How Does Cohabitation Fit into the Family Life Course?

Norms and ideals in Europe

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Abstract

Whether life courses are shaped by social norms or are primarily governed by individual preferences is a matter of scholarly debate. In this paper we investigate whether non-marital cohabitation norms structure individuals' understanding of how cohabitation fits into the ideal family life course. Using data from the European Social Survey (Round 3, 2006/07), we build a typology of the normative context of non-marital cohabitation across the 23 survey countries. Then, using multi-level modeling techniques, we explore how normative contexts may condition an individual's propensity to offer non-numeric responses to a question about the ideal age for cohabitation (i.e. 'there is no ideal age' or 'never' versus a numeric response), actual ideal ages for cohabitation, and the relative ideal timing of marriage and cohabitation. Results highlight the importance of gender, educational-level and country-level normative 'permissiveness' in conditioning individuals' perceptions of the ideal timing of cohabitation. Additionally, results suggest the emergence of positive norms for cohabitation within some European country contexts.

Cohabitation Norms & Ideals

Over the past 50 years, family demographers have documented dramatic changes in family life in European countries. Marriage occurs later and less often, couples are more likely to cohabit, more children are born to unmarried parents, and unions are increasingly likely to dissolve (for an overview of these trends, see Sobotka and Toulemon 2008). In their seminal 1986 paper, Dirk van de Kaa and Ron Lesthaeghe postulated that these dramatic changes in family life may constitute a Second Demographic Transition (SDT; Lesthaeghe and Van de Kaa 1986), which they attributed to changing value orientations. They argued that the rise of individualism and secularism led to the increased importance of individual choice and preferences in determining family life trajectories, while social norms and the institutions that maintained them, such as family and the church, faded in importance (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995; Giddens 1991; Lesthaeghe 2002; Lesthaeghe 2010; Surkyn and Lesthaeghe 2004). Still, some scholars have challenged the idea that norms are no longer important guideposts for family demographic behavior. Billari, Liefbroer and colleagues have demonstrated the importance of age norms for leaving home, entry into unions, and childbearing (Billari et al. 2010; Billari and Liefbroer 2007; Liefbroer and Billari 2010), arguing that norms may still have a role to play, along side individual preferences. In this paper we investigate how individual characteristics and country-level norms regarding the acceptability of non-marital cohabitation shape views on how cohabitation fits into the family life course across Europe.

The rise of non-marital cohabitation has been one of the hallmarks of family change in Europe in the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Kiernan 2001; Sobotka and Toulemon 2008). There has been an increase in the share of individuals who have ever cohabited as well as in the proportion of individuals currently living in a cohabiting union in all European countries, although there is cross-national variation in prevalence of this family form (Sobotka and Toulemon 2008). So too does the meaning of cohabitation vary across and within countries: for

some cohabitation may be a new phase of dating; for other, it may be a stage in the marriage process, either a prelude to marriage or trial marriage; for still others, cohabitation may represent a substitute for marriage, where couples opt for cohabitation because marriage may be unaffordable, irrelevant or simply undesirable (Heuveline and Timberlake 2004; Hiekel, Liefbroer and Poortman 2014; Kiernan 2001). This diverse landscape in the experience and meaning of cohabitation would suggest that there might also be variation in the landscape of cohabitation norms in Europe. The first aim of the paper is to document this landscape. We make use of data from the 2006/07 European Social Survey (Round 3), covering more than 40,000 individuals in 23 countries. This round of the ESS included the Timing of Life rotating module, which asked a host of questions about cohabitation norms and ideals. We develop a framework for describing norms that accounts for the full range of (dis)approval Likert responses. Using such a qualitatively rich specification of norms is crucial, providing insight into the diversity of cohabitation norms across Europe and highlighting the importance of permissiveness, i.e. the share of individuals within a country who report that they neither approve nor disapprove of cohabitation. Indeed, permissiveness may be the hallmark of diminished norms toward cohabitation, as emphasized by SDT theory.

Secondly, we investigate how these societal-level norms and individual characteristics are associated with individual ideals regarding cohabitation and where it fits in the ideal family life course. Using multi-level modeling techniques, we first explore how individual and contextual factors may condition an individual's propensity to offer non-numeric responses to a question about the ideal age for cohabitation (i.e. 'there is no ideal age' or 'never' versus a numeric response). Then, focusing on a subset of respondents offering numeric responses, we consider how individual- and contextual-level characteristics are associated with the absolute ideal age for cohabitation given and the relative ideal timing of marriage and cohabitation. Results enhance

our understanding of the meaning of cohabitation across Europe, and to debates regarding the degree to which normative contexts condition individuals' understanding of cohabitation.

Background

Cohabitation in Europe

While non-marital cohabitation was always evident to some degree in Europe, particularly among some segments of the population (e.g. the poor, the previously married or those living in rural areas), it was relatively rare during the 'golden age of marriage' during the 1950s and 1970s (Kiernan 2001; Trost 1978; Villeneuve-Gokalp 1991). As such, the marked increase in the incidence and prevalence of non-marital cohabitation since the 1970s in Europe has been of great interest to family scholars (Elzinga and Liefbroer 2007; Sobotka and Toulemon 2008). By the turn of the 21st century, non-marital cohabitation's growth in Northern and Western European countries had reached unprecedented levels. In Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway, the vast majority of first co-residential unions began as non-marital cohabitation among women born after 1971, and around the year 2000, one-third to one-half of first births occurred to unmarried cohabiting parents (Hiekel 2014; Perelli-Harris et al. 2012; Sobotka and Toulemon 2008). The diffusion of cohabitation is also apparent in Eastern and Southern Europe as well (Hiekel 2014; Sobotka and Toulemon 2008).

Despite the universal emergence of cohabitation as an increasingly important part of union and family formation across Europe, the meaning of cohabitation and its relation to other family life-course events remains diverse across country contexts. In some countries, such as in Hungary and Britain, the resurgence in cohabitation in end of the 20th century was first evident among the previously married (Kiernan 2001; Spéder 2005), while in others the never married have always constituted a majority of cohabiting couples, even early on (Perelli-Harris et al.

2015). Diversity in the duration and likelihood that cohabitation will end in marriage or dissolution suggests a large degree of variation in the meaning of cohabitation, as well as expectations about how cohabitation should relate to other union and family formation events (Heuveline and Timberlake 2004; Hiekel, Liefbroer and Poortman 2014; Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel 1990). Short-lived cohabitations followed shortly by marriage may indicate that cohabitation is linked closely to the marriage process, while short-lived cohabitation followed shortly by dissolution may suggest that cohabitation is a part of the courtship or dating process, or a 'trial marriage.' The prevalence of longer-duration cohabitations may suggest that the union serves as an alternative to or substitute for marriage, particularly when these unions are also likely to involve the birth of a child.

Life course norms and ideals across Europe

The emergence and diversity of cohabitation, along side increased union instability and the changing context of childbearing, has been emphasized as key demographic trends associated with the Second Demographic Transition (SDT). According to the SDT theory, underlying these demographic changes are dramatic ideational and value changes regarding aspects of the family life course, first emerging in Northern Europe and slowly, through processes of diffusion, throughout the continent over a span of nearly 50 years (Lesthaeghe 2010; Surkyn and Lesthaeghe 2004). Chief among the ideational and value changes associated with the SDT was the diminished role of institutions in determining the shape and course of family life, and the rise of individual choice and personal fulfillment, secularism, and postmaterialism (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Giddens 1991; Surkyn and Lesthaeghe 2004).

