

The influence of parental SES on cohabiting and single parenthood across Europe

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Over the past decades, there has been an increase in the percentage of children born outside marriage in Western societies (Sobotka & Toulemon, 2008). The Second Demographic Theory postulates that this is mostly due to attitudinal change, initially adopted by the higher educated (Van de Kaa, 2001). However, the Pattern of Disadvantage suggest that the increase in nonmarital births is instead caused by technological changes and an increase in economic hardship which hit people with a lower socio-economic status disproportionately (Perelli-Harris et al., 2010). In the literature, a question has therefore been raised as to whether nonmarital childbearing is a phenomenon especially common among the higher or instead among the lower socio-economic strata. Research in fact shows that the relationship with social class strongly differs between countries (Perelli-Harris & Gerber, 2011; Perelli-Harris et al., 2010; Wu, 1996). The current paper will build upon this research but instead of focusing on characteristics of the respondent, across countries we will examine how the socio-economic status of the respondent's parents influences the chance of becoming a cohabiting or a single parent. We will use the data of the Generations and Gender Survey which contains information on 19 European and non-European Western societies.