

UCLA

On-Line Working Paper Series

Title

With (or Without) this Ring: Race, Ethnic, and Nativity Differences in the Demographic Significance of Cohabitation in Women's Lives

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7rf126kv>

Authors

Choi, Kate

Seltzer, Judith

Publication Date

2009-08-01



California Center for Population Research
University of California - Los Angeles

**With (or Without) this Ring: Race,
Ethnic, and Nativity Differences in
the Demographic Significance of
Cohabitation in Women's Lives**

Kate H. Choi
Judith A. Seltzer

CCPR-2009-004

August 2009
Last Revised: August 2009

California Center for Population Research
On-Line Working Paper Series

**With (or Without) this Ring:
Race, Ethnic, and Nativity Differences in the Demographic Significance
of Cohabitation in Women's Lives**

**Kate H. Choi
Judith A. Seltzer**

**California Center for Population Research and
Department of Sociology
UCLA**

5 August 2009

This research was supported by a contract between the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and Duke University (N01-HD-3-3354) with a subcontract to UCLA and by the California Center for Population Research, UCLA, which receives core support from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (R24-HD41022). We are grateful to Robert D. Mare, R. Kelly Raley, and the members of the UCLA Demography, Family, and Stratification Research Group for helpful advice. Earlier versions of this paper were presented as a poster at the 2007 meetings of the Population Association of America, New York, NY, and as a paper at the 2008 National Survey of Family Growth Research Conference, Hyattsville, MD.

ABSTRACT

Using pooled data from the 1995 and 2002 NSFGs, we compare the timing and type of first union, fertility behavior in cohabitation and marriage, and the duration and outcome of first cohabiting unions for White, Black, U.S.-born Mexican American, and foreign-born Mexican American women. We find that the most pronounced differences in cohabitation are between foreign-born Mexicans and women born in the United States. Although the behavior of most foreign-born Mexicans favors marriage over cohabitation, cohabitation may substitute for marriage for a small number of foreign-born Mexicans. Patterns of cohabitation among U.S.-born Mexican Americans are consistently between those of foreign-born Mexicans and U.S.-born Whites, suggesting that assimilation changes union behavior. For Whites, our results suggest that cohabitation is a stage in the courtship process leading to marriage; whereas for Blacks, cohabitation is a highly unstable union that appears to substitute for marriage. Much of the variation by race, ethnicity and nativity status is accounted for by group differences in socioeconomic characteristics. Remaining variation may be attributable to group differences in the value of marriage and the obligations of partners in consensual unions.

INTRODUCTION

U.S. marriage patterns have undergone substantial change over the past several decades. Median age at first marriage has increased dramatically from 21.1 in 1975 to 25.5 in 2006 for women and for men from 23.5 to 27.5 over the same period (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2008 Table MS-2). At the same time, the percentage of non-marital births rose from 14.3 to 38.5 (Ventura and Bachrach 2000, Table 1; Hamilton, Martin, and Ventura 2007: Table 7). Marital instability also rose to a peak period rate of 5.0 divorces per 1000 marriages in 1976, but then declined slightly during this period leveling off at 3.6 in 2005 (Plateris 1978; Munson and Sutton 2006). Still, over half of marriages are likely to end in separation or divorce (Raley and Bumpass 2003), and children have become increasingly likely to live with cohabiting parents (Bumpass and Lu 2000; Kennedy and Bumpass 2008). Taken together, these trends indicate a separation of the processes of formal marriage, childbearing, and childrearing. They are the demographic representation of the changing social institutions of marriage and parenthood.

The transformations of marriage and parenthood are critically linked to the greater acceptance of cohabitation or co-residential unions that do not involve marriage. Since about 1970, rates of non-marital cohabitation have risen to become the social and behavioral norm (Seltzer 2000; Smock 2000). More than 60% of first unions are now cohabitations and much of the recent increase in non-marital childbearing occurred in cohabiting unions (Bumpass and Lu 2000). Because the rise in cohabitation accompanied “the retreat from marriage” (Smock and Manning 1995), previous work on the determinants and consequences of cohabitation has tried to ascertain whether cohabitation is a stage in the courtship process that will eventually end in a marriage or an alternate type of union that will substitute for marriage (Casper and Bianchi 2002; Heuveline and Timberlake 2004; Manning 1995; Raley 2001). Researchers use information

about whether cohabitators eventually marry their partners, whether a pregnant woman marries her cohabiting partner before childbirth, and the stability of cohabiting relationships to adjudicate between these two interpretations of the meaning of cohabitation. This demographic approach emphasizes central tendencies and aggregate patterns over variation in the population in the demographic structure of cohabitation and in individuals' own attitudes about their relationships (Heuveline and Timberlake 2004; Seltzer 2004). Yet researchers can use the variation ignored in this approach to shed light on the meaning of cohabitation.