This transformation has implied that social norms, maintained by institutions such as the Church and the (extended) family, which were once essential for shaping the order and timing of

family life courses, have become less important in dictating the nature of sexual and co-residential unions. Social norms are "a collective, or shared, evaluation of what behavior ought to be" (Marini 1984, p. 232). They differ from preferences or values in that they cannot be held at the individual level. They do not represent the typical behavior or an observed regularity within a group or context, rather they express a collective assessment of what people *should* do (Liefbroer and Billari 2010; Marini 1984; Thomson 2011). Social norms are often particularly important for governing marginal or deviant behaviors. Generally they have an associated sanction to induce a behavior or enforce conformity with that behavior. However, within permissive social contexts or once behaviors become more common, previously sanctioned behaviors become more (normatively) acceptable.

As norms have waned in importance, argue SDT theorists, individuals increasingly become the 'captains' of their own biographies (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Holland and Keizer Forthcoming). As such, individual's aspirations or ideals may come to the fore in determining the course of family life. Ideals correspond to "what is wanted or believed to be best for (most) individuals and society" (Thomson 2011). Rather than capturing individuals' actual behavior or what people *should do*, ideals measure what is perceived to be the *best way* to organize family life (Holland and de Valk 2013; Thomson 2011). Unlike norms, ideals are held at the individual-level, and as such may become particularly important for shaping intentions and behaviors within Second Demographic Transition contexts, characterized by high levels of permissiveness. Ideals do not correspond to sanctions and, because they are held at the individual- rather than the institutional-level, may be more fluid and flexible, adapting more quickly to ideational changes, individual's lived experiences and the experiences of family and peers. Ideals may refer to the experience of particular behaviors or events, such as whether it is better to cohabit prior to marrying rather than directly marry. So too can ideals correspond to the

timing and ordering of events, for instance the ideal ages for home leaving, cohabitation, marriage or childbearing.

Studying ideal timing of cohabitation can provide insight into how cohabitation fits into the best-perceived way of structuring the life course. In this study we focus on three different aspects of the ideal timing of cohabitation: 1) the extent to which individuals conceptualize an ideal numeric age for cohabitation versus offering a non-numeric response such as 'never' or 'there is no ideal age;' 2) the (numeric) ideal age for cohabitation; and 3) the ideal relative timing of cohabitation and marriage, which may be interpreted as the ideal duration of cohabitation. Non-numeric responses to the ideal age question may provide insight into *whether* cohabitation fits into the ideal family life course. A response of "there is no ideal age" may indicate a strong acceptance of cohabitation, but without regard to its position relative to other family formation events; alternatively this response may indicate permissiveness. A response of "never" may indicate that cohabitation is not normatively accepted or that, while it is normatively accepted, it is not part of the ideal family life course. Because these non-numeric responses are also informative as to people's beliefs about cohabitation, in our first analyses we model the propensity to offer categories of non-numeric (relative to numeric) responses, and how this propensity may be conditioned on both individual characteristics and normative context.

Numeric responses to the ideal age question provide insight into variation in *when* cohabitation ideally fits into family life. For instance, should cohabitation occur in young adulthood, as a precursor to or stage in the family formation process or should cohabitation occur later in life, even after the childbearing years? In our second investigation we explore how individual characteristics and normative contexts shape an individuals perception of the ideal age for cohabitation.

The meaning of family life events may also be contingent upon their timing relative to other family life transitions (Elder Jr. 1985). As such, in our third analysis we consider the ideal relative timing of cohabitation and marriage. Larger differences between the ideal ages for cohabitation and marriage, with cohabitation preceding marriage, may indicate that cohabitation may be an alternative to single or dating relationship, rather than part of family formation, per se. Where the ideal age of cohabitation and marriage are similar, it is likely cohabitation is closely linked to the marriage process, as a "trial marriage" or characteristic of those couples that are engaged or have marriage plans. Finally, where the mean age of cohabitation is older than the mean age of marriage, cohabitation may be characteristic of higher order unions, following the dissolution of a first marital union.

Contextual influence on perceptions of the ideal family life course

To begin to disentangle the association between the nature of cohabitation within societies and how individuals perceive cohabitation as fitting into the ideal family life course, here we focus on one measure of cohabitation norms: (dis-)approval of cohabitation. Individuals living in societies with strong positive norms toward cohabitation are likely better able to conceptualize an ideal age for cohabitation; on the other hand, individuals living in societies where cohabitation is largely disapproved of may be disinclined to conceptualize an ideal age for cohabitation. This simple dichotomy is problematic when viewed within the SDT framework, however; within SDT contexts, we would expect to find an absence of norms, i.e. a tendency to neither approve nor disapprove of cohabitation. In permissive societies, even where cohabitation is common, individuals may also be disinclined to provide an ideal age for cohabitation. The association between normative context and individuals absolute and relative (to marriage) ideal ages for cohabitation is less clear; as such, these analyses are considered exploratory.

Individual variation in perceptions of the ideal family life course

Individuals may vary in the extent to which they are able to both conceptualize an ideal timing of cohabitation and the actual ideal age ascribed to it. For example, the meaning of social age differs for men and women, particularly with respect to family life events (Aassve, Arpino and Billari 2013; Billari et al. 2010; Moen 1996; Settersten 1997), with women experiencing family life transitions earlier than men. However, Settersten (1997, p. 261) argues that time may operate differently for men and women: men's family life course clocks may be more anchored in linear time and to economic and political spheres, while women's clocks may be less constrained by chronological age but rather tied to the family sphere and to the lives of other people, and therefore more contingent and less predictable.

Personality traits, such as generalized self-efficacy and perceived locus of control, may be linked to an individual's ability to conceptualize ideal ages for family events (Bandura 1977). Self-concept is thought to become more positive with age, but may stabilize in later life, and may be positively associated with (individual and parental) education, employment status and parenthood (Demo 1992; Roberts and DelVecchio 2000; Roberts, Walton and Viechtbauer 2006).

An individual's own experience of particular family events, such as cohabitation, marriage and divorce, may condition their understanding of how cohabitation fits into the family life course. Experiencing union formation (cohabitation or marriage) may increase the saliency of age with respect to family formation, making it easier to conceptualize an ideal age for cohabitation. To the extent that ideals are informed by actual lived experiences, having previously cohabited and/or married would likely lower the perceived ideal age of cohabitation (the ideal for co-residence is likely to be at an age younger than an individual's' own age). The association between cohabitation ideals and divorce are less clear, however. To the extent that

pre-marital cohabitation is associated with a higher risk of union dissolution (Liefbroer and Dourleijn 2006), the previously married may be less likely to perceive cohabitation as part of the ideal family life course, and therefore less likely to offer an ideal age. On the other hand, the majority of second unions begin with cohabitation (Galezewska and Berrington 2014), and thus the previously married might perceive cohabitation as most ideal in second and higher order unions, which generally tend to occur at older ages.

Method

Data and Sample

Data for this analysis come from the third round of the European Social Survey (ESS, 2006/07), a cross-sectional survey of attitudes, beliefs and behavior patterns in 25 European countries (Jowell 2007). The ESS is representative of the population of each participating country that is aged 15 or older, living in private households, and has resided in the country for at least one year. In addition to the main survey, Round 3 included the Timing of Life module, covering the organization of the life-course and, in particular, questions about ideal ages for a range of family life-course behaviors. The data consist of 41,072 respondents in 23 countries where all questions pertaining to cohabitation ideals, norms and experiences were asked.[2] There were approximately 1,000 to 3,000 respondents per country. Response rates ranged from 46.0 to 73.2%, with an average of 63.5%. From this full sample we identify cohabitation norms in each country. For the subsequent analyses of the association between country-level norms and cohabitation ideals, we limit the analysis to individuals in their family forming years (ages 18 – 45) (N = 18,265).

Dependent Variable

[2] We exclude Finland and Austria because respondents were not asked about whether they had ever cohabited.

