protections offered by their family circumstances (a lower degree of *defamilisation*, Lister 1997, Saraceno 1997). Thus, the form of partnership they have entered –either cohabitation or marriage– can constitute very different settings for their future degree of protection against the loss of their partner.

Women's relative strength and continuity of attachment to the labour market thus suggests a bigger convenience for cohabitation in Sweden, France and East Germany (where job attachment is more continuous and protected and caring responsibilities are partly externalised) and a lower advantage in the South and West Germany (where women's activity is still low and her protection comes from the family, either that of origin or through her husband's employment, see also Daly 2000b).

Hp. 8: Since low activity and high unemployment means strong dependence on the male partner's income, we expect more convenience for Italian and Spanish women for the 'protection' offered by marriage. This effect is expected to hinder the diffusion process in the Southern countries, and it should be lower in the case of West Germany because of unemployment benefits and welfare protections. We expect no difference between working and nonworking women's willingness to adopt cohabitation in France, East Germany and Sweden.

Yet, what happens when young people's careers begin to be increasingly at stake? Employment opportunities have suffered from growing instability for both men and women among the young (Blossfeld and Mills and Klijzing 2005). This is due to several structural changes, which have occurred in the labour markets of modern

societies since the mid-1970s (Blossfeld 2000). These macro processes are closely linked with the rapid diffusion of new information and communication technology (Held and McGrew and Goldblatt and Perraton 1999) and made projections for the future more difficult and expected changes less predictable (Sennet 2001). Young people seem to feel the consequences of this growing uncertainty more directly (Mills and Blossfeld 2001). In fact, while young women are in a formative life phase where they have to make various long-term self-binding commitments (Blossfeld 2001), they are much more exposed to these changes because they are still unprotected by seniority and working experience. Based on these increasingly conflicting demands on young people, Oppenheimer (1988) interprets the increasing tendency among young adults to opt for cohabitation as a rational reply to growing uncertainty. Women's feelings of general economic insecurity may affect their decision-making, rendering women more reluctant to commit themselves to a long-term binding commitment such as marriage, thereby increasing the perception of a relative advantage entailed in a more flexible arrangement such as cohabitation.

Recent research has shown that uncertainty in early careers has grown particularly sharply in Italy and Spain (Blossfeld et al 2005, Blossfeld and Mills and Klijzing 2005). Italian young people have suffered the consequences of a progressive erosion of employment protection for new entrants into the labour market and from the persistent high rate of unemployment. These two features have contributed to the emergence of an insider/outsider labour market that, to a certain extent, overlaps with a cohort division: members of older cohorts enjoy permanent contracts and the strong employment protection guaranteed by the 1960s-1970s regulation, while younger cohorts of entrants in the labour market are more likely to be either unemployed or employed with fixed-term, precarious contracts. It is worth noticing that in Italy first job seekers and the self-employed are not eligible for any unemployment benefits (Dell'Aringa and Samek Ludovici 1996).

Since the fall of the regime in 1975, Spain has experienced a fast and intense process of modernisation, accompanied by a sharp increase (and persistency) in unemployment levels concentrated among women and youth (Maravall and Fraile 1998, Dolado and Jimeneo 1997). Here, in order to facilitate an increasingly difficult access to the labour market, since 1984 labour policies have introduced measures of deregulation and

flexibility in employment. This facilitated a first entry into the labour market but at the price of increasing instability and precariousness, which were not accompanied by targeted measures of social protection (Polavieja 2003, Simó and Golsch and Steinhage 2000, Simó Noguera, Castro Martín and Soro Bonmatí 2001). Thus, in Spain like in Italy the parental family remained the main institution responsible for supporting young adults until they reach an (increasingly later) economic independence (Jurado Guerrero 1995 and 2001, Naldini 2003). In fact, the government shifts the responsibility for the support of the young people to families and kinship networks (Saraceno 1994 and 1997 and 2003b, Esping-Andersen 1999a, Hobson 1990, Jenson 1997). This lack of defamilisation produces a postponement of young peoples' autonomy from their parental families and herewith indirectly hinders the diffusion of cohabitation among the younger generation. Thus, In Italy and Spain, the growing economic uncertainty of young people, coupled with the still low women's integration into the labour market and the rigidities of the housing market, should translate into a barrier for the diffusion of cohabitation as well as for one-person households among the younger generation (Jurado Guerrero 1995).

In Germany, the deregulation of the labour market was firstly introduced in the form of fixed-term contracts, in 1985 by the Employment Promotion Act (Beschäftigungsförderungsgesetz). Kurz and others identify a phase of difficult labour market prospects in Germany all during the 1980s, followed by an upward trend from the end of the 1980s up to the early 1990s, and by a tightening of the conditions for labour market entrance and establishment in the 1990s again (Kurz and Steinhage and Golsch 2001). In West Germany and France, where affordable housing is available for the young generation and female employment is almost universal among young women, cohabitation should turn out to be an increasingly advantageous living arrangement, which permits the postponement of a long-term self-binding decision such as marriage.

With regard to labour market uncertainty, the situation in the former East Germany was different in the 1970s and 1980s. In the period studied, the socialist German Democratic Republic was characterised by a comparatively high level of individual certainty and life course predictability (Adler 1997, Rosenberg 1991, Dahlerup 1994, Szydlik 1994). The favourable perspective of a secure and permanent employment allowed East German men and women to marry at comparatively younger ages (Huinink and Wagner

1995, Hullen 1998, Kreyenfeld 2000). Since the risk of unsubsidised unemployment did not especially threatened the East German women's envision of their future circumstances, we expect that the fact of being currently employed or not should have been quite an unimportant factor for the adoption of cohabitation or marriage in East Germany, at least up to the German unification.

Unemployment has been quite low (not exceeding 3.5%) in Sweden too, up to the beginning of the 1990s. Here, the rise in the women's participation in the labour market took place from the late 1960s and, despite strong gender segregation in the labour market, women's and men's participation rates have become very similar. Previous results have shown that in the Swedish dual-earner society uncertainty relates more to women's first entry into the labour market or inactivity during the early phase of a working career. In Sweden, it is a lack of attachment to the labour market, more than unemployment, which results in a lower propensity to start a first union for women (Bygren and Duvander and Hultin 2001). It follows that the effect of being employed before the formation of the first union is expected to have a positive effect on entry into cohabitation, it being the most common form of union.

Hp. 9: Employment uncertainty is expected to increase the relative advantage of cohabitation in France, Sweden and West Germany. It should have no effect in the former-socialist East Germany, and is expected instead to hinder the diffusion of cohabitation in Italy and Spain.

2.4 Affordable housing: the rental markets and home ownership.

Housing is a basic asset for establishing a co-residential partnership, thus has a strong impact on partnership decisions (Ermisch and Di Salvo 1997). Household formation also depends on the conditions that determine the relative convenience of rental vs. purchase of a dwelling. The decision to take a partner might be postponed when couples cannot afford to buy a house and there is scarce availability of houses for rent. Besides, the relative convenience of cohabiting as opposed to marry is strongly influenced by the size of investment and degree of commitment required by the rent or purchase of a dwelling, depending on their length and on the potential legal entitlements and

obligations originated. Buying a dwelling involves a consistent shared long-term financial investment and represents (both psychologically and financially) a long-term binding commitment that is not only better disciplined in a marital contract, but is also highly inconsistent with a flexible and reversible arrangement as cohabitation (Baizan 2001). Moreover, when familial financial aid is required for young people to afford the purchase of an autonomous dwelling, the decision to marry may be influenced by the greater willingness of parents to help in the case of a marriage (Barbagli and Castiglioni and Dalla Zuanna 2003).

Especially in Italy and Spain, the lack of alternatives to the buying of a dwelling, in combination with the prevalence of a more traditional view of the family, mutually reinforce each other in the making of marriage a more convenient option for young people. Here, an extremely high incidence of home ownership was the product of institutional characteristics, which made not convenient renting a dwelling, whereas favouring the investment in housing purchase. The most important of which have been the functioning of the housing and credit markets, the (lack of) effective housing policies and social housing, and the role played by family support (Saraceno 2003b; Tosi 1994; Rafòls Esteve 1998; Baizan 2001). Thus, a major barrier for the diffusion of cohabitation in southern Europe has been the difficulty with which young people could establish themselves in the housing market. Given also the extended educational participation and growing difficulties on the labour market, more and more young people therefore stay longer in the parental home (Billari and Ongaro 1999, Billari et al 2001 and 2002, Jurado Guerrero 2001, Aasvee and Billari and Ongaro 2001). In other words, in Italy and Spain living longer in the parental home while striving for a secure position in the labour market and saving for the purchase of a dwelling seems to be more advantageous compared to its alternatives (living single, cohabitation, or formal marriage). We witness indeed to a comparative later departure of southern European women from the parental home and its close connection with partnership formation (through marriage for the far greater majority, Bernardi and Nazio 2001, Simó Noguera and Castro Martín and Soro Bonmatí 2001). Quite differently in France, Sweden, West Germany and to a smaller extent East Germany, the time span between the acquisition of an autonomous residence and the formation of the first partnership is much longer (see also Hoem 1995, Blossfeld and Rohwer 1995, Leridon and Toulemon 1995).