An important dimension of variation in the United States is its racial and ethnic diversity and the inclusion of immigrants who bring with them attitudes, values, and cultural practices formed in their countries of origin. Race, ethnic, and nativity groups also differ in their access to economic resources that affect marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing. This paper investigates variation in cohabitation behavior among four race, ethnic and nativity groups — U.S.-born Whites, Blacks, and Mexican Americans and foreign-born Mexicans¹ — to shed light on how economic and cultural factors are likely to affect the meaning of cohabitation. We follow the convention of using demographic data on prevalence, rates, and conditions of cohabitation to infer the significance of cohabitation in the U.S. kinship system. The analysis uses a combined sample of women interviewed in the 1995 and 2002 National Surveys of Family Growth (NSFG) to provide samples large enough to support comparisons of the experiences of U.S. natives and immigrant Mexican Americans. We use life table and event history methods, controlling for survey year, to examine the timing and type of first union, fertility behavior in cohabitation and marriage, and the duration and outcome of first cohabitation.

¹ Throughout we refer to individuals born in Mexico but living in the United States as both Mexicans and Mexican Americans, reflecting their potential dual identities. The data section describes the measure of ethnicity and nativity status for this analysis.

Our paper extends past research in three ways. First, the majority of existing studies compare the cohabiting behaviors of all Hispanics to those of Whites and Blacks (Manning 2001; Carlson et al. 2004). Yet, “Hispanic” is a pan-ethnic category that includes people originally from or descended from immigrants from 20 Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America and the Caribbean with vastly different norms, institutional settings, and patterns of cohabitation (Landale and Oropesa 2007). Thus, descriptions of the aggregate group of “Hispanics” are weighted averages that do not adequately describe the cohabiting behaviors of any specific Hispanic subgroup; any insight about the meaning of cohabitation must come from comparisons of groups disaggregated by national origin (Landale and Oropesa 2007; Raley and Sweeney 2007). Our study examines the cohabiting behaviors of individuals of Mexican descent. This group is 58% of the U.S. Hispanic population (Rumbaut 2006: Table 2) as well as the largest immigrant group in the country (Terrazas and Batalova 2008).

A second contribution of our research is that we compare the cohabitation behavior of foreign-born and U.S.-born Mexican Americans. Past studies seldom document nativity differences in cohabitation, despite the fact that the comparison of immigrants to U.S.-born may provide insight on whether normative factors contribute to a distinctive pattern of cohabitation and on how factors inherent in the migration process may alter cohabitation.

Our third contribution is that we compare fertility in cohabiting unions to fertility in marriage. Existing studies of race-ethnic differences in fertility typically restrict attention to either cohabiting or married women. Yet, differences in the levels of fertility in cohabitation reflect both differences in fertility preferences as well as differences in the willingness to bear a child in a cohabiting relationship. Whether cohabitation is an alternative to formal marriage as a childbearing or childrearing institution should be gauged by how the level and timing of

childbearing for cohabiting women compares to the levels and timing for married women. We contribute to the debate about the meaning of cohabitation by comparing the fertility behavior of race, ethnicity, and nativity groups in each type of union.

The paper is organized as follows. The next section considers the theoretical background and motivation for this research. This is followed by a description of our data and methods. We then present the results, and conclude with a discussion of their implications for understanding variation in the meaning of cohabitation for Whites, Blacks, U.S.-born Mexican Americans, and foreign-born Mexican Americans.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Race, ethnic, and nativity differences in union formation

Demographers' understanding of the race-ethnic variations in the patterns of union formation is largely informed by comparisons of Blacks and Whites, who differ significantly in their marriage and fertility patterns. Blacks are less likely than Whites to form co-residential unions, but when they do, they are more likely than Whites to choose cohabitation over marriage as their first union (Bramlett and Mosher 2002; Raley 1996, 2000). Due, in part, to the growing presence of Hispanics in the U.S. population, demographers have also included Hispanics in their comparisons. These studies find that Hispanics are more likely than Blacks to cohabit and about as likely as Whites to marry (Bramlett and Mosher 2002: Table C; Brown et al. 2008; Lloyd 2006).