Our key dependent variables of interest are derived from questions about the ideal age for cohabitation. Respondents were asked "In your opinion, what is the ideal age for a girl or woman/boy or man to start living with a partner she/he is not married to?" The majority of respondents provided numeric responses to the question; however, while interviewers did not offer these response categories, some respondents gave non-numeric responses, that cohabitation was never acceptable, that there was no ideal age or they refused or said they did not know. For our first analysis we investigate the propensity of individuals to offer any of these three non-numeric responses relative a numeric response. In our second analysis, we exclude individuals offering a non-numeric response and focus only on numeric ideal ages (N = 14,409). Finally, in our third analysis, we consider the ideal relative timing of marriage and cohabitation. Again, focusing on those respondents who offer numeric responses to ideal age for marriage and cohabitation questions (N = 13,733), we construct a measure of the difference in the (numeric) ideal ages reported for marriage and cohabitation.

The ESS Timing of Life module had a split ballot design, whereby half of the respondents were randomly assigned female and male versions of the questions, respectively. For instance, e.g. one half of the respondents received questions pertaining women (i.e. "In your opinion, what is the ideal age for a girl or woman to start living with a partner she is not married to?") while the other half was asked the question pertaining to men. Because the age schedules of family events differ for men and women, we conduct all models separately by sex of the target of the ideal age question (i.e. the split ballot assignment).

Independent variables: country-level

Our measure of norms regarding non-marital cohabitation is operationalized at the country-level, by aggregating individual responses to the question "How much do you approve or disapprove if

a [woman/man] lives with a partner they are not married to?: strongly disapprove; disapprove; neither approve nor disapprove; approve; or strongly approve."[3] Across countries, the share of individuals expressing that they disapprove or strongly disapprove of cohabitation is low (minimum 2.6%; median 7.8%; 22.5% maximum; Thomson 2011). Simply looking at average disapproval might lead us to incorrectly conclude that there is uniformity across countries in the distribution of approval/disapproval. Moreover, such a specification obscures the share of individuals in the middle, who respond that they neither approve nor disapprove of cohabitation. In order to better account for the full range of responses within a country (rather than taking a simple average or summary measure), we investigated patterns within the full distribution of aggregated responses by country in order to identify the qualitative nature of cohabitation norms.

We plotted the full weighted distribution of aggregated responses to the question assessing (dis)approval of cohabitation by country and assessed the shape of each distribution. Our evaluation of response patterns revealed four distinct patterns of approval/disapproval (Figure 1a-w), which we incorporate into our models as a set of categorical variables: strong approval, where the majority of respondents report approval or strong approval of non-marital cohabitation (Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway; reference category); (weak) approval, permissive, where the distribution was skewed toward approval but a rather large share of individuals reported neither approval nor disapproval (France, Sweden, Spain, Cyprus, Portugal, Slovenia, Latvia, Hungary, and Poland); majority permissive, where the majority of respondents reported neither approval nor disapproval of non-marital cohabitation (Estonia, Ireland, Great Britain, Germany and Switzerland); and (weak) disapproval, permissive, where the

[3] Respondents could also refuse, respond that they do not know, or simply give no answer. These responses do not contribute to our country-level measure of cohabitation norms.

distribution was skewed toward disapproval but a substantial minority reported neither approval nor disapproval of non-marital cohabitation (Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Slovakia and Ukraine).

[Figure 1 about here]

Independent variables: Individual-level

We also account for a host of individual-level characteristics likely to influence ideal ages for cohabitation. In all models we account for respondent's sex (female as reference category) and for age with a three-category variable: 18 to 24 (reference), 25 to 34 and 35 to 45. We account for immigrant background status with a binary variable indicating majority population (reference) relative to first-generation (born abroad) and second-generation (those born in their country of residence, but with at least one parent born abroad) individuals. Highest level of education completed by the respondent is standardized using the International Standard Classification for Education (ISCED) and specified categorically: less than secondary (reference), lower secondary, upper secondary or some post-secondary, and tertiary education. We include a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent's mother or father completed tertiary education. We account for economic activity by including two variables indicating educational enrollment and paid work in the seven days prior to interview. These last two variables are neither mutually exclusive nor collinear.

Because respondents' family life experiences may influence or reflect ideals, we include a dummy variable identifying those who have ever cohabited and account for respondent's marital status at interview: never married or in a civil partnership (reference), currently married or in a civil partnership, or previously married or in a civil partnership. This last category includes both

the widowed and divorced. Finally, we include an indicator for whether the respondent ever had children.

Procedure

Our analytical procedure varies according to the nature of each dependent variable. For the analysis of non-numeric responses to the question regarding ideal ages, where our dependent variable is an unordered categorical variable and individuals are nested within 23 European countries, we plan to conduct multi-level multinomial logistic regression using the maximum likelihood method to estimate the variance components. We are currently developing these models; however, to give a preliminary indication of these results we present multinomial logistic regression models, accounting for the hierarchical nature of the data (individuals are clustered within countries) by calculating robust standard errors. In our analyses of the ideal age for cohabitation and the relative timing of cohabitation and marriage, we conduct multilevel linear regression analysis, again using the maximum likelihood method to estimate the variance components (Hox 2010; Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2012). In all models, we will assess how non-marital cohabitation ideals are shaped by influences at both the individual- and country-level. While descriptive statistics are weighted, the multilevel regression analyses are not.

Excluding non-numeric responses in the analyses absolute and relative ideal ages for cohabitation may introduce selection bias into out models. To correct for this bias, we follow the approach of Rijken and Billari (2012). We build a multinomial logistic regression model predicting (any) non-numeric response, net of the individual covariates detailed above, introducing an instrumental variable corresponding to the proportion of respondents offering a non-numeric response for ideal age of cohabitation by interviewer (range 0 to 1; (Rijken and Billari 2012, pp. 7-8). We then generate a predicted probability of non-numeric response (results

not shown, but available upon request), and include this propensity score in our models of the ideal age for cohabitation. For our models of the difference in the ideal age of marriage and cohabitation, we follow a similar procedure but predict the probability of offering non-numeric responses to either question, including two instrumental variables capturing the proportion of respondents offering a non-numeric response to the cohabitation and the marriage questions per interviewer, respectively. Similarly, this propensity score is included in our models of the ideal relative timing of marriage and cohabitation.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the full sample of men and women aged 18 to 45 (N = 18,265). Approximately 79% of respondents offered numeric responses to the question regarding the ideal age for cohabitation, 12% said there was no ideal age, 3.5% said it was never ideal and nearly 6% responded that they 'didn't know' or refused to answer the question. For those who provided a numeric response (N = 14,409), the average ideal age for women was 21.4 years (with a standard deviation of 2.9 years) and the ideal age for men was 22.6 (with a standard deviation of 3.3 years). Nearly three-quarters of all respondents (N = 13,733) offered numeric ideal age responses to both the questions regarding the ideal age for marriage and cohabitation, which we used to calculate our dependent variable for the third set of analyses: the ideal difference in age for marriage and cohabitation for women and men was 2.3 years (SD 2.8 years) and 3.1 years (SD 3.0 years), respectively.

[Table 1 about here]

Our sample was nearly balanced between female and male respondents. About 1-in-4 respondents were between the ages of 18 and 24, one-third between 25 and 34 and about 43% between 35 and 45. The majority of respondents were born in their country of residence to two native-born parents. About 17% of respondents had lower secondary education or less, 46% had an upper secondary school education and 37% had a tertiary degree. One third of respondents had at least one parent with a tertiary degree. Most respondents were in paid work in the week prior to the survey (70.1%), and about 14% were in education.