In West Germany, France and Sweden, as in other countries of Northern Europe, a significant increase in the number of single households and cohabitation has been observed when young people are attending or have just completed their education (Kuijsten 1996). In other words, finding independent housing seems to have constituted no particular hurdle for these young people, being it financed through parental support, own (part-time) work or with the help of subsidies of the welfare state (Bygren and Duvander and Hultin 2002, Galland 1997, Corijn 2001b). We therefore expect that in these countries starting informal cohabitation in an independent flat has been comparatively easy, so that the relative advantage of cohabitation compared to marriage should have been substantial.

Women can leave the parental home for entering a partnership or for living as single persons. Their decision can be driven by a desire of independence or be linked to reasons pertaining to other life course domain (i.e., pursuing a specific education, entering a job). Having reached residential independence from the parental family is expected to have two positive effects on the diffusion of cohabitation. First, living apart from the parental family lowers social control, especially important in the first phase of the diffusion process when the behaviour is still stigmatised or barely accepted. Those women who live longer in the parental home may be more traditional and/or more exposed to the norms and values of their parents. On the contrary, living alone implies more autonomy and freedom from the parents (Goldscheider and Waite 1986). Second, it signals having already overcome housing obstacles, such as the rent or the purchase of a dwelling. For this twofold reason *living single* is expected to have a positive effect on entry into cohabitation and should score particularly strong in the Mediterranean countries.

Hp. 10: Having acquired residential independence from the parental home ('living single') is expected to have a positive effect on the diffusion of cohabitation. Due to the much tighter conditions of the Southern countries' housing markets, this effect should be particularly strong in Italy and Spain.

2.5 Changing gender roles

Women's educational attainment and participation to the labour market has grown sharply in the last decades. Gary Becker (1981) claimed that as a result of women's higher educational investments and improved career opportunities, their earnings power would rise and lead to a decreasing gain from gender specialisation of work within the family. The shift from a single to a double breadwinner family would reduce the convenience of marriage for both sexes, undermine the stability of the ongoing ones (Wu 2000), and make young couples more cautious and reluctant to enter into a marital union. However, Becker's theory implies two contradicting expectations with regard to the diffusion of cohabitation. On the one side, we should expect an increase in the relative advantage of informal cohabitation as an interim or generally less-binding arrangement (Wu 1995). On the other side, women's growing economic independence and income potential should reduce the convenience entailed in any kind of union relationships, including cohabitation.

More specifically, Oppenheimer (1994) stresses how the traditional gender role specialisation also means that the small nuclear partnership is particularly vulnerable to the temporary (through unemployment, illness) or permanent (through separation, death) loss of a unique individual who provides an essential function – either at home or in the labour market. From this perspective, women's employment is more of an highly adaptive family strategy in a modern society, rather than as a threat to the union as a social institution (Oppenheimer 1977 and 1997). And indeed, women in non-marital and marital unions increasingly work, so that modern societies are progressively transformed from male breadwinner into dual earner societies (Blossfeld and Drobnič 2001, Daly 2000a).

However, in spite of this move towards equalisation, there are still significant aspects of traditional gender arrangements to be found in the new practices, for nowhere has the gender division of labour disappeared (Orloff 2002, Kemp 1994, O'Connor 1996). Still nowadays most women (and some men) face challenges in reconciling paid work and family life (Saraceno 1987a and 1992, Becker and Moen 1999). The depressing role of marriage on women's labour career in Italy is also confirmed by Bellotti (1993) and Bernardi (1999 and 2001a) and in Germany by Drobnič (Drobnič and Blossfeld and Röhwer 1999). Given the growing employment uncertainty and the delay in adjustment between the division of unpaid reproductive labour within the family and women's

working participation, it would be more rational for women to avoid or postpone marriage (and childbirth) rather than reduce their attachment to the labour market: being it withdrawing, lowering working hours or career prospects (Huston and Geis 1993). Outcome of this increasing pressure on women, given women's interest in family formation, should be young women's preference for cohabitation on the ground of a less established and more open gender role negotiation (Bernardi 2003).

New studies suggest that gender equality in the division of work within the household is greater if couples cohabit (see Huinink 1995 on West Germany). Yet, it is also known that on the contrary marital unions tend to reproduce in a few years a traditional division of labour between spouses (see for Germany Thiessen and Rohlinger and Blasius 1994). Thus (in particular working) women seem to have an incentive to cohabit instead of marrying. We then expect a general positive effect of women's labour force participation on the adoption of informal cohabitation. Particularly in Italy and Spain, there might be a more substantial relative advantage of cohabitation compared to formal marriage for working women, given the importance of the male-breadwinner family model and a comparatively traditional division of work within the family. On the other hand, in these countries a traditional marriage might still represent a form of perceived security for non-working women or for those who face difficulties in entering the labour market. Previous research has in fact shown that in Spain, where a marital union is still the prevalent option for gaining independence from the parental family, being in a non-working status enhances the transition to a first union for women, though this effect becomes smaller for younger cohorts (Simó Noguera, Castro Martín and Soro Bonmatí 2001).

In dual-earner societies, like the former East Germany, France or Sweden, women's gainful employment has been standard and the female partner's income has become a significant determinant of the living standard and the 'lifestyle' of couples and families (Blossfeld and Timm forthcoming). Under these conditions, women's labour force participation should have no effect on the rate of non-marital unions. In particular in Sweden, a forerunner country in Europe in terms of gender equality, no effect of women's employment is expected to influence the likelihood to adopt cohabitation.

Hp. 11: Especially working women are expected to perceive a greater relative advantage from cohabiting (positive effect), the more if they belong to a country with a traditional gender division of labour. However, this effect could be counterbalanced by the scarce degree of defamilisation, particularly in Italy and Spain. This effect should be much lower in dual-breadwinner countries, such as Sweden and East Germany.

2.6 Law regulations on cohabiting unions.

Among the countries analysed, in France and Sweden the legal context reacted most promptly to the societal change, incorporating and recognising cohabitation in the *legal framework* and making it an accepted alternative to traditional marriage (for an overview of the changes in family law see Glendon 1989, Ditch and Barnes and Bradshaw 1996, Millar and Warman 1996, Gauthier 1996). In Sweden, for example, cohabiting couples are treated the same way as married ones for the purposes of tax and social laws, though there is no legal duty to economically support the partner, and the rules relating to inheritance between spouses do not apply to cohabiters. However the legislation (specifically the ‘Cohabitees Act’, 1987) allows the surviving party to use and occupy the joint home in case of partner’s death, and it protects the survivor further by a special rule in the division of property (Saldeen 1995).

In France, informal family behaviour was already regulated in the Civil Code (1804), according to which, beside being granted a share in the couple’s belongings, a cohabitant who has been abandoned by his/her companion may obtain a compensation which resembles that of legal spouses in case of divorce. In the case of partner’s death, no inheritance rights for the survivor are granted (Glendon 1989). However, since 1948 different provisions entitle the occupation of the dwelling to a cohabitant who has been living in the premise for at least one year. Tax law does not take cohabitation into account, so that each partner is taxed as if he/she was single. Therefore the tax position may be more favourable for cohabiters than for spouses as far as tax deductions are concerned (Guimezanes 1995). In welfare law, cohabiters are instead often equated with spouses, and when parentage is proved, both parents have the same duty to maintain children as married parents.