Because marriage is an economic institution, explanations for race and ethnic variation in union formation patterns often attribute these differences to variation in socioeconomic characteristics. At the individual level, those with uncertain economic prospects are more likely

to cohabit than to marry because cohabitation does not entail the same long-term economic requirements as marriage does (Smock 2000; Oppenheimer et al. 1997, Oppenheimer 2003). Because Black men tend to have more uncertain economic prospects than Whites, Blacks are more likely than Whites to choose cohabitation over marriage in the event that they enter into a co-residential union (Oppenheimer et al. 1997; Oppenheimer 2003). At the population level, the presence of men with poor and uncertain economic prospects results in the shortage of marriageable men in local marriage markets, which contributes to delayed or foregone marriages for the women living in these communities (Bulcroft and Bulcroft 1993; Raley 1996). Women who delay marriage may cohabit to enjoy at least some of the benefits of intimacy and shared responsibility for children that the co-residential union of marriage provides (Edin et al. 2004).

Race and ethnic differences in union formation may also be due to cultural differences. Some researchers attribute the Black-White differences in patterns of union formation to cultural differences in norms governing family organization. According to this argument, Blacks place greater emphasis on extended kin ties and less on the conjugal ties of marriage compared to Whites (Sarkisian and Gerstel 2004). The argument for the primacy of extended kin relationships among Blacks draws on evidence of apparently greater preference for matriarchal families traced back to the family organization of African Blacks who came to the United States involuntarily and the slavery-imposed separation of Black couples. Additionally, the legacy of slavery contributes to Blacks' disadvantaged labor market opportunities and a continuing culture in which women bear primary responsibility for childrearing (Sarkisian and Gerstel 2004; Raley and Sweeney 2007).

Perhaps because of the cultural importance of extended kin relationships, Blacks may assign less prestige or social desirability to marriage than Whites do (Sassler and Schoen 1999;

South 1993). There is mixed evidence in support of this argument. Although some studies find that Blacks have less favorable attitudes towards marriages, others find that marriage has the same social significance for Blacks as for Whites (Edin et al. 2004; Sassler and Schoen 1999; South 1993). Behavioral data also provide mixed support for cultural interpretations of race differences in marriage. Some studies find that Black mothers are *more* likely to give or receive support from extended kin than Whites are (Hogan et al. 1990; Parish et al. 1991). Others find that Blacks give or receive *less* support from extended kin (Cooney and Uhlenberg 1992; Hogan et al. 1993). Still others find that Blacks and Whites do not differ in the overall amounts given to or received from kin (Eggebeen 1992; Sarkisian and Gerstel 2004).

Mexican Americans are also more closely embedded in extended kin networks than Whites. Mexican Americans believe that parents and children have stronger obligations to each other than European Americans (Sarkisian et al. 2007). However, unlike Blacks, these familistic attitudes do not inhibit marriage. Mexican Americans have marriage rates that are similar to those of Whites, and even higher at young ages than rates of women in other race-ethnic groups (Landale and Oropesa 2007; Lloyd 2006; Oropesa 1996; Oropesa et al. 1994). These high marriage rates occur despite Mexican Americans' significantly worse economic circumstances compared to Whites'. This paradox of high marriage rates and economic disadvantage may have a cultural basis as evidenced by the more favorable attitudes Mexican Americans express toward marriage compared to those of non-Hispanic Whites (Oropesa 1996). At the same time, Mexican Americans also may be more accepting of cohabitation than women in other groups because consensual unions have traditionally served as surrogate legal marriages for those in the lower socioeconomic strata (Castro Martin 2002; Oropesa 1996).

Explanations for differences between the union formation patterns of immigrants and the

U.S.-born, however, cannot rely solely on explanations developed to describe race and ethnic differences among the U.S.-born. Migration processes affect immigrants' opportunities and preferences for cohabitation and marriage. Higher rates of marriage among foreign-born Mexicans may be the product of U.S. immigration policy that qualifies the spouse of a documented migrant or a U.S. citizen for legal entry into the country (Raley et al. 2003; Raley and Sweeney 2007). Additionally, the higher rates of marriage among Mexican immigrants may be due to Mexican families' greater willingness to finance the migration trips of married women than the trips of single women (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994).

Assimilation processes also affect immigrants' union formation. As immigrants assimilate to the United States, their economic conditions tend to improve (Waldinger 2008; Waters and Jimenez 2005). Immigrants are also likely to adopt some of the cultural norms in their receiving communities. These changes, in turn, are likely to generate differences in the type and timing of unions by nativity status and duration of stay in receiving communities (Landale and Oropesa 2007).