Turning to the respondent's family circumstances, over a third or respondents reported that they had previously cohabited. About 41% of the sample was never married, half were married or in a civil partnership at the time of the survey, and 8.5% had been previously married or in a civil partnership (either divorced or widowed). Almost 3-in-5 reported that they had children. Finally, Table 1 also summarizes the shares of the sample living in different normative contexts: about 6% of the sample lived in countries identified as 'strong approval' contexts, 30.7% in '(weak) approval, permissive' countries, 25% in 'majority permissive' contexts, and 38.3% in '(weak) disapproval, permissive' countries.

Non-numeric responses to the ideal age questions

Table 2 presents preliminary analyses of non-numeric responses to questions concerning the ideal age of cohabitation for men and women. These multinomial logistic regressions accounted for the hierarchical nature of the data by calculating robust standard errors (individuals are clustered within countries). Our dependent variable captured the category of response to the ideal age question: numeric response (reference), no ideal age, never, and don't know or refused.

[Table 2a about here]

[Table 2b about here]

There was a slightly positive age gradient for all categories of non-numeric (relative to numeric) response, however only the coefficients for 'No ideal age' and 'Never' for women's cohabitation reached conventional levels of statistical significance. We only distinguished a positive educational gradient in the propensity to offer non-numeric response for the category of 'no ideal age' for women's cohabitation; for the other response categories for women and for all response categories for men there was no clear pattern of association with education. For both men's and women's cohabitation, being in paid work in the week prior to the survey was associated with a lower propensity to offer a response of never and respond 'don't know' or refuse to answer the question consistent with social-psychological theories that employment may be associated with higher levels of self-efficacy and perceived locus of control. A current or prior experience of cohabitation was consistently associated with providing a numeric response to the ideal age for both men's and women's cohabitation.

Turning to categories of normative contexts, we found very consistent patterns of association with questions pertaining to both women and men's cohabitation ideals. By and large, respondents in 'strong approval' contexts were most likely to offer numeric responses to the ideal age question. However, the relationship between (dis-)approval and different categories of non-numeric responses did not appear to be linear. Those living in 'majority permissive' contexts were most likely to offer the response 'there is no ideal age' for cohabitation, suggesting that this response category is indeed associated with permissiveness. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those residing in '(weak) disapproval, permissive' contexts were the most likely to report that cohabitation was 'never' ideal; the other normative contexts could not be distinguished from one another. Finally, living in a 'strong approval' context was negatively associated with individual

responses of 'don't know' or refusal, as compared to all other contexts (which could not be distinguished from each other).

The ideal age for cohabitation

Results from multilevel linear regression of ideal ages for women and men's cohabitation are presented in Table 3. All else equal, female (vs. male) and older respondents were more likely to report older ages for both men's and women's cohabitation. Respondent's higher education was associated with older ideal ages for cohabitation for both men and women, consistent with studies demonstrating that the highly educated are more likely to postpone family formation. Having at least one parent who completed tertiary education was also associated with older ideal ages for cohabitation, but for women only. Interestingly, we found differential associations between economic status and the ideal ages for men's and women's cohabitation: respondents who were in paid work in the week prior to interview were more likely to report an older age for men's and women's cohabitation; respondents who were enrolled in education were more likely to report an older age for women's cohabitation only. Having ever experienced cohabitation and being currently married (relative to never married) were associated with a younger ideal age for cohabitation. Parenthood was not statistically associated with ideal ages for women or men's cohabitation.

[Table 3 about here]

Our main question was to what extent norms at the societal level are relevant for the ideal ages as expressed by the respondents. Although not all country-level coefficients of cohabitation norms reached statistical significant, the general trend revealed a positive association between

approval of cohabitation and ideal ages for women's and men's cohabitation: individuals living in strong approving and (weak) approving, permissive contexts reported the oldest ideal ages, individuals living in (weak) disapproving, permissive contexts reported the youngest ideal ages, and the ideal ages of those living in majority permissive societies fell in between. The gradient in the association between norms and ideal ages was stronger for women than for men. About 25% of the unexplained variation in ideal ages for cohabitation was at the country level.

The relative ideal timing of marriage and cohabitation

Table 4 presents results for multilevel models of the difference in ideal ages for marriage and cohabitation. There was evidence of differences in the ideal spacing of women's cohabitation and marriage by age of the respondent: respondents over the age of 25 tended to prefer approximately three-to-four month shorter spacing than respondents under age 25. This may indicate that cohabitation is associated with different ideal meanings at different stages in the life course or it may suggest different meanings of cohabitation by cohort: younger respondents may see cohabitation as part of the dating process, while older respondents consider to it to be part of the marriage process. Due to the cross sectional nature of our data we were unable to draw firm conclusion on either of these potential explanations from our finding. Interestingly, the age gradient was only found for women and not for men, suggesting that gender may condition perceptions of the ideal family life course. Immigrant background was only associated with a narrower ideal spacing of cohabitation and marriage (only marginally significant at the 10%-level for men). Respondent's education was positively associated with the ideal spacing between cohabitation and marriage: the more highly educated tend to report a longer ideal spacing between marriage and cohabitation than the less educated. Parental tertiary education was also

associated with longer spacing, but only for men's cohabitation and marriage. Longer ideal spacing was associated with educational enrollment for men and employment for women.

[Table 4 about here]

Looking at the family life course stage of the respondent, we found that those who have ever cohabited reported a wider ideal spacing between cohabitation and marriage, but other family life transitions tended to be associated with a narrower ideal spacing: the married reported about a 3-month shorter difference between the ideal age of marriage and cohabitation versus the never-married (for women's cohabitation only), and parents tended to prefer a 4-month shorter difference relative to non-parents (for women and men's cohabitation), all else equal.

Turning to country-level norms, 'strong approval' of cohabitation tended to be associated with a wider ideal spacing of marriage and cohabitation, while disapproval tended to be associated with a narrower (or, for some, possibly no) spacing. Again, few coefficients reached statistical significance, but it was notable that the trend in ideal spacing was not linear as with absolute ideal ages for cohabitation; the positive coefficient for majority permissive suggests that in these contexts cohabitation may be most distinct from the marriage process. About 20% of the unexplained variation in the ideal relative timing of marriage and cohabitation was at the country level.

Discussion

Whether life courses are structured by social norms, collective assessments of what people should do and when they should do it, or are primarily governed by individual preferences is a central debate within family sociology (Liefbroer and Billari 2010). The current study contributes to this

debate by investigating how individual characteristics and norms regarding non-marital cohabitation structure individuals' understanding of how cohabitation fits into the ideal family life course. Using data from the European Social Survey (Round 3, 2006/07), we built a typology of the normative context of non-marital cohabitation across the 23 survey countries. We identified four ideal types of cohabitation (dis)approval: strong approval contexts, where the majority of respondents report approval of non-marital cohabitation (Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway); (weak) approval, permissive, where the distribution was negatively skewed toward approval but where a sizable share of respondents chose a middle, 'permissive' category (neither approval nor disapproval) (France, Sweden, Spain, Cyprus, Portugal, Slovenia, Latvia, Hungary, and Poland); majority permissive, where the majority of respondents reported neither approval nor disapproval of non-marital cohabitation (Estonia, Ireland, Great Britain, Germany and Switzerland); and (weak) disapproval, permissive, where the distribution was positively skewed but a substantial minority reported neither approval nor disapproval of non-marital cohabitation (Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Slovakia and Ukraine).

We explored how these normative contexts, as well as individual characteristics, may condition an individual's perceptions of cohabitation: whether they are able to conceptualize a numeric ideal age or believe that there is 'no ideal age' or that cohabitation is 'never' ideal; the actual ideal ages reported for cohabitation; and the relative ideal timing of marriage and cohabitation. It seems that the SDT theorists and the proponents of the importance of norms are both right: we found that both individual characteristics and normative contexts shape cohabitation ideals in Europe.

