Well-being premium to marriage
Time trends and macro processes involved

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The married are happier!

- direct effect
- indirect effect
- selection
- heterogeneity
  - couples with large income differences; specialization + children (Stutzer & Frey 2006)
  - religious countries (♂ & ♀), more gender-traditional countries (♀) (Lee & Ono 2012)

but...

USA studies:

- ▶ evidence of some decrease of the happiness gap between the married and the never married (Lee et al 1991)
- ▶ growth of marital discord (Rogers, Amato 2000)

Broader social processes:

- ▶ individualism $=$ more fragile family bonds
- ▶ geographical mobility, women's employment
- ▶ demographic changes: lowering marriage and fertility rates, increasing frequency of divorce and cohabitation

Did the happiness premium to marriage really decrease?

Which macro factors affect the happiness premium to marriage?

Specialization

Becker 1992
Treatise on the Family

- stable arrangement
- different types of productivity
- builds marriage premium

Hypotheses

The happiness premium to marriage decreased over time

The happiness premium to marriage is higher, when the economic specialization of spouses is stronger

The decline of economic specialization between spouses is related to decreasing happiness premium to marriage

Data and method

- WVS+EVS

- 3-level MLM:
  individuals $\rightarrow$ country-year $\rightarrow$ country
  84 countries, $\approx$200 000 respondents, years 1981-2009
- analysis of time trends:
  49 countries (min 3 waves)

Decreasing SWB premium to marriage?

Decreasing SWB premium to marriage? - MLM

	Happiness	Life satisfaction
Individual-level variables:		
married	0.160	0.323
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
cohabiting	0.106	0.219
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
widowed	−0.020	0.039
	(0.015)*	(0.143)
divorced	−0.037	−0.051
	(0.000)***	(0.100)
other indiv. vars	yes	yes
Trend of well-being:		
year	0.005	−0.008
	(0.005)*	(0.185)
married × year	−0.003	−0.007
	(0.000)***	(0.002)*
(per 10 years)	−.029 ≈ 18%	−.066 ≈ 20%

Decreasing SWB premium to marriage? - MLM

- ► Estimation for **age groups**
  $\rightarrow$ rather consistent downward trend

- ► Estimation for **groups of countries**
  $\rightarrow$ downward trend in developing and developed countries
  BUT transition countries are a special case: positive
  trends for life satisfaction and flat trends for happiness

Does specialization equal happy marriage?

=

?

Does specialization equal happy marriage? - MLM

	Happiness	Life satisfaction
Country-year specific variables:		
specialization (c)	0.010	0.524
	(0.895)	(0.056)[+]
GDP, ln (c)	0.039	0.379
	(0.080)[+]	(0.000)***
fertility rate (c)	0.021	0.028
	(0.302)	(0.714)
political rights of women (c)	0.013	−0.033
	(0.662)	(0.752)
social rights of women (c)	0.047	0.328
	(0.041)*	(0.000)***
Cross-level interactions:		
married x specialization (c)	0.049	0.029
	(0.005)*	(0.609)
married x GDP (c)	0.017	0.079
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
married x fertility rate (c)	−0.026	−0.081
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***
married x political rights of women (c)	0.018	0.032
	(0.011)*	(0.174)
married x social rights of women (c)	−0.007	−0.065
	(0.215)	(0.000)***

# Does specialization equal happy marriage? - MLM

▶ Estimation for **age groups**
$\rightarrow$ well-being premium to marriage depends on level of specialization in age group 15-24 y.o.
(& for happiness for group 55-64 y.o.; negative effect for life satisfaction in group 65-74 y.o.)

▶ Estimation for **groups of countries**
$\rightarrow$ happiness premium to marriage depends on specialization level only in developing countries
$\rightarrow$ life satisfaction premium to marriage negatively correlates with specialization level in transition countries