Race, ethnic, and nativity differences in childbearing, childrearing, and legitimation

Cohabitation is increasingly becoming an institution for childbearing and childrearing (Seltzer 2004). While roughly 30% of non-marital births occurred in cohabiting unions in the early 1980's; over half of all non-marital births occurred in cohabiting unions by 2001 (Bumpass and Lu 2000; Kennedy and Bumpass 2008; Mincieli et al. 2007). This change is due to increases in the proportion of women who cohabit and the proportion who become pregnant in cohabitation, as well as increases in the proportion of women who either remain in or transition into cohabitation in response to a pregnancy (Manning 2001; Raley 2001).

Previous researchers have documented how fertility in cohabitation varies by race and

ethnicity. White women are less likely than women in other groups to become pregnant in cohabiting unions, and if Whites become pregnant while they are single or cohabiting, they are substantially more likely to “legitimate” their births by marrying (Manning 2001; Carlson et al. 2004; Wildsmith and Raley 2006). These findings suggest that the acceptability of cohabitation as a childrearing and childbearing institution is lower among Whites than for Hispanics and Blacks, the typical comparison groups. Manning’s (2001) findings provide inconsistent evidence on the “relative” acceptability of cohabitation as a childbearing and childrearing institution for Blacks and Hispanics. She finds that Hispanics are more likely than Blacks to become pregnant in cohabiting relationships, but that among pregnant cohabiting women, Blacks and Hispanics equally likely to give birth while they are cohabiting. (Manning 2001).

Proximate determinants of fertility, such as differences in union formation and exposure to the risk of becoming pregnant in unions also contribute to race and ethnic variation in the union context of childbearing and legitimation behavior. Union formation, fertility, and union dissolution are interrelated behaviors that are components of an individual’s family building process. Decisions about the timing and sequence of each event are likely to be made at the same time (Brien et al. 1999; Musick 2007). Therefore many of the explanations used to describe fertility differentials in cohabitation are largely extensions of socioeconomic and cultural explanations regarding race and ethnic variations in union formation (Raley and Sweeney 2007).

Differences among race and ethnic groups in fertility in cohabiting unions and legitimation of non-marital births also may be due to variations in the perceived stability of unions and expected outcome of cohabitation. Childrearing is an activity that requires long-term investments of time, money, and emotional resources. Women may try to avoid pregnancy in cohabiting unions if they perceive these unions to be relatively casual, short-term living

arrangements. Hispanic women may be more likely than Black or White women to become pregnant in cohabiting unions because Hispanic women are more likely to view cohabiting relationships as long-lasting unions akin to marriages in every aspect except for their legal status (Castro Martin 2002). Whites may be less likely than women in other groups to become pregnant or give birth in cohabitation because they think of cohabitation as a short-term living arrangement that is part of the courtship process or engagement.

Our description of past research refers to results for the pan-ethnic category of Hispanic women because few studies examine the attitudes and behavior of specific Hispanic subgroups compared to Whites and Blacks. There are, however, a few notable exceptions. One is work by Wildsmith and Raley who study Mexican Americans (Wildsmith and Raley 2005, 2006). Another exception is research by Landale and colleagues who study Puerto Ricans (Landale and Forste 1991; Landale and Fennelly 1992; Landale and Haun 1996; Manning and Landale 1996). Taken together, these studies show that Mexican Americans are more likely than Puerto Ricans to marry, but cohabiting women in both groups appear to treat cohabiting unions as surrogate marriages. Mexican American and Puerto Rican women are considerably more likely than White women to become pregnant in cohabiting unions (Manning and Landale 1996; Wildsmith and Raley 2005, 2006). They are also substantially less likely than White women to legitimate their births if they become pregnant in cohabiting relationships (Manning and Landale 1996; Wildsmith and Raley 2006).

Previous research demonstrates the importance of nativity status for understanding fertility differences among race-ethnic groups, but few studies have sufficient data to take account of nativity status and country of origin. Although foreign-born and U.S.-born Hispanics are both more likely to have a nonmarital birth in a cohabiting relationship than as a single

woman, foreign-born Hispanics are more likely to have a nonmarital birth in a cohabiting relationship than are U.S.-born Hispanics (Kennedy and Bumpass 2008). Wildsmith and Raley (2005) document similarity between foreign-born and U.S.-born Mexican Americans in rates of childbearing in cohabiting unions, but foreign-born Mexicans are much more likely to remain cohabiting than to marry their child's father, compared to U.S.-born Mexican Americans. Our research builds on these studies by examining fertility in both cohabitation and marriage to evaluate how similar the two institutions are for foreign-born and U.S.-born Mexican Americans.

