



Cohabitation and childbearing: Poland

Anna Matysiak

Institute of Statistics and Demography
Warsaw School of Economics



Monika Mynarska

Institute of Psychology
Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw



3rd non-marital childbearing workshop

Cohabitation in Poland

▶ Evidence from cross-sectional data:

Population Census:

1988: 1.3% of unions

1995: 1.7% of unions

2002: 2.1% of unions (4.9% among persons aged 15-29)

▶ Evidence from longitudinal data:

mid-2000s: around 1/3 of first unions formed by women born 1966-1981
was formed through cohabitation

early 1990s: around 12%

Cohabitation in Poland

- ▶ Cohabitants are mainly low-educated and low income persons, often unemployed or inactive (Fihel 2005, Slany 2002)
 - ▶ But cohabitation starts to spread to other social groups: since the late 1990s the increase in the incidence of cohabitation was stronger among the high educated than the low educated (Matysiak 2009)
 - ▶ Still, non-marital cohabitation is a temporary living arrangement (median duration = 3 years) likely to convert to marriage
 - ▶ It is clearly perceived as a trial period before marriage, which is less stable than marriage (Mynarska & Matysiak 2010)
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Mixed-method approach

- ▶ **Quantitative data**
 - ▶ To assess the incidence of cohabitation quantitatively
 - ▶ Retrospective survey „Employment, Family and Education Survey (EFES)”, conducted in 2006
 - ▶ Sample: 3000 women born 1966-1981
 - ▶ **Analytical method:**
Models (for first unions only):
 - ▶ Competing risk model: entry to cohabitation vs. entry to direct marriage
 - ▶ Event history model: transition from cohabitation to marriage
 - ▶ Major covariate: parity-and-pregnancy status (childless, not pregnant / pregnant with the first child / mother of at least one child)
 - ▶ Control covariates: age, calendar period, education level, place of residence
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Mixed-method approach

▶ Qualitative data

- ▶ To understand the meanings and attitudes attached to cohabitation
 - ▶ Semi-structured in-depth interviews with young men and women, conducted 2004 – 2005 in Warsaw
 - ▶ Total 48 interviews:
 - ▶ 11 cohabiting
 - ▶ 26 married (10 – married directly, 16 – married after cohabitation)
 - ▶ 11 dating or no partner
 - ▶ In most cases: secondary or tertiary education
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Cohabitation & Childbearing

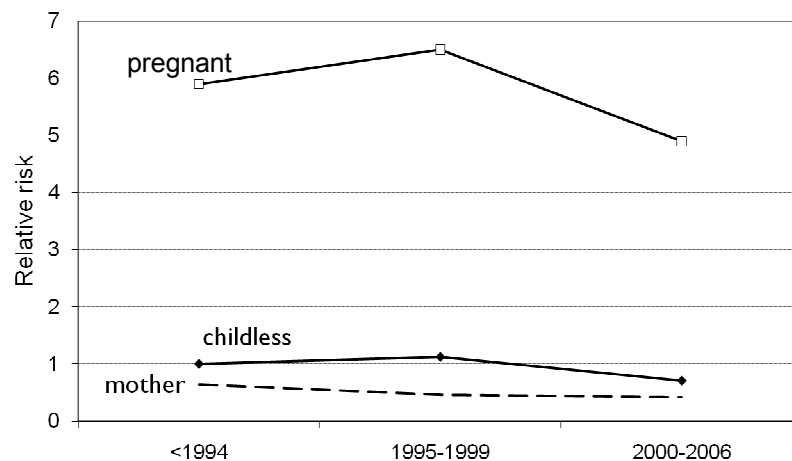
Relative risks of:

- a) entry to cohabitation,
- b) entry to direct marriage,
- c) conversion of cohabitation to marriage

Parity-and-pregnancy status	Mode of union entry	
	a) cohabitation	b) direct marriage
childless and non-pregnant	1	1
childless and pregnant	6.11***	19.81***
mother	1.88***	2.35***

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- ▶ Relative risks of transition from cohabitation to marriage, by parity- and-pregnancy status



Cohabitation – meanings and attitudes

- ▶ Qualitative data:
 - ▶ Cohabitation is perceived as a testing period or a step in a relationship development that should lead to marriage
 - ▶ „not stable”, „falls apart faster”, „no commitment”, „not approved by the Church”, lacks social recognition (pejorative labels), „only after marriage can one talk about a real couple”.