In West Germany the protection offered by the 'Federal Constitution' (1949) to the institutions of family and marriage is denied when couples choose to cohabit and, in the absence of minor children, the relationship is not seen as originating a family. However, cohabiters are free to make private arrangements according to the general rules of the Civil Code on contract, property and succession. Thus, a weaker status for cohabiters appears when partners have failed reaching agreement on all issues or have not regulated their union. Two principles dominate the legal approach: protection of the institution of marriage and respect for the presumed intention of cohabiters to avoid legal consequences. These conditions still prevent informal union from acquiring a large number of legal effects (among which is a more favourable tax arrangement); and non-marital relationships are left free to develop in a way that in case of dissolution the weak and dependent part is more exposed (Glendon 1989). In 1991 an explicit reference to cohabitation (aimed at protecting marital rights) was made in the 'Federal Relief Act', by which relief payments to unmarried cohabiters are subject to the same reductions as the payments made to married couples (Graue 1995). Only in 2005, co-resident partners were made responsible for the economic support of their unemployed partner (Zweiten Buch des Sozialgesetzbuches (SGB II), 01/01/2005).

In Italy and Spain, even more drastically, cohabitation has not been given any legal recognition, and cohabiters have no mutual rights and duties to live together, to provide material and moral support or to be faithful. Cohabitation is thus seen as a free and unbinding relationship, which is terminable by either party at any time and in which each partner owns and disposes separately of any property acquired during cohabitation. In presence of children recognised by both partners, each has parental authority and the same rights and duties as with married parents, and they have to provide children maintenance and alimony. However, in Italy inheritance rights are recognised to children of unmarried parents as for legitimate children, whereas cohabiting partners have no legal obligation to pay maintenance or alimony to each other, nor succession rights exist under the Civil Code. Cohabitation contracts have only recently emerged, and are indirectly acknowledge by the Constitutional Court (Timoteo 1995).

In Spain too, cohabitation is not fully recognised or regulated and cohabiters do not have the same rights as married couples, nor special family proceedings are available in courts. Unmarried parents have parental rights and duties and since 1987

(1991 for Catalan Law) are allowed to adopt children. Cohabitors have neither reciprocal maintenance duties nor rights to widow's pension or succession on the death of the partner, but they may be entitled to social security benefits (e.g. health assistance) when living together with a person or child entitled to such assistance (Roca 1995; Alberdi 1993).

Given the existing legal constraints the choice not to marry means, on the one hand, to avoid the responsibilities and restrictions imposed upon married persons but, on the other, does not entitle to demands for protection and privileges connected with marriage. As described, these restrictions are more pronounced in Italy and Spain, followed by Germany, France and, at last, Sweden, where marital and cohabiting unions are made virtually alike. Given the legacies of a traditional division of labour within the family, where women are often still the main or sole responsible for the amount of unpaid reproductive work, such restrictions are seen to affect the diffusion process, enhancing (in southern countries) or reducing (in Sweden, France, East Germany and more ambiguously in West Germany) the degree of risk entailed for women in cohabiting unions.

Hp. 12: We expect legal frame of opportunities and constraints set by national laws to increase the advantage of cohabiting in Sweden, France and East Germany, whereas to decrease its relative advantage in Italy, Spain and to a minor extent in West Germany.

3. Models and variables

This cross-national comparative diffusion analysis is based on retrospectively collected life history data from the Fertility and Family Survey (FFS) project (Klijzing and Cairns 2000, Klijzing and De Rose 1999, Festy and Prioux 2002). These data bases cover 24 industrialised countries and provide internationally comparable data, compiled in Standard Recode Files (SRF) for each country (Klijzing and De Rose 1999). Six different institutional contexts are studied making use of the corresponding data sets: West Germany, East Germany, Italy, Spain, France, and Sweden. A common sample of women born between 1954 and 1973 is selected in each country, whose educational, employment, fertility and partnership histories were observed for each birth cohort from

age 15 up to an event of entry into cohabitation or, for right-censored cases, up to the date of entry into a marital union or the date of interview or age 39, whichever occurs first. We have chosen to treat East and West Germany as two distinct countries because of their different political history between 1945 and 1989.

These analyses use monthly time-varying controls at the individual level for: age, being enrolled in education (before leaving the educational system), changing educational attainments, being employed (against being unemployed or inactive)², labour force experience (cumulated number of months of employment since first job), an indicator about the presence of a not miscarried pregnancy (Blossfeld and Klijzing and Pohl and Rohwer 1999), and a control for the state of residential independence from the parental home (*living single* distinguishes the time after having left the family of origin). To introduce these time-dependent measures into the rate equation, we made use of the method of episode-splitting (Blossfeld and Hamerle and Mayer 1989, Blossfeld and Röhwer 1995b).

Several time-constant controls are also inserted: birth cohort, religious affiliation (not available for France and Sweden), region (in the case of Italy), the size of the locality where lived at age 15, and an indicator for having been brought up in a broken family (Clausen 1991, Corijn 2001b). In the following lines we will describe in more detail the variables used in the rate models.

We have made use of a combination of two variables to control for the well-known non-monotonic *age dependence* of the rate of entry into first marital and non-marital partnerships (Coale 1971, Bloom 1982). Accordingly, the rate of entering first union is expected to increase with age up to a certain point and then decrease (Lillard and Brien and Waite 1995). This approach assumes that women are at risk of entering first marriage or premarital cohabitation between the ages 15 and 39 and specifies the following two time-dependent covariates (Blossfeld and Huinink 1991, Blossfeld and Rohwer 1995a):

$\log(\text{current age} - 15)$,

$\log(39 - \text{current age})$.

² In the case of France, given the absence of a complete record of women's employment career where only information about the first and current job was present, the variable controlling for labour force

Religiosity is controlled through a dummy variable, which has the value ‘1’ if the woman declared herself as being religious. In many countries there has been a non negligible decline in organised religion and rise in secularisation (Surkyn and Van de Kaa 2002). Religion is generally found to be negatively associated with cohabitation, and positively with marriage (Thornton and Axinn and Hill 1992). However, the estimates of this variable should be interpreted with caution since this variable was measured at the time of the interview. A similar caution must be applied with regard to *region*, which in the case of Italy was also recorded at the time of the interview (the North is here the reference category).

We also used the variable *residence* at age 15, that makes a distinction with regard to the size of the urban centre: *rural* or up to 10,000 inhabitants is the reference category, from 10,000 to 100,000 is *middle-size city* and above is *large city*. These dummy variables are used to capture social control and the effect of urban contexts on the spread of cohabitation. Living in a more populated area affords more opportunity for alternative lifestyles and possibly, less social control (Glick and Spanier 1980). Whereas having been brought up in smaller or rural areas may result in a lessened exposure to innovative behaviours, and thus to a more traditional lifestyle or a lower tolerance to alternative living arrangements.

To study continuous changes across birth *cohorts*, we introduced a set of yearly-based dummy variables for the transition rate models. In the Swedish case, due to the sampling strategy adopted, only four selected birth cohorts were available.

In order to measure the accumulation of women’s qualifications in the general and university school system, we updated time-dependent dummy variables indicating *women’s educational attainment level* at specific school duration (see Blossfeld and Huinink 1991; Blossfeld and Röhwer 1995b). Educational attainment levels have been reconstructed along different educational careers on the basis of their average length and of the respective educational attainments achieved. This strategy is said to allow the production of valid, accurate and comparable indicators (Selden 1992). The upgrading

participation reports the status of being employed against never having worked. It follows that the coefficient for this variable cannot be directly compared with those for the other countries in the tables.

of the attainment levels is based on the successful completion of the corresponding level(OECD 1999). For facilitating the cross-country comparison, three educational attainment levels were distinguished in all the countries: *compulsory education* (reference category = 8 to 10 years of schooling), *secondary education* (11 to 13 years) and *tertiary education* (14 to 18 years).

Enrolment in the educational system was included by the time-dependent dummy variable '*enrolled in education*', which indicates whether or not a woman is still studying at a specific age. This variable is coded '1' while a woman is still enrolled in education, while switches to '0' from the time when she leaves the educational system.

With respect to the labour career, a woman's labour force participation is included with a time-dependent dummy variable indicating in each month whether she is *employed* (value '1') or not (being out of the labour force or unemployed) at a specific age. In the case of France, since not all the employment career was recorded, we only dispose of the information referred to the initial spell of their labour career and to their last one at the time of the interview. This forced to a different specification, whose result is the shift of the reference category from "not working" (either unemployed or inactive) to "never having worked" in the French case.

We also tested for the effect of the accumulation of *employment experience* thorough the life course, by the inclusion of a variable measuring the cumulated number of years of employment in all the jobs held until the beginning of the current sub-spell. This indicator does not reset at every beginning of a new job, and it holds constant (but positive) for periods of unemployment or inactivity between successive hobs. Though it is expressed on a yearly basis, it is measured and cumulated at a monthly level. This indicator is aimed at capturing the opportunities women face in the labour market and their degree of investment (length of attachment) to it. It was not computed for France.