Race, Ethnic, and Nativity Differences in Union Dissolution

How long cohabitations last and whether they result in marriage provide additional demographic clues about the meaning of cohabitation. That about half of first cohabitations end in marriage (Bumpass and Lu 2000; Kennedy and Bumpass 2008) suggests that for many, cohabitation is a stage in the courtship process or an engagement. Most cohabitations do not last long, whether they end in marriage or the couple dissolves their union, but there is evidence that cohabitations have become somewhat longer lasting in recent years (Bumpass and Lu 2000; Kennedy and Bumpass 2008).

Not surprisingly, given the significant race and ethnic differences in other cohabiting behaviors, the outcome of cohabiting unions varies substantially by race and ethnicity. White women are more likely than women in other groups to marry their cohabiting partners, and Blacks are more likely to dissolve their unions (Bramlett and Mosher 2002). These findings suggest that for Whites, but not for Blacks, cohabitation is a stage in the courtship process. Compared to other women, Hispanics are more likely to remain in cohabiting unions (Bramlett and Mosher 2002), a pattern consistent with the view that for them cohabitation is an alternative to legal marriage.

Variations in the stability and outcome of cohabitation may be attributable to socioeconomic disparities by race and ethnicity. According to socioeconomic explanations, Blacks and Hispanics are less likely than Whites to transition from cohabitation to marriage because their economically disadvantaged position prevents them from fulfilling the economic prerequisites for marriage (Edin et al. 2004; Edin and Reed 2005; Smock and Manning 1995). These explanations also suggest that Black men's difficult career transitions contribute to the high rates of instability of Black cohabiting unions (Oppenheimer 2003).

Race, ethnic, and nativity status differences in the stability and outcome of cohabitation may also be due to cultural differences. Mexican Americans, especially those who are foreign-born, live in settings in which others treat cohabitation as surrogate marriages (Castro Martin 2002; Landale and Oropesa 2007). This increases women's (and men's) willingness to make long-term, relationship-specific investments in their unions, such as having children, which further enhances the stability of cohabiting unions. For U.S.-born Mexican Americans, the normative support for long-term investments in cohabiting relationships is weaker than for those who are foreign-born. Thus, because of their greater exposure to the dominant U.S. view of cohabitation as a form of courtship, U.S.-born Mexican American women's cohabiting unions may be less stable than the unions of foreign-born women.

DATA AND METHODS

Data

We use data from two national probability samples of women: the 1995 and 2002 National Surveys of Family Growth (Bramlett and Mosher, 2002; U.S. DHHS, 2006). The 1995 and 2002 National Surveys of Family Growth (NSFG) are nationally representative, cross-

sectional surveys of women between the ages of 15 and 44 (Mosher 1998). The 1995 NSFG collected data from 10,847 women on their marriage, cohabitation, and fertility histories. The 2002 NSFG collected similar information 7,643 women and 4,928 men.

The 1995 and 2002 NSFGs sampled Hispanic and Black women at higher probabilities than women in other race-ethnic groups. To oversample Hispanics and Blacks, all households containing Hispanic or Black women in the 1993 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) were included in the 1995 NSFG sample and one woman was randomly selected from these households (Massey et al. 1989; Mosher, 1998; Potter et al., 1998). Households in the 1993 NHIS with no Hispanic or Black women were sampled at a lower rate. The 2002 NSFG initially consisted of a nationally representative sample of households supplemented by a sample drawn from census blocks with high concentrations of Hispanics (Lepkowski 2006). The inclusion of these oversamples in 1995 and 2002 allows us to obtain reliable estimates of the cohabiting behaviors of Blacks, U.S. born Mexican Americans, and foreign-born Mexican Americans by pooling the 1995 and 2002 samples.

Despite the advantages of pooling the samples, this approach has some drawbacks. The 1995 and 2002 NSFGs have different sampling designs, which may lead to overestimates of change in the cohabiting behavior of Mexican Americans between the two survey years. Specifically, the 2002 NSFG's reliance on blocks with large concentrations of Hispanics is likely to result in a higher proportion of recent immigrants than in the 1995 NSFG because recent Mexican migrants initially settle in areas with high concentrations of Hispanics, but eventually move to areas with lower concentrations as they assimilate (Leach 2005; Newman and Tienda 1994). In fact, 24% of the foreign-born Mexicans in the 2002 NSFG had migrated to the United States within 5 years of the interview date, compared to only 7% of foreign-born Mexicans in the

1995 NSFG. Unfortunately sample sizes are too small to allow us to control statistically for this compositional difference between the 1995 and 2002 samples.