“I know a couple that lived together for 6 years without marriage, they still don't have it. He simply doesn't respect a woman when he doesn't commit – so to speak – to her. Because that's the only thing a man can do, he can get married. (...) from a man's side it's still marriage that is the only sign of true and sincere love, of respect for this woman.”

(Female, 22, married after cohabitation)

Cohabitation & Childbearing

"We knew that when we wanted to have a child, then we would have to arrange a wedding"

(Female, 25, married after cohabitation)

"[If] she didn't get married and had a child – that could mean that something didn't work out for her. And when they are married and they have a child, they are happy and all in all everything looks different." (Male, 21, dating)

- ▶ Out-of-wedlock child is not desired large because of social control and stigmatization, but also because of problems expected in everyday life
- ▶ „the neighbors start talking”, „this child would be somehow stigmatized [among peers]”, „couldn't pick up kids from school [...] because he was not the real father”, legal problems „in case something happens”

Conclusions and Outlook

- ▶ Incidence of cohabitation has been increasing and spreading to other (better educated) social groups
- ▶ But cohabitation is perceived as a testing period before marriage and not the appropriate condition for childbearing
- ▶ It is seen as less stable and it is valued much less than marriage. Having children in cohabitation is perceived as a strong violation of social norms and a possible source of troubles in everyday life.

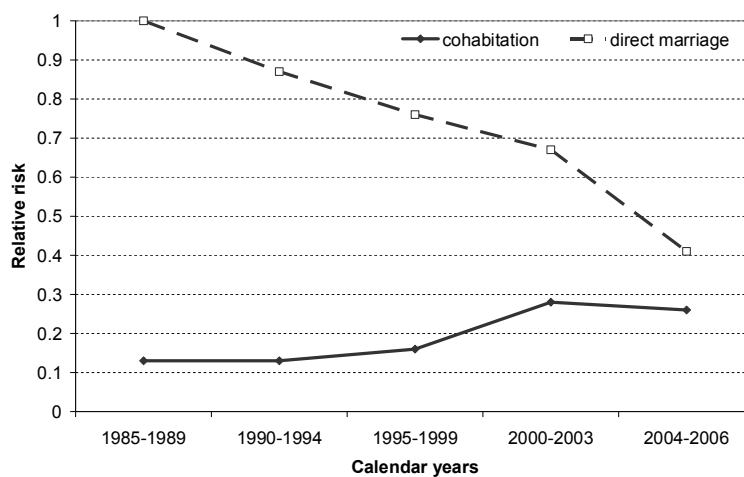
- ▶ Have the behaviours and meanings changed since 2006?
- ▶ Who are the cohabitants with children?
- ▶ Quality of cohabiting unions and quality of life of cohabitants
 - ▶ Quantitative data: Census 2011 and GGS 2011
 - ▶ Qualitative in-depth interviews: FAMWELL project (www.sgh.waw.pl/famwell)



Thank you!

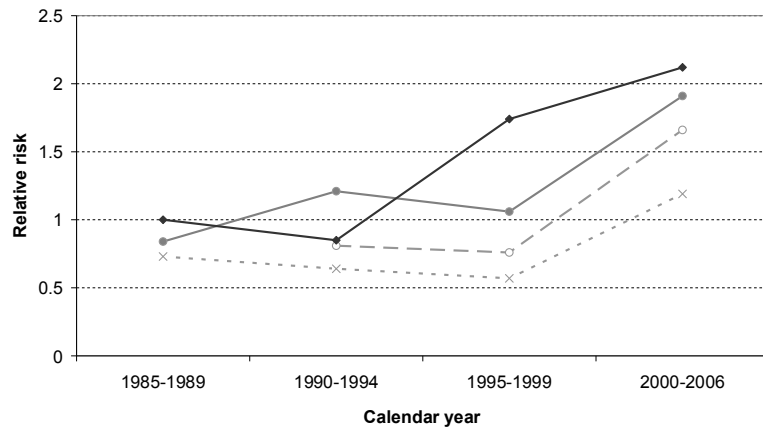
amatys@sgh.waw.pl
m.mynarska@uksw.edu.pl

Incidence of cohabitation vs. direct marriage



Diffusion of cohabitation to other social groups?

▶ Relative risks of entry to cohabitation by education level



----- x in education o tertiary ● secondary ◆ vocational and primary -----