In order to model the time lags between the effect of a not miscarried *pregnancy* and the entrance into a first union, a series of time-dependent dummy variables has been created. They are aimed at capturing the direct effect of the fertility career on that of union formation. Reference category are those periods before of a pregnancy. These

dummies are based on the entire fertility history of the women under analysis, before the entrance into a first union, and thus update at any subsequent pregnancy³.

The dummy variable '*Living single*' is constructed as a time-varying indicator of women's reached residential autonomy from the parental home. It takes the value of '1' starting from the month in which the exit takes place, and it is meant to capture, on the one hand, the effect of a greater independence and economic autonomy and, on the other hand, is used as an indicator of having overcome possible housing difficulties.

4. Results: a description of the diffusion of cohabitation

We present here the first empirical results with a description of the diffusion of cohabitation among young women across birth cohorts in the six national contexts under study. As discussed earlier, we are specifically interested in two different mechanisms driving the diffusion process: knowledge-awareness (measured as the cumulative experiences of older cohorts) and direct social modelling (measured as cumulative experiences of peers within the same birth cohort).

[Figure 1 around here]

Figure 1 describes the changes in *cumulative proportions of pre-cohort adoption* across age for the birth cohorts 1954-73 in five of the six countries. Unfortunately, given the sampling structure of the FFS surveys it has not been possible to compute these measures for Sweden. Having selected the same birth cohorts and having followed them along the same age-span, also means having captured the same historical period in each of the country studied: a period of around 25 years beginning the late sixties, up to the early nineties. The graphs reveal that during this period in France, East and West Germany each successive birth cohort of women encountered a higher proportion of prior cohabitation practice right from the beginning of exposure at age 15. This suggests that across birth cohorts there has been an increasing level of social acceptance of

³ Especially in the cases of East Germany and Sweden, cases of second pregnancies before a first union were not rare. This fact is interpreted as related to the specific institutional contexts.

cohabitation for each younger birth cohort. Along with increasing levels of practice, cohabitation can progressively be considered as a less deviant form of partnership. This trend continues to rise during the life course of each birth cohort of women, as it can be seen from the birth cohort trajectories (Figure 1).

Compared to these countries, Italy and Spain seem to experience a much slower diffusion process of cohabitation. Although there is also an increasing proportion of cohabitation practice, the differences between birth cohorts are not very marked and the increase of cumulative pre-cohort experience over the life course is almost negligible. In Italy *cumulative pre-cohort adoption* reaches its maximum at about 7%, in Spain at 11%, whereas in East Germany it reaches it at 36%, in West Germany at 43% and in France at 50%. This description suggests that in southern European countries, even for younger birth cohorts of women, the adoption of cohabitation is still an uncommon practice and it thus remains a sort of deviant behaviour.

[Figure 2 around here]

Figure 2 displays the *cumulative proportion of peer group adoption* for the same countries and birth cohorts, measured as the cumulative proportion of prior adopters within each birth cohort. Starting from zero, cohabitation is at first adopted in each birth cohort by the forerunners who might serve as an example. Then it is adopted at a rapidly accelerating rate with increasing age, gradually slowing down and finally stabilising at a specific level. As characteristic of diffusion studies, the resulting distribution of cumulative adoptions over age can generally be described as taking the form of an S-shaped curve. There are here again important differences in the shapes of the curve trajectories among birth cohorts and the overall levels reached by the younger cohorts in the six countries. The maximum cumulative proportion of peer group adoption is reached in Sweden with 87%, followed by France with 78%, West Germany with about 50% and East Germany with 40%, while Spain lags behind with 17% and Italy even further apart with about 10%. Thus, whereas in Sweden cohabiting seems having been a common option already for the women born in the early 50's, in Southern Europe the opposite is the case even for women born twenty years later. In fact, the steep of the slopes and the relative distances of the curves from each other displayed in Figure 2,

clearly indicate that the diffusion of cohabitation seems to be slower overall and somehow blocked in the south of Europe, at least until the early nineties.

4.1 Changing modes of partnership formation: the diffusion of cohabitation

Here below the main results of an exponential model with time-varying covariates are synthesised, where the adoption of cohabitation is framed in competing risk with the event of marrying. Two different models are shown in the analysis of the transition to a cohabiting union: a competing risks model for women's rate of entry into cohabitation (Table 1); and an individual level diffusion model for women, which explicitly incorporates theoretically important measures expected to drive the diffusion process (Table 2). Both models include controls for *age dependence* (see Blossfeld and Huinink 1991).

With regard to *educational enrolment*, we hypothesised that not having yet completed schooling has a negative effect on the adoption of cohabitation. In all countries this effect is indeed negative and significant, showing the incompatibility between being a student and the grounding of an autonomous family. However, the differences in the magnitude of this effect across countries are remarkable, and prove in line with the corresponding institutional contexts. This effect is lowest in Sweden, followed by Germany, especially in the former social-democratic East, where both normative expectations and lower economic dependence of student from their families made it easier to combine studies with family formation.

The effect of women's *educational attainment level* on the adoption of cohabitation is less straightforward. We saw that Becker's theory implies that women's growing economic independence should reduce the benefits of all types of unions, if and when they are based on a traditional gender division of work within the family. However, education does also imply a cultural dimension. Thus, we could also expect that women with higher educational attainment levels are more open to new behavioural models, and would therefore be more inclined to adopt new living arrangements. Furthermore, since cohabitation is often coupled with less rigid gender- role expectations (Huinink 1995), highly educated women should be more interested in adopting this type of arrangement. In sum, we can identify counteracting forces with respect to the effect of

educational attainment level on the adoption rate of cohabitation. Table 1 shows no clear linear pattern of educational attainment level. Overall, education seems not having any bearing on the adoption of cohabitation. Since the empirical results do not support either interpretation, further research might help the evaluation of these competing dimensions of education.

Only in Sweden working women seems to have a higher propensity to adopt cohabitation, where *being employed* is significantly positively associated with the rate of adoption of cohabitation (the effect for France is not strictly comparable). Spain is the only country displaying a significant negative effect (a similar result was already found by Simó Noguera and Castro Martín and Soro Bonmatí 2001), an element that may capture the particularly strong difficulties faced by young Spanish women in the early stage of their working career, and the long time required for establishing in the labour market (Polavieja 2003). In fact, both in Spain and Italy, the duration of attachment to employment accelerates entry into cohabitation and counterbalance this effect. These results suggest that the length of previous *working experience*, particularly in the Southern countries, may be the key factor that allows young women to engage in family formation. Here, staying longer in the parental home while cumulating a certain job experience seems to be the best solution for many young women. As expected, in socialist East Germany and in the countries that support women's autonomy through employment or welfare measures, there is no significant effect.

The effect of *religiosity* on the adoption of cohabitation is negative in all four countries for which this indicator was implemented and does reduce the adoption rate of cohabitation, especially in catholic Italy and Spain (see Table 1). We expected this effect to score negatively in West Germany, Italy and Spain, but not in atheist East Germany (where it approaches a low significance level). It therefore seems that religiosity, to some extent, is a good proxy variable for traditionalism, even in an atheist environment. As expected, the magnitude of the effect of religiosity is far greater in the Southern countries.

Having experienced a parental *divorce* has a positive effect in all the countries analysed. This is in line with the hypothesis that having had the experience of an unsuccessful marriage in the parental home supports the choice of a less binding union (see also

Corijn 2001b). An alternative explanation may also be that cohabitation takes place earlier among the daughters of divorced parents because they are seeking a source of relative emotional stability, but without incurring a marital commitment.

In line with previous results (Lesthaeghe and Neels 2001), we expected to find ecological effects depending on the size of the city to have a bearing on the adoption of cohabitation. Since bigger cities are less traditional with regard to family values, cohabitation was expected to diffuse faster among individuals brought up in larger urban centres. Table 2 shows that only in the more traditional environments of Italy and Spain is there indeed a positive effect of a large city of residence that supports this hypothesis. The results suggest that large cities exert significantly less social control and offer a broader range of tolerable behaviour with regard to new forms of family formation, and thus tend to favour the spread of innovative practices, especially in the early stage of the diffusion process. Opposite is case of Sweden, where in large (and medium-sized) cities, entrance into cohabitation is postponed, which points instead to the later stage of the diffusion process of cohabitation. In an environment where living single is the norm and where, for most people, entering a union means entering cohabitation, being brought up in an urban area somewhat prolongs the entry into a partnership.