Does specialization equal happy marriage? - MLM

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Marriage well-being gap

Size of effects: fertility rate for groups of countries
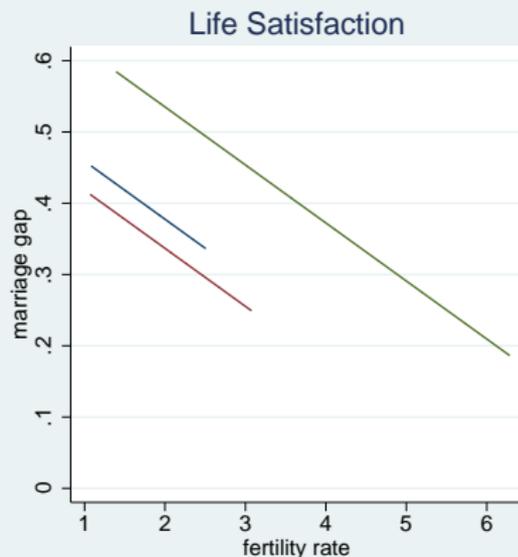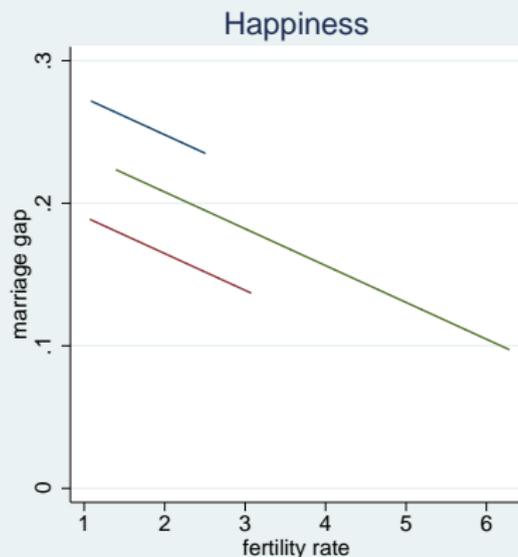
Marriage well-being gap

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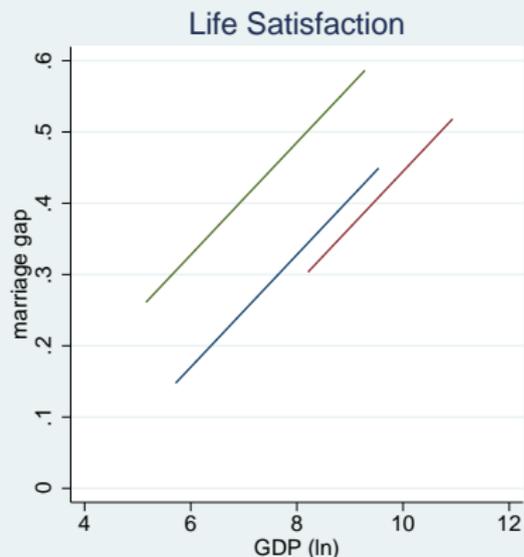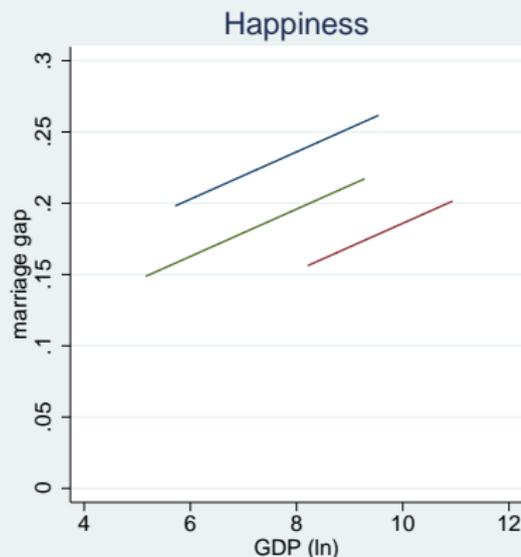
Do the trends go in the same direction?