Pooling the NSFGs also means that some variables that would ideally be included in a study of cohabitation cannot be taken into account because of changes in the content of the interviews between 1995 and 2002. Because of the demands of expanding the universe to collect information on men, the 2002 NSFG dropped the retrospective histories of education and employment that had been in the 1995 interview. Despite these limitations, the NSFG remains the best dataset for studying recent trends and differences in women's cohabitation and fertility.

Sample

The analysis uses data on U.S.-born Whites, U.S.-born Blacks, U.S.-born Mexican Americans, and foreign-born Mexicans ages 22 to 37 years old. We restrict analyses to women because the NSFG only started to collect information from men in 2002 and the single survey year does not provide a sufficiently large sample of foreign and U.S.-born Mexican American men. Women ages 22 to 37 are from birth cohorts represented in both the 1995 and 2002 samples. The event history analyses (described further below) assume that the risks of entering a union, becoming pregnant for the first time, and ending the first cohabitation begin at age 15. Therefore, we exclude women who reported having entered into a union or having given birth prior to the age of 15 ($n = 196$). We also exclude women who provided incomplete or inconsistent data on the timing of marriage, cohabitation, and pregnancies ($n = 151$).

The analytical sample includes 8,428 women: 5,370 Whites, 2,024 Blacks, 538 U.S.-born Mexican Americans, and 496 foreign-born Mexican Americans. Our combined sample of 1,034 U.S.-born and foreign-born Mexican Americans compares favorably to the pan-ethnic Hispanic sample in the 1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, which is 745 women

(Lloyd 2006).

Variables

Race, ethnic, nativity group status: We use the respondent's own report about her identity and nativity status. The constructed variable "*race, ethnicity, and nativity status*" distinguishes: U.S.-born Whites, U.S.-born Blacks, U.S.-born Mexican Americans, and foreign-born Mexicans.

Control variables. The multivariate analyses control for a limited number of variables that indicate the respondent's family background and socioeconomic status, which previous research shows are factors affecting union formation, fertility behavior, and union dissolution. We control for mother's education, family structure while growing up, respondent's education, and type of high school diploma. We also control for survey year.

Mother's education is a three category variable that identifies women whose mothers completed less than high school, high school, or some postsecondary education. We also include a dichotomous variable to indicate cases with missing data on mother's education.

Childhood family structure distinguishes four living arrangements at age 14: whether the respondent lived with both biological/adoptive parents; a mother and stepfather; a single mother, or in another type of household.

Respondent's completed schooling is a four-category variable: completed less than high school, high school diploma, some college, and college graduate or more schooling. Women with less than a high school education include those with fewer than 12 years of schooling as well as those who completed 12 years but did not receive a high school diploma. This category includes women who acquired a GED. The categories for women with some college (13-15 years of school) and those who completed college or more education (16+ years) include both

women with conventional high school diplomas and those with GEDs.

GED is a dichotomous variable distinguishing women with a GED from those with a high school diploma.

Survey year indicates whether the interview year was 1995 or 2002.

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the sample by survey year. Data are weighted using the year-specific final post-stratified, adjusted weights to obtain nationally representative estimates (Abma et al. 1997; U.S. DHHS 2004). The total column in which we report estimates from the pooled sample assigns the 1995 weight to women interviewed in 1995 and the 2002 weight to those interviewed in 2002.

Table 1 here.

About three quarters of the women in the pooled sample are U.S.-born non-Hispanic Whites. The distributions of most variables are very similar for the two survey years, with the exception of the education variables, which indicate somewhat higher levels of completed schooling for women and their mothers in 2002 than in 1995. Table 1 also shows that a slightly higher percentage of women in the 2002 survey lived with both biological/adoptive parents when they were growing up compared to women in the 1995 survey (70% vs. 66%, respectively). We control for these characteristics in the multivariate analyses.²

Table 2 shows the characteristics of women in the four race, ethnicity, and nativity status groups. As expected, foreign-born Mexican women come from the least educated families. The vast majority of women have mothers who did not complete high school (88%). U.S.-born

² The higher percentage of women from two-parent households in 2002 might be due to a change in the logic of the question sequence on childhood living arrangements. In 1995, the sequence began by asking the respondent with whom she lived when she was born, and followed with questions about changes in her living situation. In 2002, the sequence began with a filter question that identified women who lived in an intact family between birth and age 18. Filter questions may alter reports about events because they require respondents to make assumptions about what the interviewer is asking (Knauffer 1998), in this case what an “intact family” is.