Since regional differences are known to be very pronounced in Italy (Ongaro 2001, Billari and Kohler 2002), we introduced controls for region in the empirical analysis. Especially the South of the country was expected to be more traditional with regard to family values and norms of conduct. Accordingly, we found that women who live in the more traditional Centre of Italy or, especially, in the South of the country tend to adopt cohabitation less frequently than those living in the North (Table 2).

4.2 The interdependence between the union, residential and fertility career

An additional important result of this study is the empirical assessment of the strong interdependencies between events in the residential, union and fertility careers. Events on parallel careers, such finishing education, gaining residential autonomy from the parental home or experiencing a pregnancy, can significantly affect the likelihood to adopt cohabitation. Corijn (2001a) underlines how the process to residential

independence develops in a context of both socio-economic and cultural opportunities and constraints: residential autonomy requires financial resources to access to privacy and autonomy. For young women, the financial means to independence can come from different sources (or from their combination): the parental families, the welfare state or their own paid work. The amount and the origin of the resources necessary to undertake this transition are highly dependent on the national institutional contexts and on the characteristics of the housing markets (see also Aassve and Billari and Mazzuco and Ongaro 2002, Klijzing and Corijn 2001).

Consistent with the results of previous research, our analyses show that the transition out of the parental household is a key issue for women in the Southern countries. In Italy and Spain, differently from other European countries, the transition out of the parental home is still strongly connected with partnership formation (and very often with house purchase). The results of the multivariate analysis (Table 1) show that living single, an indicator of having already overcome housing obstacles and having reached some degree of economic autonomy, has everywhere a significant positive effect on entry into cohabitation. They also point at this effect being very much stronger in Italy and Spain. Having already exited the parental home rises the probability for young women to cohabit of around 20% in Sweden, 30% in East Germany, 40% in West Germany, 80% in France, while of more than 300% to 550% in Italy and Spain respectively (see Table 2). Moreover in these two countries (together with France) it is where pursuing higher studies proves to be particularly conflicting with union formation. Finishing one's education increases the probability to cohabit of more than two and a half times in Italy while it doubles it in Spain and France (Table 2). It follows that any measure directed to lower young people's dependence on their families would counteract the particularly late (and still delaying) residential independence and partnership formation in these countries. Our findings suggest that –especially in Italy and Spain– a more accessible housing market, coupled with a system of unemployment benefits and/or support for first-job seekers, could dampen the postponement of both transitions (to residential independence and to first partnership) and eventually make them more independent from one another, as it is for the other countries.

The estimates about the adoption of cohabitation (Table 1) also show a significant time-dependent effect of the discovery of a pregnancy on women's entry into a union (see also similar findings by Brien and Lillard and Waite 1999, Goldscheider and Waite 1986). This consists of one of the strongest predictors and is in line with the expectations that women may want to accelerate partnership formation not to have an out-of-wedlock (or out-of-union) birth in order to comply with social norms and expectations, as for offering their child a more secure family environment. This effect tends to be somewhat lower than for marriage (not shown, see Nazio forthcoming) and to spill over after the birth has taken place.

4.3 The diffusion process: mechanisms at play

A further important result of this study is that, surprisingly, with the exception of France, there is no autonomous partial cohort trend left on women's rate of entry into cohabitation, after controlling for cohort differences in educational participation and attainment levels as well as for women's labour force participation (Table 1). At a first glance this result makes it seem like no diffusion process would occur across cohorts, as the measures of pre-cohort and peer group adoptions suggested. However, a part from the trend towards secularisation and increasing divorce rates, none of the (significant) effects in the analyses can point to the influences responsible for the rising levels in cohabiting unions observed in Figures 1 and 2. Despite this, the results presented in Table 2 show that the diffusion process considerably affects the likelihood of cohabiting, which is mainly driven by peer-group influences in its early stage (insights for intergenerational mechanisms are only found at a later stage of the process). The measures of previous adoptions (diffusion covariates) seems to effectively capture an influential mechanism, since reintroducing controls for birth cohorts together with the *diffusion* covariates does not produce any further statistical improvement of the model. It also suggests that the lack of a cohort pattern observed in Model 1 was probably the resultant of two counteracting effects: the first of a progressive postponement of partnership across cohorts, and the second of a diffusion process that makes it increasingly interesting and easier to cohabit. The core finding of this study is thus that *cohabitation is indeed 'contagious' and that the shape of this influence varies across countries reflecting their institutional contexts and their speed in the diffusion process.*

More specifically, the diffusion analysis shows that, when take up levels are low, the dissemination of abstract knowledge based on the cohabitation experiences of earlier generations does not seem to have any substantial influence on the diffusion of cohabitation in the population. As we expected, at the beginning of the diffusion process direct social modelling of peers is required to start the diffusion of cohabitation while the more general informative content (knowledge-awareness) transmitted by the experiences of earlier generations plays a role only in a much later stage (see the case of France, Table 2). Concrete experiences of the same age group clearly constitute a sort of useful vicarious trials for potential adopters. We can imagine the diffusion process starting with groups of innovators who have a specific interest or motivation to cohabit and who are thus particularly sensitive to peers' reinforcement influences. After having reached a country-specific threshold, the process then spills over the entire population of potential adopters, where it might continue independently from a growth in the sensitivity to peers' example (Figure 3). The sensitivity to direct social modelling from peers decreases along with the speed of the diffusion, reflecting the characteristics and adjustments of the respective institutional contexts. Highest in the Southern countries where the process is slower and the cultural and normative framework did not adapted to or favour the diffusion, middle in Germany and lowest in France and Sweden (the latter is not strictly comparable due to the lack of controls for pre-cohort influence). In a more advanced stage of the diffusion process, the adoption of cohabitation is rather influenced by an acquired abstract knowledge (see the significant effect of pre-cohort adoption for France). We would have expected knowledge-awareness (measured as pre-cohort experience) to be the driving force in Sweden too, but for this country the corresponding indicator was not available for testing. As figure 4 shows, in the cases of France and Sweden testing for the sole 'direct social modelling' mechanism, inflate somewhat the effect captured by the peer group indicator. In sum, as Figure 3 shows, the role and shape of the effects played by the mechanisms linked to diffusion reflect the country-specific stage and speed in the diffusion process and are highly consistent with a path dependent development of each nation.

5. Conclusions

We know that in the most recent decades cohabitation has become increasingly popular in many modern societies (Kiernan 1999 and 2001). However, there are still marked differences in the pace and extent of the spread of cohabitation among the countries (Prinz 1995). Using representative longitudinal data and individual-level diffusion models, we have analysed the spread of cohabitation among young women in six different national contexts with various family traditions and institutional arrangements: the social-democratic Sweden, the conservative West Germany and France, the former socialist East Germany and the familistic Italy and Spain. Making use of social diffusion theory, we argued that –beside individuals’ specific advantage in an alternative and more flexible union arrangements than marriage– there was an endogenous mechanism driving the increasing levels of practice of cohabitation (Palloni 2001, Hedström and Swedberg 1998, Manski 1993a, Åberg 2000). A fundamental assumption underlying social diffusion approaches is that the adoption of innovative practices is primarily a learning process, where other individuals’ behaviours can influence the likelihood of adoption for the remaining population.

In diffusion theory the individual’s rate of adoption of cohabitation is conceived as a function of prior adoptions from other individuals in the social system. The overall shape and speed of the macro-level diffusion process of cohabitation is thought to be a result of the influences exercised by both individual-level risks factors and by the social context in which individuals frame their actions (namely, age and cohort-specific measures of the level of cohabitation practice in a society). In this framework cohabitation is conceived as an innovative behavioural option for entering a partnership, when it emerges within a national context. Its degree of ‘innovativeness’ than varies for different birth cohorts of individuals and along with their growing older. As the result of a strong focus on the specificity and complexity of the time-related characteristics of the process (Nazio and Blossfeld 2003), we made a distinction between two mechanisms possibly fostering new adoptions. We distinguished, beside the effect of institutional features, two mechanisms through which social influence could be driving the diffusion process: ‘Knowledge-Awareness’ about experiences of previous cohorts (measured as the general level of *Pre-Cohort Adoption*), and ‘Direct Social Modelling’ of peers (measured as the cumulative proportion of *Peer Group Adoption*).

