

## Trends in nonmarital childbearing in Poland

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### Increase in % of out-of-wedlock births in Poland - alternative explanations

- ▶ The nonmarital fertility ratio (NFR) grew from 5% up to 20% in 1985–2009
  - ▶ what was the driving force of this growth ?
- ▶ The role of declining propensity for shotgun weddings
  - ▶ shotgun weddings ~ bridal pregnancies ~ legitimation = marriage in the period between conception and birth
  - ▶ if a women, who conceives while unmarried, decide not to marry, then the birth is classified as nonmarital
  - ▶ shotgun weddings may conceal the genuine nature of relationship between marriage and fertility (Raymo and Iwasawa 2008)
  - ▶ a decline in shotgun weddings may lead to increase in NFR

## Increase in % of out-of-wedlock births in Poland - background

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- ▶ What might affect decisions whether to marry or not among unmarried women who get pregnant (Espenshade 1985; Parnell et al. 1994; Ermisch 2008)
- ▶ the risk of economic hardship among lone parents
  - ▶ limited access to welfare state support might prevent decisions not to marry the father of the child
- ▶ stigma associated with single motherhood
  - ▶ low acceptance for lone motherhood may increase the propensity to marry in event of pregnancy for own and child's sake

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## Increase in % of out-of-wedlock births in Poland - background

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- ▶ policy support for lone parents - changes in 1985-2009:
  - ▶ **1990** - a reform of family policy **decoupled the receipt of family benefits from employment status**; a reform in the Alimony Fund **raised the maximum level of benefits** from 25% up to 30% of the average wage
  - ▶ **mid 90ies** – changes in the means testing criterion for family benefits, **raising the availability of family benefits among poor families** (Piętka 2009)
  - ▶ reforms in **2002-2004**: decreasing the the means testing threshold for Alimony Fund benefits from 60% down to 30% of the average wage
  - ▶ a reform in **2005**: **abandoning the Alimony Fund**, single parents who could prove that they are not able to collect alimonies from the other parent of the child, would receive the so-called advance alimony payment
- ▶ **in summary:**
  - ▶ after 1989 reforms were oriented at decreasing the risk of poverty among various disadvantaged groups, including lone parents,
  - ▶ after 2000 the state policy was focused on reducing public expenditures, this meant the retrenchment of support for families with children, and especially for lone parents

## Increase in % of out-of-wedlock births in Poland - background

- ▶ stigma associated with single motherhood
  - ▶ pronounced in Poland because according to the **dominating Roman Catholic religion**, tradition and customs, it is expected that **parents should be married**
  - ▶ but there is some evidence on social attitudes shows that the acceptance for raising a child outside marriage was increasing (ISSP data 1994 / 2002)
- the % of agreements with a statement that children should be raised only by married couples decreased (from 73% to 67%), agreements with a statement „lone parents as able to raise their child well” rose (48% to 56%)

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## Trends in numbers of births



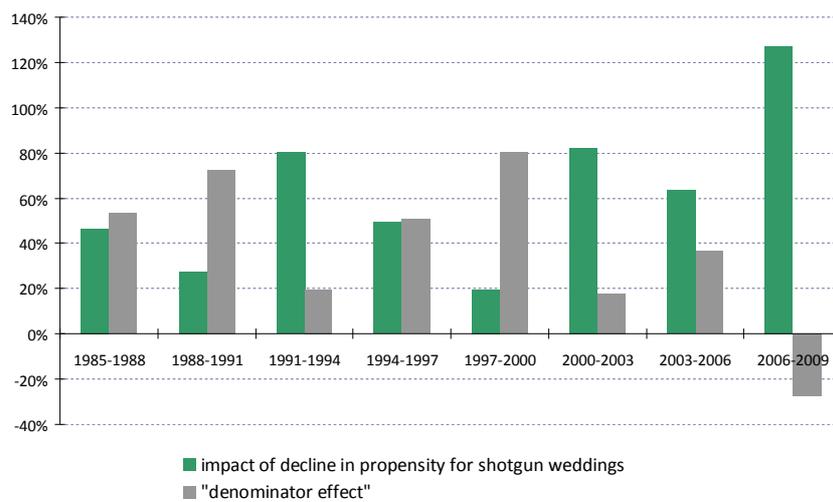
- ▶ strong decline in births among married women → NFR is raised by the declining denominator → the growth of NFR may be simply a statistical artefact ?
- ▶ a change in propensity to marry in the period between conception and birth: the proportion of women who have shotgun weddings dropped from 74% down to 38%

## Data and methods

- ▶ Decomposition method proposed by Akerlof et al. 1996
  - ▶ quantifying the role of shotgun weddings: what part of growth in the proportion of out-of-wedlock births can be attributed to the decline in propensity for shotgun weddings
  - ▶ ...taking into account the changes in the structure of births according to the marital status of a woman at the time of conception → net of „denominator effect” related to dropping numbers of marital births
- ▶ Data: Birth Register 1985-2009
  - ▶ precise dates of births and marriages
  - ▶ few background characteristics of women who gave births

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## Growing share of nonmarital births - fact or artifact? Results from decomposition.



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## Conclusions

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- ▶ before transition to market economy and in the 90ies the growth in proportion of out-of-wedlock births was mainly a matter of dropping marital fertility
  - ▶ Dropping propensity for shotgun marriages had a strong impact only in 1991- 1994 i.e. after a set of reforms creating welfare state support for lone parents
  - ▶ but apart from that, growing share of nonmarital births resulted from the 'denominator effect'
- ▶ in 2000-2009, the main driving force of growth in NFR was declining propensity for shotgun weddings
  - ▶ there were no social policy reforms which encouraged remaining unmarried!
  - ▶ impact of changing attitudes towards raising a child outside marriage ?

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

Comments & suggestions very welcome:  
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