Normative context was strongly associated with the propensity to give differential non-numeric responses to the ideal age for cohabitation question, and the key demarcations between contexts seemed to be related to the strength of approval and the degree of permissiveness. Those

living in strongly approving contexts were most likely to offer numeric responses to the ideal age question and least likely to respond that they 'didn't know' or refuse to answer. This finding suggests that, in these contexts, individuals may have the strongest sense of age grading of cohabitation, and its place in the (family) life course may be most established. On the other hand, the 'no ideal age' response was clearly associated with permissiveness: those living in 'majority permissive' contexts were most likely to give this response, however it was also evident in both the (weakly) approving and (weakly) disapproving, permissive contexts. Clearly then, a response of 'there is no ideal age' does not indicate a strong acceptance of cohabitation, but perhaps the lack of a firm sense of the ideal life-timing of cohabitation. Unsurprisingly, we found the strongest positive association between residing in '(weakly) disapproving, permissive' contexts and the response that cohabitation was 'never' ideal.

Normative contexts were also related to ideal ages for cohabitation and the relative timing of marriage and cohabitation, however this association was strongest where there was a tendency toward disapproval. In these '(weakly) disapproving, permissive' contexts, respondents tended to prefer younger ideal ages for cohabitation, while at the same time reporting a shorter spacing between the ideal timing of marriage and cohabitation. With respect to the absolute ideal ages, the normative context variable may serve as a proxy for other attributes of the countries, particularly a preference for earlier ages of family formation. However, the finding regarding the relative ideal timing of cohabitation suggests that in (weakly) disapproving contexts, cohabitation may be closely linked to marriage the marriage process and in fact, for many, the ideal timing for a couple to co-reside is only at marriage.

These findings also suggest that permissiveness, measured here by the country-level share of those reporting that they neither approve nor disapprove of cohabitation, may be distinct from the approval/disapproval gradient. Looking at full distribution of responses to (dis)approval

questions may be useful for identifying and understanding permissiveness. The emergence of permissiveness as a characteristic of normative contexts is consistent with the emphasis on the diminishing importance of norms in governing family demographic behaviors within SDT theory. However, it is also notable that in several countries of Northern and Western Europe (Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway), where family and value changes may have first taken hold, we find little evidence of permissiveness with respect to cohabitation. On the other hand, it may be that new norms toward cohabitation are developing in these 'strong approval' contexts. If so, a question assessing approval versus disapproval may not be sufficient for understanding whether a new positive cohabitation norm exists. Rather, it may be necessary for social theorists to consider new types of questions to assess emerging cohabitation norms, such as: "*a couple considering marriage should always live together first."*

In our models of absolute and relative ideal ages we found greater variation within countries (between individuals) than across countries. Still, it may be possible to explain the 20 to 25% residual variation at the country level by drawing in additional contextual covariates. In particular, it may be useful to consider the country-level incidence and prevalence of non-marital cohabitation, as well as the degree of institutionalization of cohabitation within countries, comparing the rights and responsibilities of cohabiters relative to married couples (Perelli−Harris and Gassen 2012). Additional measures of the diffusion of values associated with the Second Demographic Transition, such as measures of gender equality and secularism, may also shed light on differences in cohabitation ideals.

Alongside normative contexts, individuals' characteristics were important for predicting individuals' absolute and relative ideal ages for cohabitation. One's own experience of family-life events, such as having ever cohabited, being married, and parenthood, tended to predict younger ages of cohabitation. Those who had ever formed a partnership (co-residential and/or

married) and those with children will have entered that union or borne children earlier than those who have never (or not yet) married or become parents, all else equal. If individual tend to construct their ideals to be consistent with their own lived experiences, we would indeed expect those who are currently married or who have ever cohabited to prefer younger ages for family formation, and thus cohabitation. Married individuals and parents were more likely to report a narrower spacing of marriage and cohabitation. Those in married families and parents may be more likely to view cohabitation as part of the family formation process than those who have not formed marital or childbearing unions, who are more likely to view cohabitation as distinct from marriage and childbearing. The experience of a previous cohabitation, however, was associated with a wider spacing of marriage and cohabitation. Individuals who view cohabitation as distinct from the marriage process, either because they see cohabitation as an alternative to dating or because it is an alternative to marriage, and see a wider spacing of marriage and cohabitation as ideal, will be under-represented among those who are currently married, but over-represented among the ever-cohabited.

Turning to socio-economic characteristics, consistent with studies showing increasing postponement of family behaviors among the highly educated, we found that those with a tertiary education tended to offer older ideal ages for cohabitation than those with lower levels of education. At the same time, the more highly educated also tended to view a larger spacing between cohabitation and marriage. This finding provides support for differences in the way that cohabitation fits into the ideal family life course by educational attainment across Europe: for the less highly educated, cohabitation may be more closely bound to the marriage process than for the highly educated. The highly educated, often considered to be pioneers with respect to individualism and less influenced by norms against premarital cohabitation, may be more likely to view non-marital cohabitation as part of the ideal family life course, but distinct from

marriage. Indeed, this finding would also be consistent with the possible emergence of cohabitation as an acceptable context for bearing children, while marriage becomes a capstone event, coming may come later in the family life course (Cherlin 2004; Holland 2013; Lappegård and Noack 2015).

The Timing of Life module in the 2006 European Social Survey had a unique split ballot design which enabled us to explore how normative contexts and individual characteristics varied in their association with cohabitation ideal depending on whether the target of the ideals question was male or female. Living in a '(weak) disapproval, permissive' context was more strongly associated with younger ideal ages for cohabitation and a smaller spacing of marriage and cohabitation for women than for men. The association between respondents' current economic status and their cohabitation ideals also varied by gender of the target. Being enrolled in education was associated with older ideal ages for women's cohabitation, but only paid work was (positively) associated with the ideal spacing of women's marriage and cohabitation. On the other hand, those enrolled in education reported a wider ideal spacing for men's cohabitation and marriage. So too was the association between the age of the respondent and several of our ideals measures contingent upon the sex of the target. While a positive age gradient for the absolute ideal age of marriage was evident regardless of the sex of the target, older cohorts of respondents tended report shorter ideal spacing of women's cohabitation and marriage than younger cohorts, but this was not the case for men's cohabitation and marriage. This may suggests that older generations view cohabitation as more closely tied to marriage for women but not for men. We also found that older respondents were more likely to respond that women's cohabitation was 'never' ideal, while there was no similar age gradient in the 'never' response for men's cohabitation. These findings may suggest that older respondents may be more disapproving of women's cohabitation, particularly when it's not linked to marriage. At the same time, we found

similar gender differences in the age gradient of in responding that there was 'no ideal age' for cohabitation, pointing toward the possibility of greater uncertainty or permissiveness about how cohabitation fits into the ideal family life course for older respondent's answer about women's cohabitation, but not men's. These findings are consistent with previous studies of divorce and childlessness using the same data (Rijken and Merz 2014; Rijken and Liefbroer 2010), and highlight the importance of gender when investigating individual perceptions of and societal norms toward new family behaviors . (Settersten 1997)

Taken together this study has provided new insights into how the ideal timing of cohabitation may be associated with the meaning of cohabitation for individuals and it's role in the family life course within different European countries. The rotating Timing of Life module included in the 2006 European Social Survey was extremely unique, allowing for a deeper exploration of attitudes and norms across Europe. No other data source has included such a rich array of questions pertaining to values, norms and ideals regarding the family life, for such a wide range of countries. While these data are nearly 10 years old, the insights gained from the module have been instrumental to our understanding European family life, in general, as well as allowing for the exploration of the meaning individuals attach to new family behaviors, such as cohabitation. Replicating this module in a future round of the ESS would provide exciting new opportunities for exploring change over time in cohabitation ideals and norms.