A first substantive important result obtained from this analysis is about the appropriateness and relevance of a diffusion approach in the study of cohabitation's emergence and spread. The findings from the empirical test of the diffusion model (Table 2) strongly support the hypothesis of cohabitation 'contagiousness' through others' enacted behaviours. The results have also shown the importance of institutional specific effects on the shape of these influences, and thus on the hindering or favouring the diffusion process. We will thus discuss these results and their implications in more detail.

A first description of the diffusion process across generations showed that in France, East and West Germany each successive birth cohort experienced not only an impressive rise in the proportions of cumulative *pre-cohort adoption* but also a steep increase in the cumulative proportions of *peer group adoption* at each age (Figures 2 and 3). This suggests that there has been an increasing social acceptance of cohabitation for each younger birth cohort, especially in Germany and France, to the extent that cohabitation has become a normal form of partnership in the process of family formation. Among the youngest birth cohorts, more than 85% of women in Sweden and 75% in France, about 50% in West Germany and 40% in East Germany have adopted cohabitation before they (possibly) started a first marriage. In contrast, in Italy even among the youngest birth cohorts not more than about 10% of women, and in Spain only 16%, have adopted cohabitation before eventually entering into first marriage.

Multivariate analyses (Table 1) show in more detail that the growing age gap produced by a general increased postponement of entry into marriage (Nazio 2004) is not everywhere filled by cohabitation. In fact, with the partial exception of France, no clear cohort trend is left over once educational participation and labour attachments are controlled for. The analyses show that cohabitation is indeed not an attractive choice in Italy and Spain. At first, young Italians and Spaniards are practically excluded from access to an extremely scarce public housing. The rental market, which is squeezed by specific rental laws and distorted by an (unprotected) 'informal housing market', is rather expensive. Thus, the best choice for young people would often be either staying with their parents or buying a house. But buying a house not only requires a huge financial investment, it is also a long-term binding decision. For this reason marital and

cohabitation decisions would implicitly have very similar consequences for the life course of young Italians and Spaniards. Secondly, the Mediterranean welfare state provides only a weak protection against the increasing labour market risks for the younger generations (Jurado 1995), wherein the cohesive Mediterranean family is the relevant locus of social aid in which parents are responsible for their children and vice versa (Saraceno 1994, Bettio and Villa 1998, Gonzales and Jurado and Naldini 2000, Naldini 2003, Gonzales and Jurado and Naldini 2000, Orloff 2002, Barbagli and Castiglioni and Dalla Zuanna 2003). In other words, increasing youth unemployment and uncertainties of employment relationships (Bernardi and Nazio 2005, Simó Noguera and Castro Martín and Soro Bonmatí 2005) together with the peculiarities of the housing market and Catholic familialism, make an extended stay of young people in the parental home more attractive than cohabitation or living as a single person.

Therefore, as the longitudinal analysis show, cohabitation in Italy and Spain is confined to small highly selective groups of women who have a good reason to break with traditional gender roles and family models. As a rule, these women are not religious, have left the educational system and have already gained some years of working experience, have reached residential independence and, in the case of Italy, live mainly in the North and grew up in an urban context. Particularly in Italy, the diffusion of cohabitation to broader groups of the population appears to be blocked. Social forerunners who are practising cohabitation consist of very specific groups of people whose experiences obviously cannot serve as appropriate models for their peers in other groups, so that the mechanism of the 'strengths-of-weak-ties' (Granovetter 1973) does not work in the Italian diffusion process. Although Spain shares most of the characteristics of the Italian environment, the results show that the process of diffusion of cohabitation seems to have recently passed a threshold that could allow for an increasing spread of this alternative living arrangement in the near future.

In East Germany, a comparatively high level of individual life course predictability in the former socialist society allowed for a relatively low average age at marriage and the diffusion was partly a consequence of a specific housing allocation policy. In the historical period between the mid-1970s and 1989 there was a strong incentive for young women to adopt cohabitation and have out-of-wedlock births in order to qualify for welfare benefits, even when they were still in school. After the

breakdown of the socialist society in 1989, a historical period that could not be covered well with these data, the institutional framework of West Germany was introduced in East Germany and economic uncertainty and rising unemployment have increased dramatically. Research has shown that these changes resulted in rapidly declining nuptiality and fertility rates and contributed to increase further the rate of cohabitation and extra-marital births in East Germany. These strong institutional characteristics contributed to the diffusion process and are reflected in the comparatively lower sensitivity to social modelling from peers, with respect to the speed and stage of the diffusion process in the former Democratic Republic.

In West Germany, the housing market has been accessible for young people for many decades. It has been easy to rent a flat and the prices are –with the exception of some few expensive cities– generally affordable. In cross-national comparative terms, the proportion of homeowners is also relatively low in West Germany at 45% (Kurz and Blossfeld 2005). If young people don't work, they are normally supported by the conservative welfare state or by their parents. Thus, given increasing unemployment and growing employment uncertainty, cohabitation or living as a single person are attractive options compared to staying with parents in West Germany.

Somewhat different is the case of France, a country well beyond the initial stage of the diffusion process of cohabitation, where the biggest effect in the dissemination of the practice is exercised by the pre-cohort adoption measure. Here a bunch of experiences has accumulated and the practice has gained an increasing tolerance and consensus along with its spread. In France, the welfare system and a controlled and highly subsidised housing market make of cohabitation and living single very attractive and rather affordable alternatives to marry or live with the parents.

A last important result of this study was the development and empirical test of an explanatory model that allows for different mechanisms to affect individuals' decision-making process. The results have stressed that there is more than one mechanism at play in young women's decisions to cohabit, and suggested that the diffusion of cohabitation does not imply a strong mechanism that links cohabitation experiences across generations. Rather, especially in contexts where the process

developed at a lower pace, cohabitation seems to be driven mainly by direct social modelling of peers' behaviour. What does this result exactly mean in terms of expected consequences for the individuals and societies? The model predicts that increasing levels of cohabitation are, at least partially, produced through an endogenously (self-)driven process led by the example from previous adopters. This means that, once cohabitation has become the norm and its social meaning has changed to a full acceptance and institutionalisation of the new practice, individual specific advantage entailed in cohabiting can become quite secondary in motivating its adoption.

In the first section we have argued that social acceptance of cohabitation is a function of the prevalence of the practice among earlier adopter. Results have shown that, along with the diffusion process, the costs of an initially 'socially unaccepted' behaviour are reduced and its adoption further increased, even despite a lowering degree of sensitivity to the reinforcement influence offered by peers' examples. This can lead to long run cultural changes that make previously unaccepted behaviour not only accepted, but even desirable. Indeed, as changes in the family values and attitudes are produced by social change in the society, a trend of decreasing marriage and increasing cohabitation may well be sustained by a formal and legal convergence of the two forms of unions. More specifically, the model presented in this study suggests that an initial increasing convenience for more flexible family arrangements can result in gradual changes in how cohabitation is perceived and the meaning attached to it (Manting 1996). This in turn can lead to gradually increasing levels of cohabiting couples among those who still have a bigger advantage in less-binding commitment, but as well as among those who might not have a specifically higher interest or need. Furthermore, after a certain time, cultural changes (in terms of how cohabitation is viewed) may progress to a point past which exogenous factors and individuals characteristics do little in stopping the rise in the levels of cohabitation.