Mexican Americans also come from families with low levels of schooling compared to U.S.-born Blacks and Whites; 53% of the mothers of U.S.-born Mexican Americans did not complete high school, compared to 30% of Blacks and 17% of Whites. The very small percentage of foreign-born Mexican women whose mothers went beyond high school means that the multivariate analyses must use a less fine-grained education variable for mothers than for daughters. The educational disadvantages in the mothers' generation are also evident in the respondent's own generation, but not in as steep a gradient. These differences among the race, ethnic, and nativity groups may contribute to group differences in cohabitation.

Table 2 here.

Analysis Plan

The analysis has three parts. We begin by investigating transitions into first unions. We then ask who becomes a parent in a first cohabiting relationship, how this compares to the transition to parenthood in a first marriage, and whether women who experience a non-union pregnancy either begin cohabiting or marry by the time their child is born. The last part of the analysis examines the stability and outcome of cohabiting unions, that is whether the union ends in marriage or the couple separates. In each part of the analysis we examine race, ethnic, and nativity differences, paying particular attention to differences between U.S.-born and foreign-born Mexican Americans.

The analysis uses basic descriptive tables, life table estimates, and event history analysis. The life table estimates and event history analyses use person-month data constructed from the detailed retrospective histories on marriage, cohabitation, and fertility. Age is the clock for our analysis of union formation where observations are censored at entry into first union or date of interview. Union duration is the clock for the fertility analysis where observations are censored

at the initiation of first pregnancy or date of interview. We define the initiation of first pregnancy as the 7 months before the first live birth, as in previous research (Manning 2001; Raley 2001). Union duration is also the clock for the dissolution analysis where observations are censored at the end of the first cohabiting union or date of interview. All person-month files are restricted to months in which women were at risk for the particular event. For example, the analysis of first pregnancies in first unions includes only person months contributed by women in their first co-residential unions who had not experienced their first pregnancy. As noted above, we consider transitions from age 15 onward.

We estimate discrete-time logistic and multinomial logistic regression models predicting the formation of first unions, first pregnancies in a first union, and the dissolution of first unions. The multivariate models include the individual's race, ethnicity, and nativity status and the control variables described above to account for family background and socioeconomic differences among the groups. Each model also includes a series of dummy variables for age (or duration) to model the temporal dependence of the processes.

We examined if the baseline hazards for each outcome – choosing cohabitation or marriage as a first union, becoming pregnant in cohabitation or marriage, and dissolving the union – were proportional for the four race, ethnic, and nativity status groups. The results suggest that the baseline hazard for the models of union formation and fertility are not proportional by race, ethnicity, and nativity status (not shown). Therefore, these models include interactions of age (or duration) and race, ethnicity, and nativity status to account for the non-proportionality in the shape of these functions and to obtain estimates of differences by race, ethnic, and nativity status that are not biased by group-specific changes in the hazards of entry into unions or becoming pregnant over time. The results from these multivariate analyses are presented in

figures depicting the predicted cumulative percentages of women who engaged in the cohabiting behavior of interest by age (or duration) for the four race, ethnic, and nativity status groups. We chose this approach over presenting tabular results from the nonproportional models because the parameters for the many interaction terms make race, ethnic, and nativity status differences very difficult to interpret without the figures. (Detailed tables available on request.)

The NSFG design is cross-sectional with retrospective histories. As a result the data do not include direct measures of culture or women's attitudes prior to the cohabitation and fertility outcomes we investigate. Instead, we adopt the common strategy of attributing the race, ethnic, and nativity differences in family behavior that remain net of statistical controls for family background and socioeconomic status as cultural differences. This strategy has obvious disadvantages. Because we cannot include controls for all the socioeconomic characteristics that affect cohabitation, our interpretation of the residual differences as attributable to cultural differences will overstate the importance of group differences in attitudes and values. We consider the implications of this common demographic strategy in the discussion section.

RESULTS

Current and Past Cohabitation Experience

The period increase in cohabitation is evident in Table 3. We find that the percentage of women who have ever cohabited increased for each of the four race, ethnic, and nativity groups between 1995 and 2002, results similar to those of Kennedy and Bumpass (2008). For instance, the percentage of Whites who have ever cohabited increased from 50% to 61% between 1995 and 2002. The same trend is evident in the estimate for premarital cohabitation. In 1995, 44% of White women had cohabited before their first marriage; by 2002, this figure had risen to 56%.

The percent of women currently cohabiting also rose somewhat for all groups except U.S.-born Whites. In 1995, 9% of Blacks and U.S.-Born Mexican Americans were in cohabiting unions whereas, but by 2002, 11% of women in both groups were cohabiting.

Table 3 here.