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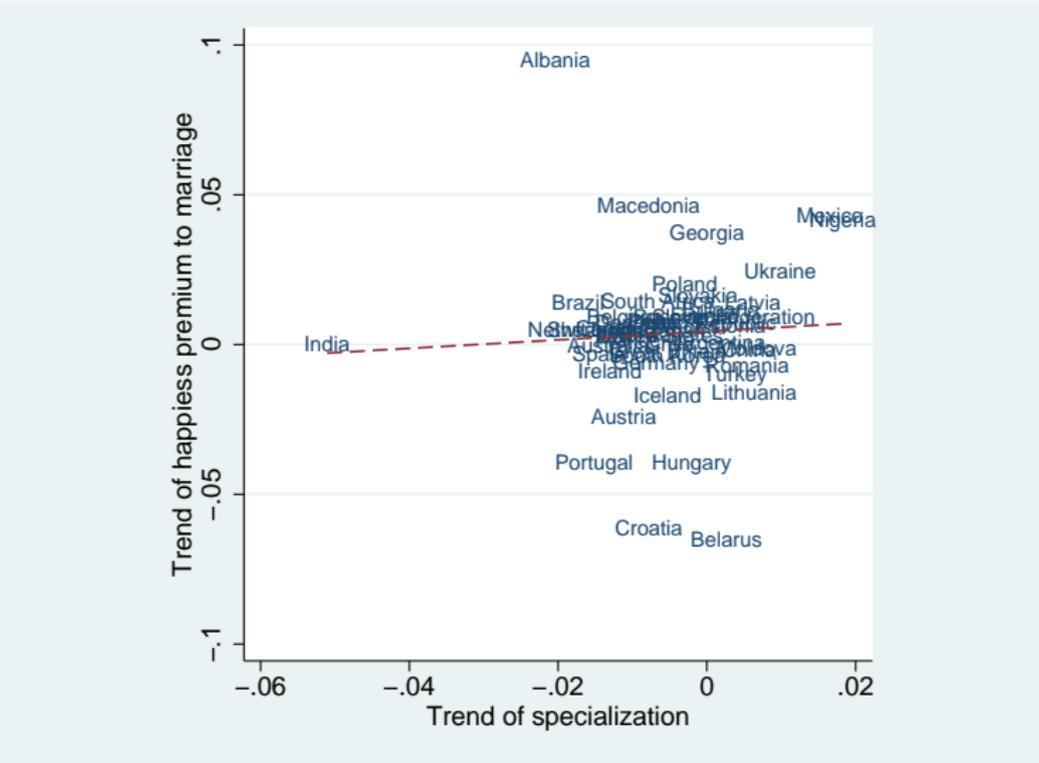
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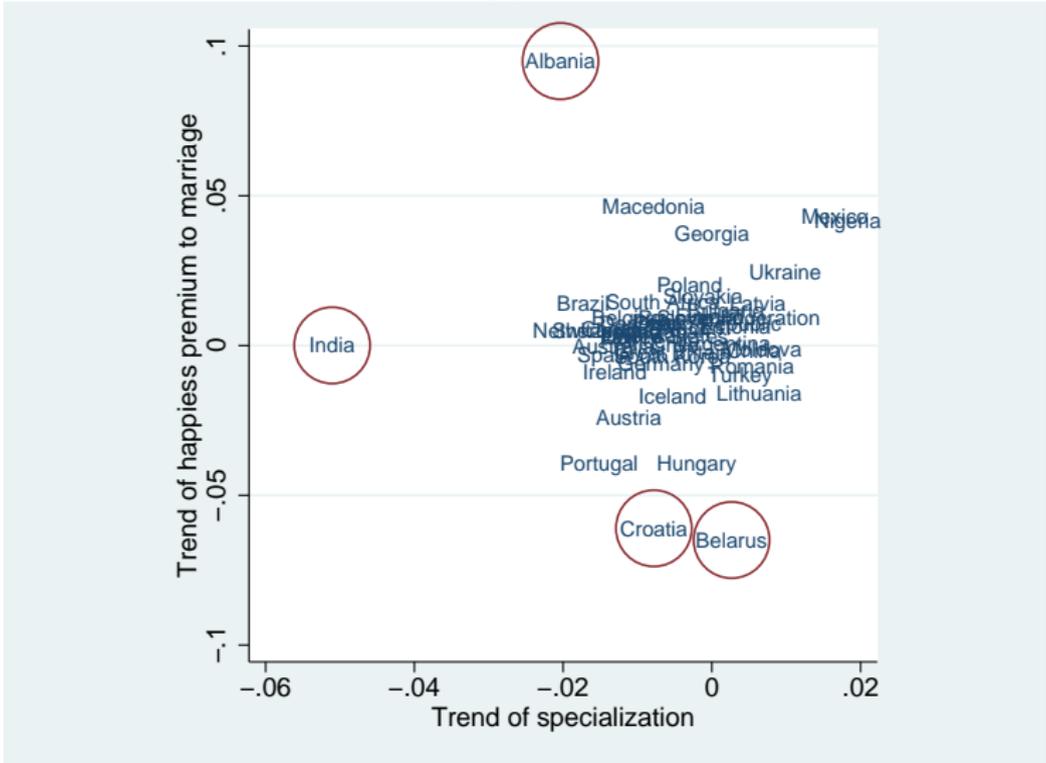