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Table 1: Estimation of covariate effects on the hazard rate of cohabitation among women

	Italy	Spain	West Germany	East Germany	France	Sweden
Constant	-12,02 **	-18,62 **	-28,88 **	-28,58 **	-24,71 **	-19,83 **
Log(Age-15)	0,27 *	0,78 **	1,09 **	1,26 **	1,05 **	0,73 **
Log(39-Age)	0,69 +	1,38 **	3,45 **	3,19 **	2,73 **	2,32 **
Enrolled in education (<i>Ref. education: compulsory</i>)	-1,37 **	-0,75 **	-0,43 **	-0,26 **	-0,76 **	-0,27 **
	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education: secondary	-0,19	0,15	0,20 *	0,04	0,07	-0,24 **
Education: tertiary	0,32	0,44 *	0,19	0,24	0,29 **	-0,11
Being employed	0,22	-0,37 *	0,18 +	0,13	0,18 *	0,33 **
Employment experience	0,08 **	0,07 *	0,02	0,03	-	0,01
Living single (<i>Ref. pregnancy time before</i>)	1,50 **	1,97 **	0,36 **	0,27 **	0,59 **	0,23 **
	0	0	0	0	0	0
Preg.: up to 2 months since	1,97 **	1,58 **	1,54 **	1,41 **	1,25 **	1,63 **
Preg.: 3 to 5 months since	2,72 **	1,10	1,83 **	1,38 **	0,95 **	1,80 **
Preg.: 6 to 8 months since	3,23 **	1,58 *	1,71 **	1,75 **	1,09 **	1,93 **
Preg.: Birth - 2 months after	3,05 **	1,79 **	0,29	1,40 **	0,41	0,82 *
Preg.: 3-5 months after birth	2,18 *	1,30	1,11 *	1,15 **	-0,13	0,60
Preg.: 6-more m. after birth	1,70 +	-0,05	0,25	0,58 **	-0,60 **	-0,15
Parental divorce	0,49 +	0,77 **	0,29 **	0,42 **	0,27 **	0,25 **
Religiosity (<i>Ref. residence: rural/small</i>)	-1,05 **	-0,53 **	-0,16 *	-0,16 +	-	-
	0	0	0	0	0	0
Residence: middle-size city	-0,14	0,01	0,11	0,02	-0,04	-0,09 +
Residence: large city (<i>Ref. region: North</i>)	0,42 *	0,23 +	-0,03	-0,05	-0,08	-0,19 **
	0	-	-	-	-	-
Region: Centre	-0,26	-	-	-	-	-
Region: South and Islands (<i>Ref. Cohort: 1954</i>)	-0,33 *	-	-	-	-	-
	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cohort 1955	0,14	-0,75	-0,16	0,35	0,12	-
Cohort 1956	-0,64	0,40	0,16	0,36	0,39 +	-
Cohort 1957	0,31	0,39	-0,05	0,26	0,49 *	-
Cohort 1958	0,09	0,67	0,27	0,26	0,43 *	-
Cohort 1959	0,31	0,66	0,15	0,30	0,63 **	0,05
Cohort 1960	0,02	0,72	0,26	0,28	0,58 **	-
Cohort 1961	0,30	0,55	0,28	0,56 *	0,92 **	-
Cohort 1962	0,83 +	1,17 *	0,41 *	0,37 +	0,74 **	-
Cohort 1963	0,48	0,93 +	0,11	0,11	0,88 **	-
Cohort 1964	0,88 *	0,89 +	0,38 +	0,63 **	0,70 **	-0,03
Cohort 1965	0,09	1,16 *	0,15	0,49 *	1,01 **	-
Cohort 1966	0,34	1,29 **	-0,00	0,44 +	1,09 **	-
Cohort 1967	0,43	1,73 **	-0,15	0,34	0,82 **	-
Cohort 1968	0,82 +	1,23 *	0,03	0,83 **	1,20 **	-
Cohort 1969	0,80	1,35 **	-0,37	0,84 **	1,19 **	0,02
Cohort 1970	0,06	1,02 +	-0,58 *	0,84 **	1,14 **	-
Cohort 1971	0,16	1,27 *	-0,08	0,75 **	1,26 **	-
Cohort 1972	0,06	1,05 +	-0,56 +	0,64 **	1,09 **	-
Cohort 1973	0,74	1,77 **	-0,73 *	0,55 *	1,32 **	-
<i>Events</i>	214	257	895	868	1287	2133
<i>Log-likelihood</i>	(-14626,0)	(-13566,3)	(-10321,4)	(-12461,5)	(-11438,4)	(-13317,3)
	-14427,7	-13333,0	-9990,0	-11972,9	-10810,6	-12668,8

+ : 90% significance

* : 95% significance

** : 99% significance level

Table 2: Estimation of covariate effects on the diffusion of cohabitation among women (Exponential model with time constant and time dependent covariates)

	Italy	Spain	West Germany	East Germany	France	Sweden
Constant	-13,96 **	-21,86 **	-31,67 **	-25,65 **	-27,07 **	-19,50 **
Log(Age-15)	-0,32 *	0,03	0,55 **	0,68 **	0,64 **	0,26 **
Log(39-Age)	1,08 **	2,22 **	4,16 **	2,96 **	3,07 **	2,33 **
Enrolled in education (<i>Ref. education: compulsory</i>)	-1,26 ** 0	-0,68 ** 0	-0,35 ** 0	-0,18 * 0	-0,73 ** 0	-0,24 ** 0
Education: secondary	-0,29 +	0,10	0,21 **	0,04	0,06	-0,23 **
Education: tertiary	0,12	0,38 +	0,25	0,31	0,25 **	-0,18 *
Being employed	0,21	-0,42 **	0,12	0,07	0,15 *	0,21 **
Employment experience	0,06 *	0,06 *	0,02	0,03	-	0,02
Living single (<i>Ref. pregnancy time before</i>)	1,42 ** 0	1,90 ** 0	0,34 ** 0	0,26 ** 0	0,59 ** 0	0,18 ** 0
Preg.: up to 2 months since	2,02 **	1,64 **	1,60 **	1,43 **	1,28 **	1,63 **
Preg.: 3 to 5 months since	2,78 **	1,18 +	1,87 **	1,41 **	0,98 **	1,80 **
Preg.: 6 to 8 months since	3,32 **	1,62 *	1,74 **	1,76 **	1,10 **	1,91 **
Preg.: Birth - 2 months after	2,99 **	1,75 **	0,27	1,36 **	0,38	0,73 +
Preg.: 3-5 months after birth	2,11 *	1,31	1,13 *	1,13 **	-0,15	0,55
Preg.: 6-more m. after birth	1,63 +	-0,11	0,26	0,57 **	-0,62 **	-0,15
Parental divorce	0,42 +	0,78 **	0,31 **	0,39 **	0,29 **	0,25 **
Religiosity (<i>Ref. residence: rural/small</i>)	-1,00 ** 0	-0,55 ** 0	-0,15 * 0	-0,16 + 0	- 0	- 0
Residence: middle-size city	-0,16	-0,01	0,11	0,02	-0,05	-0,08 +
Residence: large city (<i>Ref. region: North</i>)	0,40 * 0	0,22 + -	-0,02 -	-0,03 -	-0,09 -	-0,19 ** -
Region: Centre	-0,27	-	-	-	-	-
Region: South and Islands	-0,36 *	-	-	-	-	-
Peer group adoption	1,20 **	0,63 **	0,17 **	0,16 **	0,04 *	0,10 **
(Peer group adoption) ² /100	-18,00 **	-6,09 **	-0,55 **	-0,68 **	-0,11 *	-0,20 **
(Peer group adoption) ³ /1000	9,22 **	2,26 **	0,07 **	0,09 **	0,01 *	0,01 **
Pre-cohort adoption	0,67	0,75	-0,04	-0,04	0,18 *	-
(Pre-cohort adoption) ² /100	-15,21	-13,38	0,22	0,28	-0,47	-
(Pre-cohort adoption) ³ /1000	9,90	7,54	-0,04	-0,04	0,05	-
<i>Events</i>	214	257	895	868	1287	2133
<i>Log-likelihood</i>	(-14626,0)	(-13566,3)	(-10321,4)	(-12461,5)	(-11438,4)	(-13317,3)
	-14413,2	-13324,2	-9986,0	-11975,8	-10814,3	12630,3