Acknowledgments

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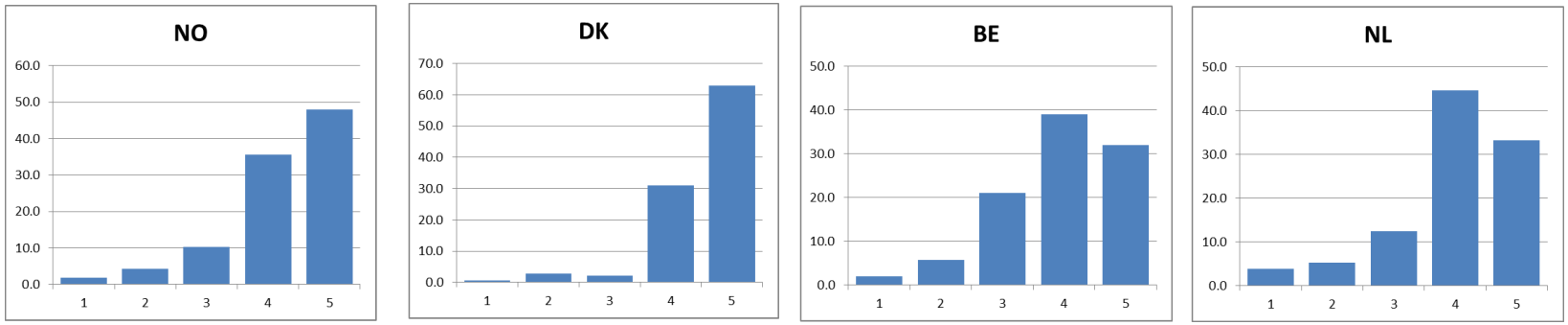
Figures

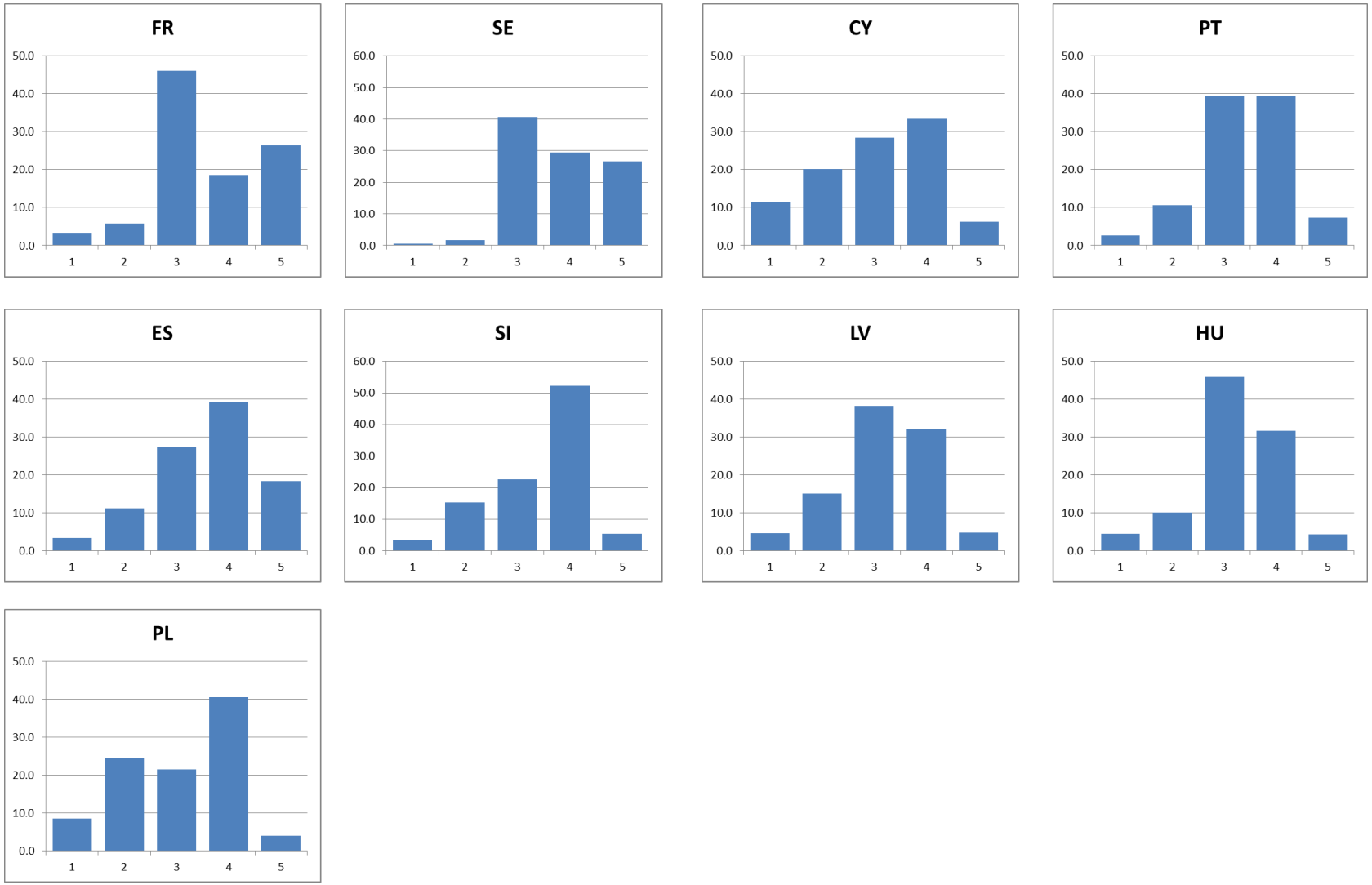
Figure 1. Cohabitation norms, by country

Figures 1a-d. Strong Approval



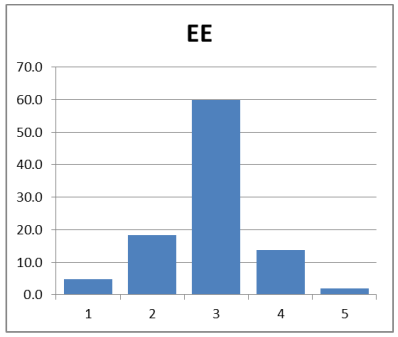
Source: European Social Survey Round 3 (2006/07).
NOTE: Responses to the question: "How much do you approve or disapprove if a [woman/man] lives with partner not married to? Strongly disapprove (1); disapprove (2); neither approve nor disapprove (3); approve (4); or strongly approve (5)."

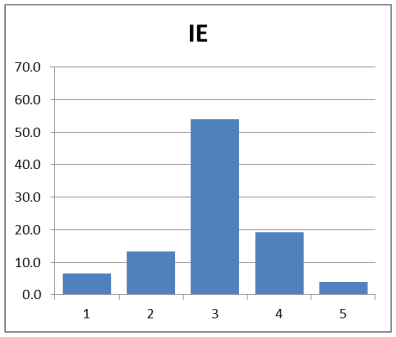
Figures 1e-m. (Weak) Approval, Permissive

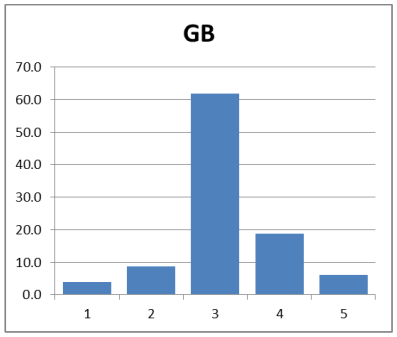


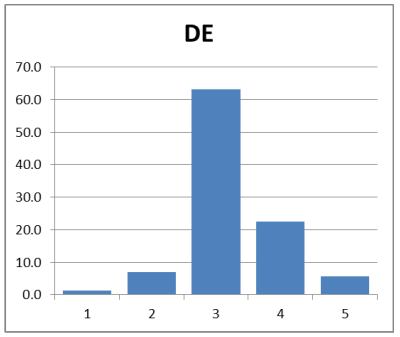
Source: European Social Survey Round 3 (2006/07).
NOTE: Responses to the question: "How much do you approve or disapprove if a [woman/man] lives with partner not married to? Strongly disapprove (1); disapprove (2); neither approve nor disapprove (3); approve (4); or strongly approve (5)."