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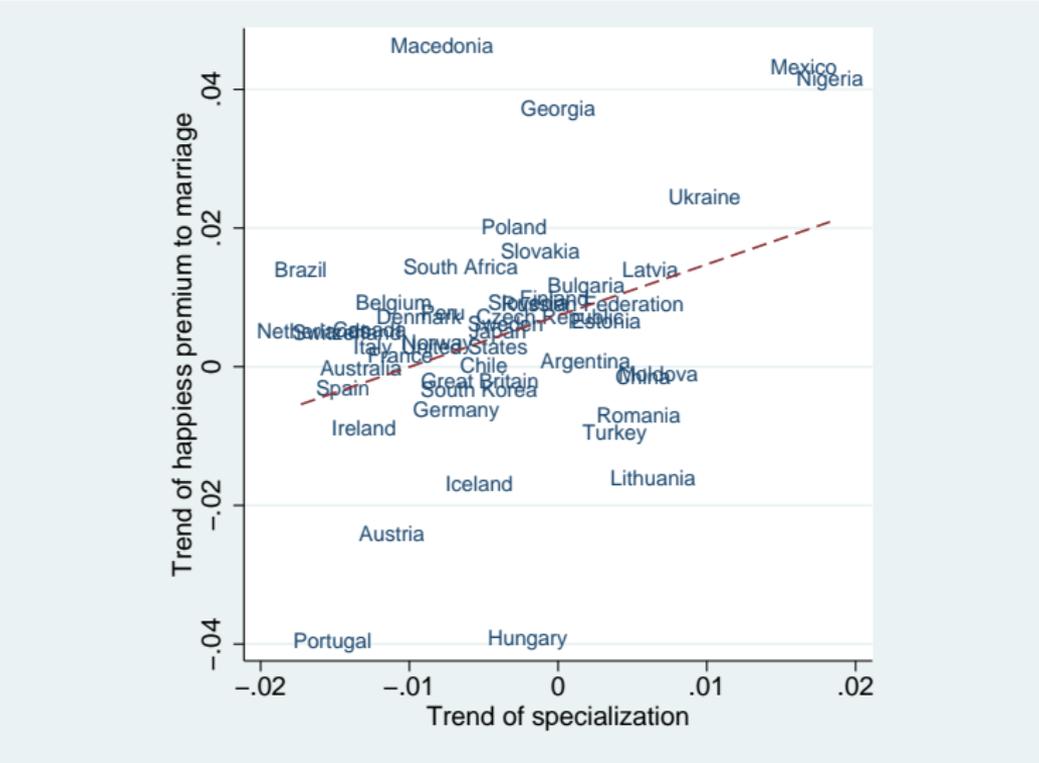
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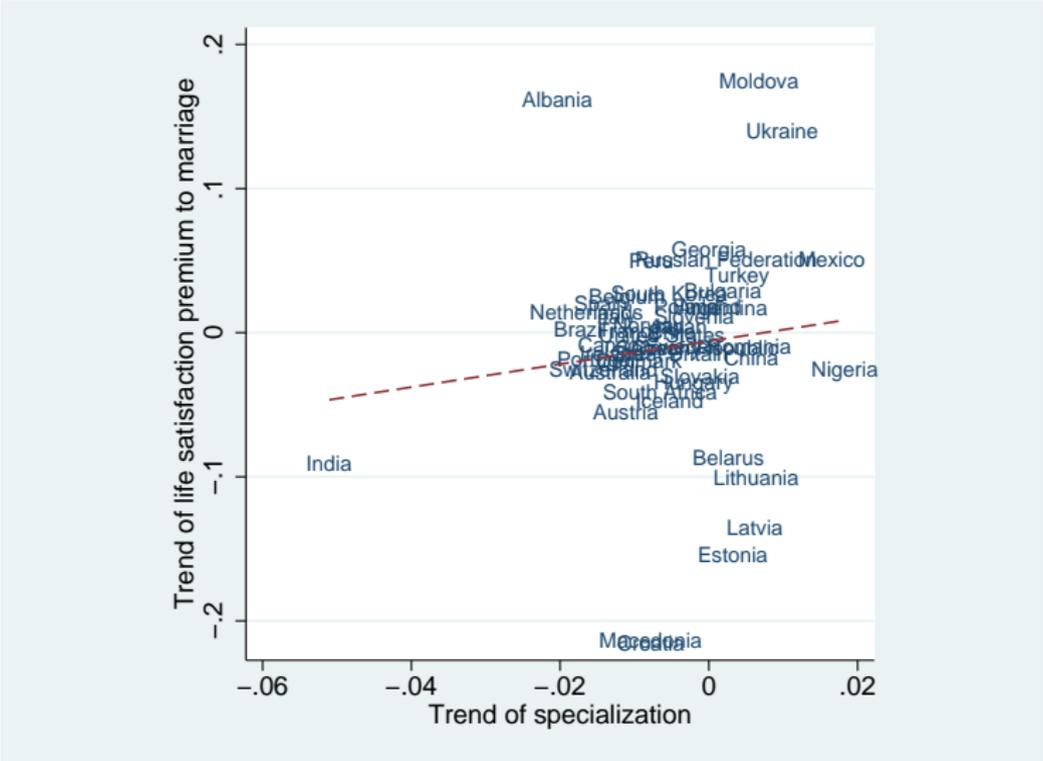
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