+: 90% significance

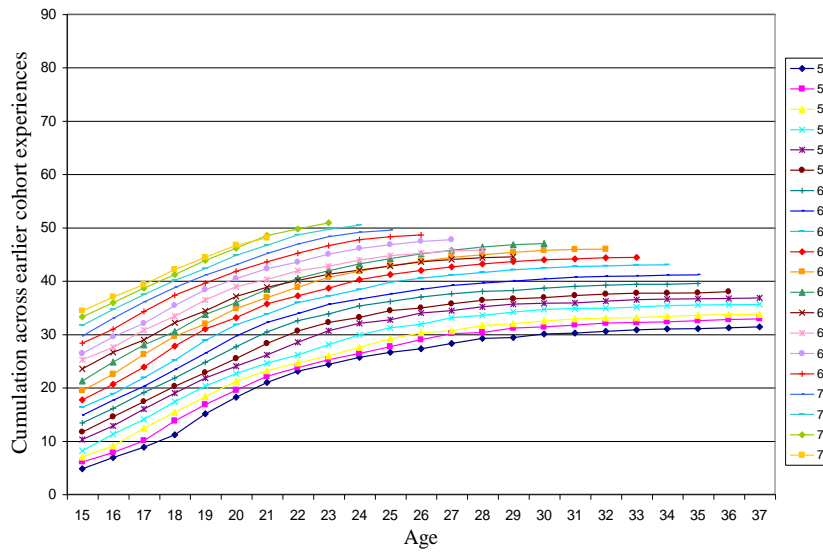
*: 95% significance

**: 99% significance level

Figure 1 - Cumulative pre-cohort adoption

Not computable for Sweden

France



West Germany

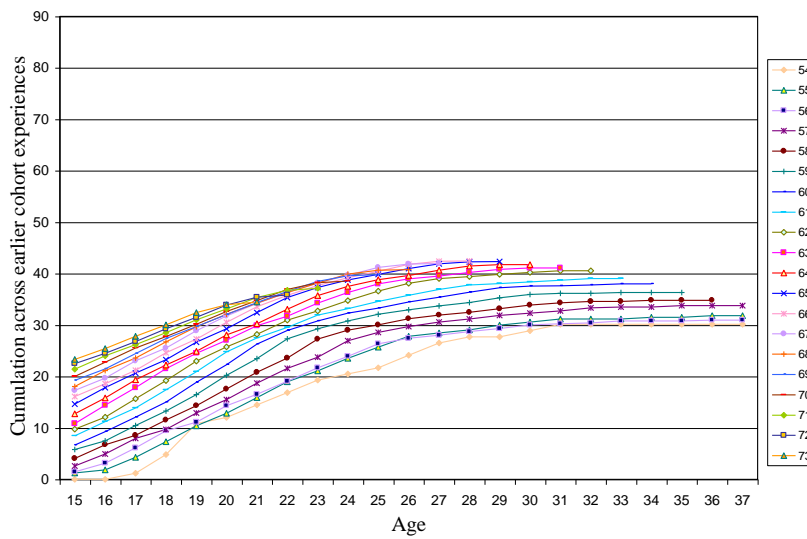


Figure 2 - Cumulative peer group adoption

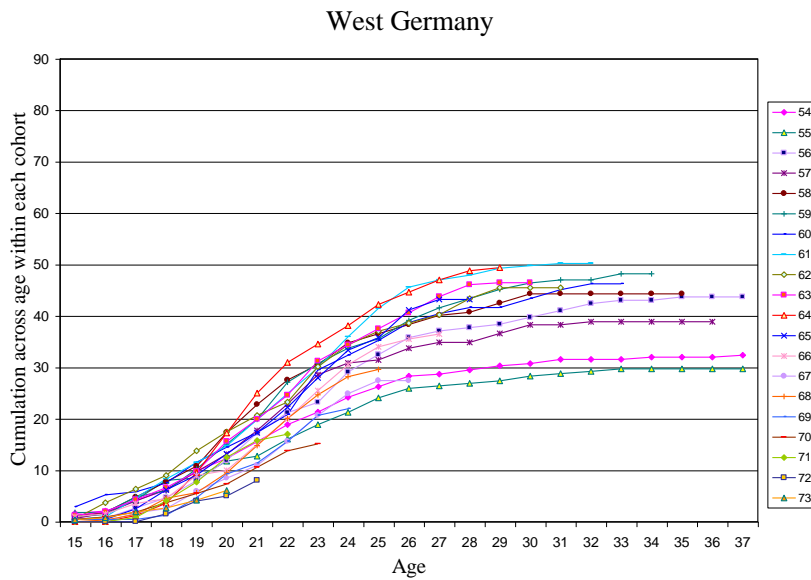
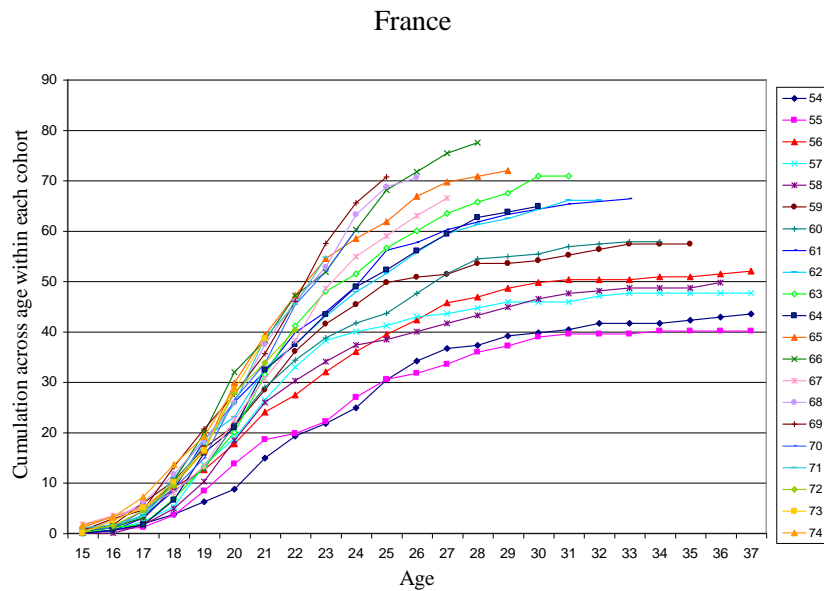
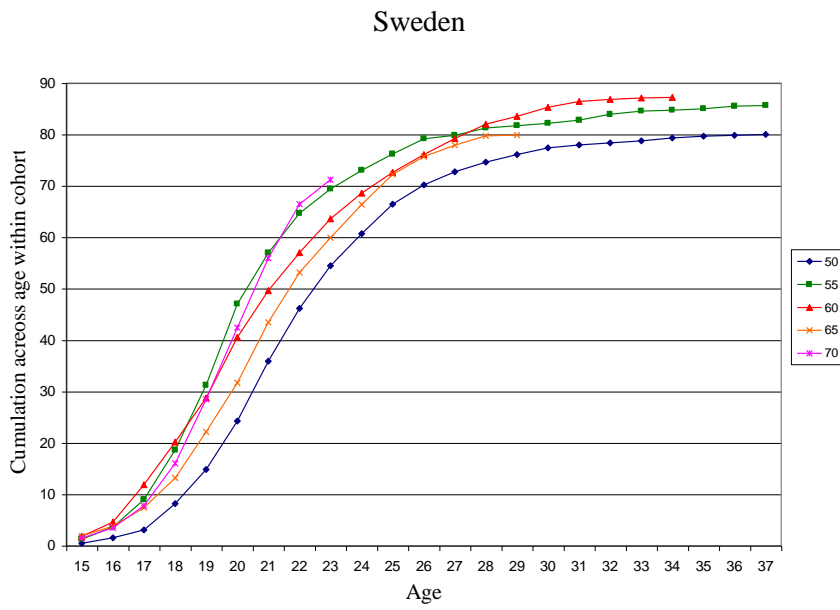


Figure 3 - Peer group effect

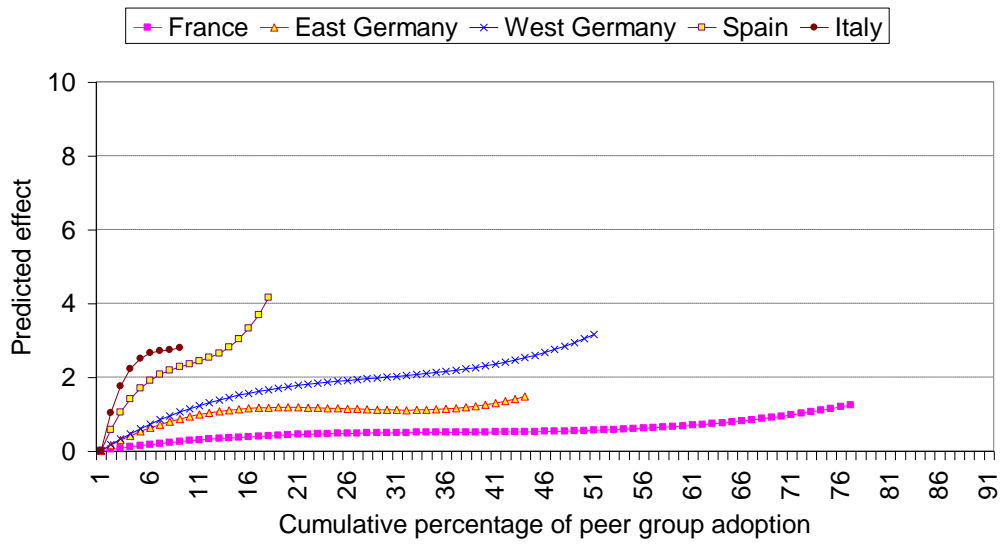


Figure 4 - Peer group effect (pre-cohort not tested)