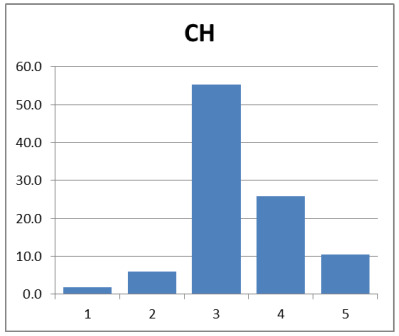
Figures 1n-r. Majority Permissive





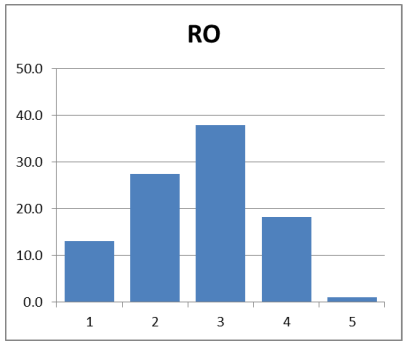


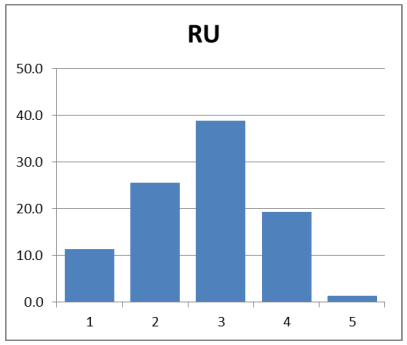


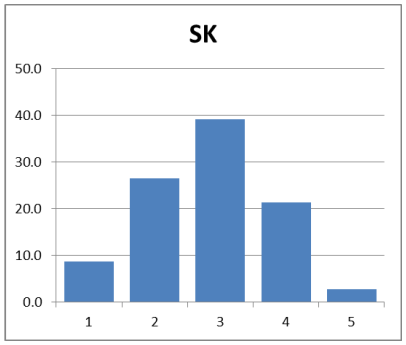


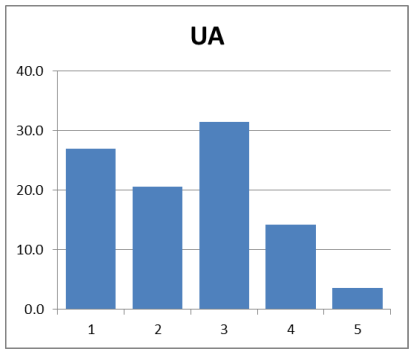
Source: European Social Survey Round 3 (2006/07).
NOTE: Responses to the question: “How much do you approve or disapprove if a [woman/man] lives with partner not married to? Strongly disapprove (1); disapprove (2); neither approve nor disapprove (3); approve (4); or strongly approve (5).”

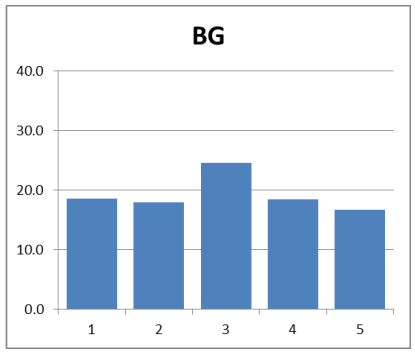
Figures 1s-w. (Weak) Disapproval, Permissive











Source: European Social Survey Round 3 (2006/07).
NOTE: Responses to the question: “How much do you approve or disapprove if a [woman/man] lives with partner not married to? Strongly disapprove (1); disapprove (2); neither approve nor disapprove (3); approve (4); or strongly approve (5).”

Tables

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

	Unweighted N	Weighted %
Dependent variables		
Ideal age for Cohabitation		
Numeric Response	14,409	78.7
Mean Women (years, weighted)	21.4	
SD Women (years, weighted)	2.9	
Mean Men (years, weighted)	22.6	
SD Men (years, weighted)	3.3	
No ideal age	2,336	12.0
Never	552	3.5
Don't Know, Refused or missing	968	5.8
Difference between Ideal age for Marriage and Cohabitation		
Numeric response (both questions)	13,733	74.9
Mean Women (years, weighted)	2.3	
SD Women (years, weighted)	2.8	
Mean Men (years, weighted)	3.1	
SD Men (years, weighted)	3.0	
Individual-level		
Female	9,706	53.1
Age category		
18-24	4,099	24.8
25-34	6,290	32.7
35-45	7,876	42.6
Immigrant background	3,046	15.8
Highest education completed		
Less than secondary	778	3.6
Secondary	2,729	13.3
More than secondary, less than tertiary	8,796	46.0
Tertiary	5,962	37.1
Mother/Father teriary education	4,996	34.5
In education	2,519	14.3
In paid work	13,151	70.1
Ever cohabited	7,534	37.7
Marital Status		
Never married	7,687	40.6
Married	8,926	50.9
Ever married	1,652	8.5
Any children	10,127	56.5
Country-level		
Normative context		
Strong approval	3,037	6.0
(Weak) Approval, permissive	6,728	30.7
Majortity permissive	4,379	25.0
(Weak) Disapproval, permissive	4,121	38.3
N	18,265	

European Social Survey 2006/07.

Table 2a Multinomial Logistic Regression of Non-Numeric Categories of Response to Ideal Age for Women's Cohabitation

	No ideal age (vs. numeric response)			Never (vs. numeric response)			Don't know/refused/skipped (vs. numeric response)		
	B	Robust SE	exp(B)	B	Robust SE	exp(B)	B	Robust SE	exp(B)
Constant	-3.23	0.34 ***	0.04	-3.76	0.42 ***	0.02	-3.15	0.44 ***	0.04
Individual-Level									
Female	0.24	0.09 **	1.27	-0.12	0.12	0.88	0.03	0.11	1.03
Age category									
18-24	0.00		1.00	0.00		1.00	0.00		1.00
25-34	0.36	0.09 ***	1.43	0.37	0.16 *	1.44	0.04	0.12	1.04
35-45	0.45	0.07 ***	1.57	0.65	0.18 ***	1.92	0.12	0.16	1.13
Immigrant background (1st, 2nd gen)	0.05	0.07	1.05	0.72	0.25 **	2.05	0.17	0.16	1.19
Highest education completed									
Less than secondary	0.00		1.00	0.00		1.00	0.00		1.00
Secondary	0.28	0.20	1.32	0.14	0.33	1.15	-0.02	0.24	0.98
More than secondary	0.31	0.18	1.37	0.26	0.35	1.30	-0.22	0.24	0.80
Tertiary or more	0.55	0.15 ***	1.73	0.27	0.27	1.31	-0.25	0.22	0.78
Mother/Father tertiary education	0.11	0.08	1.12	-0.35	0.18	0.70	0.01	0.12	1.01
In education	0.16	0.11	1.17	0.19	0.37	1.21	-0.26	0.14	0.77
In paid work	-0.10	0.08	0.90	-0.64	0.12 ***	0.53	-0.35	0.10 ***	0.70
Ever cohabited	-0.24	0.11 *	0.79	-1.98	0.22 ***	0.14	-0.45	0.15 **	0.64
Marital Status									
Never married	0.00		1.00	0.00		1.00	0.00		1.01
Married	-0.19	0.10	0.83	0.28	0.23	1.32	-0.05	0.12	0.95
Ever married	-0.07	0.12	0.93	0.40	0.27	1.49	0.14	0.19	1.16
Any children	-0.19	0.13	0.83	0.16	0.18	1.17	-0.25	0.16	0.78
Country Level									
Normative context									
Strong approval	0.00		1.00	0.00		1.00	0.00		1.00
(Weak) Approval, permissive	0.95	0.37 *	2.60	0.33	0.48	1.39	1.11	0.38 **	3.03
Majority permissive	1.17	0.34 ***	3.23	0.19	0.36	1.21	1.04	0.36 **	2.84
(Weak) Disapproval, permissive	0.98	0.35 **	2.67	1.16	0.37 **	3.18	1.34	0.35 ***	3.83
Individuals		9070			9070			9070	
Countries		23			23			23	

European Social Survey 2006/07.
*** 99.9% ** 99% * 95% confidence interval.