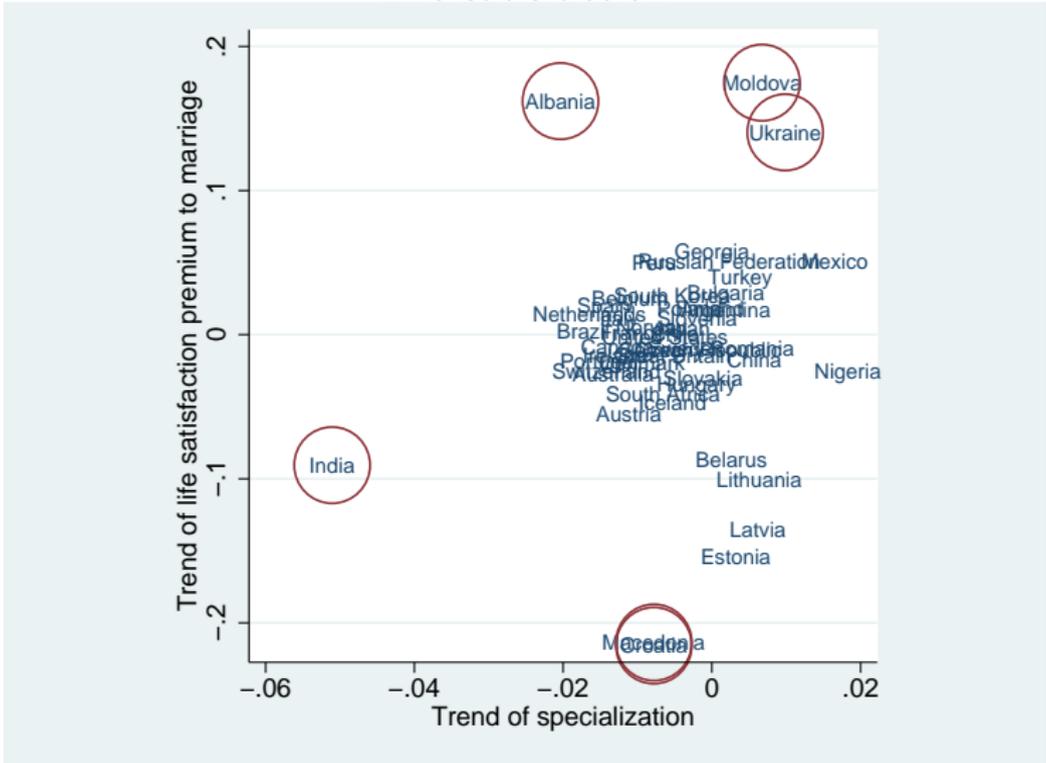
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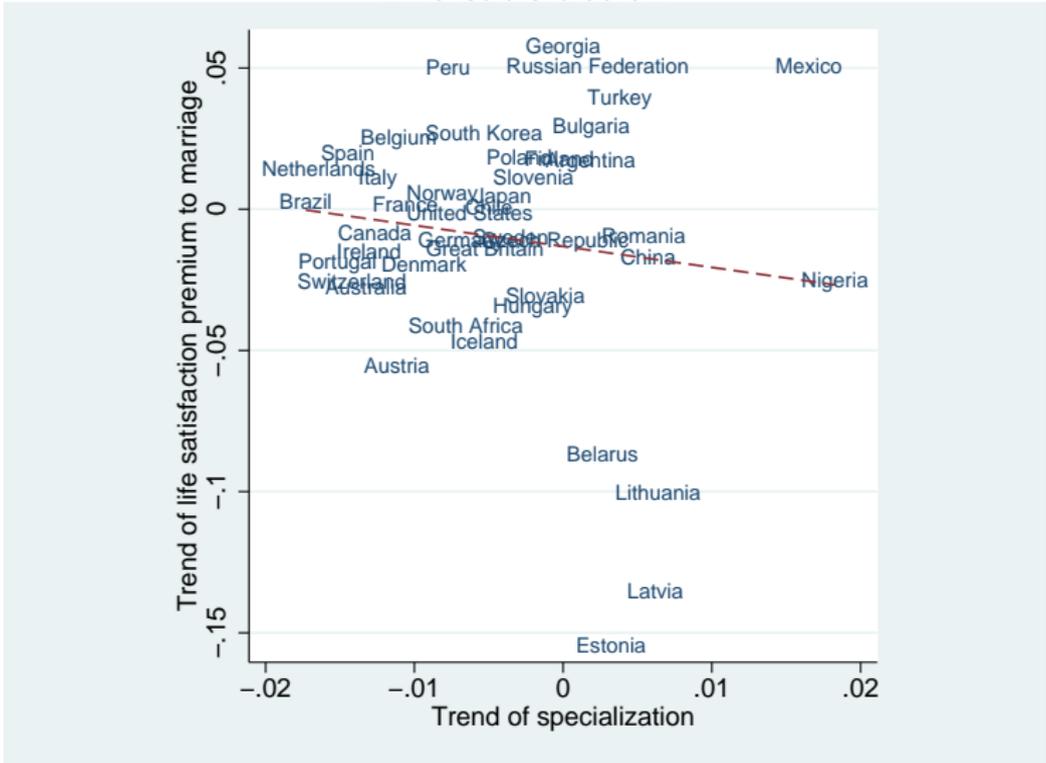
Do the trends go in the same direction? - reg

|	Overall	Developed	Transition	Developing
mean happiness premium	0.118	0.077	0.195	−0.355
	(0.000)***	(0.000)***	(0.005)*	(0.074)+
trend of specialization	−0.093	0.273	−0.631	1.093
	(0.777)	(0.592)	(0.752)	(0.055)+
mean level of specialization	0.001	0.014	0.181	0.113
	(0.981)	(0.528)	(0.195)	(0.113)
trend of GDP	0.226	0.103	0.276	−0.686
	(0.333)	(0.766)	(0.643)	(0.200)
mean level of GDP	−0.002	0.008	−0.002	−0.018
	(0.777)	(0.297)	(0.891)	(0.271)
trend of fertility	−0.362	0.091	0.254	0.151
	(0.046)*	(0.734)	(0.599)	(0.612)
mean level of fertility	0.015	0.000	0.059	−0.011
	(0.046)*	(0.962)	(0.470)	(0.414)
transition countries	0.040			
	(0.009)*			
developed countries	0.028			
	(0.059)+			
Constant	−0.074	−0.100	−0.136	0.245
	(0.228)	(0.159)	(0.463)	(0.231)
Observations	49	21	18	10

Do the trends go in the same direction? - reg

	Overall	Developed	Transition	Developing
mean LS premium	0.053	0.050	0.062	0.253
	$(0.087)^{+}$	$(0.001)^{*}$	(0.524)	(0.416)
trend of specialization	1.966	1.779	5.600	-0.859
	$(0.074)^{+}$	$(0.095)^{+}$	(0.627)	(0.721)
mean level of specialization	0.060	0.078	-0.504	0.167
	(0.456)	$(0.090)^{+}$	(0.425)	(0.241)
trend of GDP	0.269	1.534	2.777	2.291
	(0.730)	$(0.038)^{*}$	(0.302)	(0.472)
mean level of GDP	-0.036	-0.024	-0.041	0.003
	$(0.052)^{+}$	$(0.097)^{+}$	(0.526)	(0.962)
trend of fertility	-0.577	1.359	-1.318	-1.524
	(0.342)	$(0.018)^{*}$	(0.598)	(0.499)
mean level of fertility	-0.019	-0.019	0.080	0.055
	(0.430)	(0.293)	(0.871)	(0.549)
transition countries	0.008			
	(0.864)			
developed countries	0.104			
	$(0.036)^{*}$			
Constant	0.254	0.212	0.142	-0.508
	(0.212)	(0.127)	(0.895)	(0.566)
Observations	49	21	18	10

Key results

- the well-being premium to marriage is decreasing at rate of about 2% per year

- specialization vs. well-being premium to marriage → not very consistent

- in no population the effect of specialization cancels out the negative time trend of well-being premium to marriage

- specific case of transition countries

- higher GDP, lower fertility = higher well-being premium to marriage

Thank you!

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