Table 2b Multinomial Logistic Regression of Non-Numeric Categories of Response to Ideal Age for Men's Cohabitation

	No ideal age (vs. numeric response)			Never (vs. numeric response)			Don't know/refused/skipped (vs. numeric response)		
	B	Robust SE	exp(B)	B	Robust SE	exp(B)	B	Robust SE	exp(B)
Constant	-2.61	0.50 ***	0.07	-4.32	0.38 ***	0.01	-2.75	0.45 ***	0.06
Individual Level									
Female	-0.04	0.08	0.96	-0.04	0.16	0.96	0.01	0.11	1.02
Age category									
18-24	0.00		1.00	0.00		1.00	0.00		1.00
25-34	0.22	0.14	1.25	0.05	0.29	1.05	0.28	0.21	1.33
35-45	0.29	0.16	1.34	0.24	0.31	1.27	0.41	0.22	1.51
Immigrant background (1st, 2nd gen)	-0.03	0.12	0.97	0.37	0.22	1.45	0.01	0.15	1.01
Highest education completed									
Less than secondary	0.00		1.00	0.00		1.00	0.00		1.00
Secondary	-0.38	0.27	0.69	0.28	0.29	1.32	-0.49	0.25 *	0.62
More than secondary	-0.21	0.34	0.81	0.23	0.29	1.26	-0.43	0.24	0.65
Tertiary or more	-0.03	0.30	0.97	0.35	0.32	1.41	-0.39	0.27	0.68
Mother/Father tertiary education	0.08	0.10	1.09	-0.18	0.24	0.83	0.08	0.14	1.08
In education	0.03	0.14	1.03	0.32	0.20	1.38	-0.18	0.20	0.84
In paid work	0.01	0.09	1.01	-0.52	0.15 ***	0.60	-0.53	0.12 ***	0.59
Ever cohabited	-0.32	0.09 ***	0.72	-1.68	0.31 ***	0.19	-0.42	0.13 ***	0.66
Marital Status									
Never married	0.00		1.00	0.00		1.00	0.00		1.01
Married	-0.16	0.10	0.85	0.65	0.29 *	1.92	-0.01	0.14	0.99
Ever married	-0.04	0.17	0.96	0.78	0.42	2.17	0.20	0.22	1.22
Any children	-0.09	0.11	0.92	0.06	0.21	1.06	-0.33	0.12 **	0.72
Country Level									
Normative context									
Strong approval	0.00		1.00	0.00		1.00	0.00		1.00
(Weak) Approval, permissive	1.04	0.41 *	2.83	0.88	0.41 *	2.42	0.81	0.37 *	2.25
Majority permissive	1.31	0.37 ***	3.72	0.02	0.43	1.02	1.00	0.37 **	2.73
(Weak) Disapproval, permissive	1.02	0.36 **	2.77	1.29	0.35 ***	3.62	1.41	0.36 ***	4.11
Individuals		9195			9195			9195	
Countries		23			23			23	

European Social Survey 2006/07.
*** 99.9% ** 99% * 95% confidence interval.

Table 3. Multilevel Linear Regression Models of Ideal Age for Men's and Women's Cohabitation

	Women			Men		
	B	SE		B	SE	
Constant	20.46	0.51	***	21.81	0.59	***
Individual Level						
Predicted probabilty of numeric response (from IV analysis)	0.42	0.22		-0.24	0.24	
Female	0.47	0.07	***	0.75	0.07	***
Age category						
18-24	0.00			0.00		
25-34	0.45	0.11	***	0.67	0.12	***
35-45	0.67	0.12	***	0.93	0.13	***
Immigrant background	0.08	0.09		0.19	0.10	
Highest education completed						
Less than secondary	0.00			0.00		
Secondary	0.37	0.18	*	0.31	0.21	
More than secondary	0.77	0.17	***	0.76	0.20	***
Tertiary	1.16	0.18	***	1.02	0.20	***
Mother/Father teriary education	0.24	0.08	**	0.08	0.09	
In education	0.36	0.12	**	0.17	0.13	
In paid work	0.17	0.09	*	0.37	0.09	***
Ever cohabited	-0.36	0.07	***	-0.21	0.08	*
Marital Status						
Never married	0.00			0.00		
Married	-0.50	0.10	***	-0.84	0.11	***
Ever married	-0.16	0.14		-0.23	0.15	
Any children	-0.11	0.10		-0.15	0.10	
Country Level						
Normative context						
Strong approval	0.00			0.00		
(Weak) Approval, permissive	0.23	0.52		0.65	0.60	
Majortity permissive	-0.39	0.58	*	-0.22	0.67	
(Weak) Disapproval, permissive	-1.50	0.58	**	-0.83	0.67	
Random effects						
Country SD	0.85	0.13		0.99	0.15	
Residual SD	2.72	0.02		2.97	0.02	
Individuals	7135			7257		
Countries	23			23		

European Social Survey 2006/07.
*** 99.9% ** 99% * 95% confidence interval.

Table 4. Multilevel Linear Regression Models of the Difference in the Ideal Age for Men's and Women's Marriage and Cohabitation

	Women			Men		
	B	SE		B	SD	
Constant	2.44	0.43	***	2.44	0.46	***
Individual Level						
Predicted probabilty of numeric response (from IV analysis)	0.29	0.21		0.45	0.23	
Female	0.07	0.07		-0.13	0.07	
Age category						
18-24	0.00			0.00		
25-34	-0.27	0.11	*	0.08	0.12	
35-45	-0.31	0.12	**	-0.16	0.13	
Immigrant background (1st, 2nd gen)	-0.21	0.09	*	-0.15	0.10	
Highest education completed						
Less than secondary	0.00			0.00		
Secondary	0.05	0.18		0.40	0.20	*
More than secondary	0.37	0.17	*	0.42	0.20	*
Tertiary	0.51	0.18	**	0.56	0.20	**
Mother/Father tertiary education	0.04	0.08		0.28	0.09	**
In education	0.16	0.12		0.41	0.13	**
In paid work	0.23	0.09	**	0.11	0.09	
Ever cohabited	0.68	0.07	***	0.48	0.08	***
Marital Status						
Never married	0.00			0.00		
Married	-0.26	0.10	**	-0.10	0.11	
Ever married	-0.18	0.14		0.02	0.15	
Any children	-0.32	0.10	***	-0.32	0.11	**
Country Level						
Normative context						
Strong approval	0.00			0.00		
(Weak) Approval, permissive	-0.60	0.40		-0.59	0.41	
Majority permissive	0.31	0.45		0.33	0.46	
(Weak) Disapproval, permissive	-1.08	0.45	*	-0.41	0.46	
Random effects						
Country SD	0.65	0.10		0.67	0.10	
Residual SD	2.66	0.02		2.92	0.02	
Individuals	6774			6942		
Countries	23			23		

European Social Survey 2006/07.
*** 99.9% ** 99% * 95% confidence interval.

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