Women's current and cumulative cohabitation experiences vary little by race and ethnicity. Instead, the demarcating difference is nativity status. Foreign-born Mexicans are more likely than women in the other groups to be in a cohabiting union. In 2002, 18% of foreign-born Mexicans were cohabiting, twice as high as the percentage of Whites.³ In contrast, foreign-born Mexicans are substantially less likely than women in other groups to have ever been in a co-residential union. In 2002, fewer than half of foreign-born Mexicans had ever cohabited, only 42%, compared to 55% of U.S.-born Mexican Americans and over 60% of Whites and Blacks. The patterns are similar in 1995 albeit at lower levels. That foreign-born Mexicans were more likely to be cohabiting at the time of interview than women in other groups, but less likely to have ever cohabited, suggests that only a small group of foreign-born Mexicans form cohabiting unions, but the unions they form last longer than cohabiting unions for U.S.-born women. We investigate this further below.

Entry into First Cohabitation or First Marriage

The results summarized in Figures 1A and 1B show the cumulative predicted percentages of women in each race, ethnic, nativity group who entered a first cohabiting relationship (1A) and first marriage (1B) by age, taking account of family background and women's education. The predictions use parameters from a discrete time multinomial logistic regression and are for a hypothetical woman whose mother finished 12 years of school, who

³ Foreign-born Mexican women experienced an even greater increase between 1995-2002 than other women in the percentage currently cohabiting, 12% vs. 18%, but this difference may be partly due to the change in sampling frames between the two surveys.

grew up with both biological/adoptive parents, who herself completed 12 years of schooling and holds a high school diploma, and was interviewed in 2002.

Figures 1A and 1B here.

Figure 1A shows that at younger ages, U.S.-born Mexican Americans are slightly more likely than Whites to cohabit, but by their mid-20s, Whites are much more likely to form first cohabiting unions. As women age, the percentages entering first cohabiting relationships for U.S.-Born Mexican Americans are eventually between those for Whites and foreign-born Mexicans. Foreign-born Mexicans have the lowest rates of entry into cohabitation at most ages, but their rates are very similar to those of Blacks.

Foreign-born Mexicans are more likely than women in the other groups to marry as their first co-residential union, as Figure 1B shows. Blacks have substantially lower probabilities of marrying for the first time by age 30 than women in any of the other groups; 16% of Black women marry as their first union, compared to 47% for Whites, 48% for U.S-born Mexican Americans, and 57% of foreign-born Mexicans. Throughout young adulthood there is virtually no difference in the rates of entry into marriage as a first union for Whites and U.S.-born Mexican Americans.

Cohabitation, Childbearing, and Legitimation

We investigate cohabitation as a setting for childbearing in four ways. First we use lifetable estimates to describe how the likelihood of experiencing a first pregnancy in cohabitation and marriage varies by race, ethnicity, and nativity status and duration of union. We then compare the hazards of experiencing a first pregnancy in cohabitation and in marriage for the four race, ethnicity, and nativity status groups in an event history analysis that controls for socioeconomic status and family background. We present the multivariate results in figures and

report the results of statistical tests of race, ethnic, nativity status differences in having a first pregnancy in first cohabitation compared to first marriage. Finally, we use simple percentages to describe the “legitimation” behavior of cohabiting and single women following a pregnancy, focusing on whether cohabiting women marry by the time their child is born and whether single women cohabit or marry before the birth. Small sample sizes prevent a multivariate analysis of legitimation behavior.

Given the persistent normative preference for marital childbearing in the United States, it is not surprising that married women are more likely than cohabiting women to become pregnant, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or nativity status. The lifetable estimates in Table 4 show that 56% of married women had become pregnant after two or more years of marriage, compared to only 15% of cohabiting women. Foreign-born Mexicans are much more likely to become pregnant in both types of first unions; 60% of cohabiting women and 76% of married women had become pregnant after two or more years in their unions. This compares to Whites where 11% of cohabiting women and 56% of married women had experienced their first pregnancies during the same time interval. For U.S.-born Mexican Americans and Blacks about twice as high a percentage of women became pregnant in marriages as in cohabiting unions. The difference between marriage and cohabitation is much smaller for foreign-born Mexicans than for any of the other groups, suggesting that with respect to fertility, cohabitation may be a more marriage-like institution for foreign-born Mexicans than for U.S.-born women.

Table 4 here.

We investigate whether group differences in family background and women’s education account for the higher pregnancy rates and greater similarity between cohabitation and marriage for foreign-born Mexicans. Figures 2A and 2B show the adjusted cumulative percentages of

women who experience a first pregnancy in their first cohabiting union (2A) or first marriage (2B). Predicted percentages are calculated using parameters from two separate discrete-time logistic regressions. The calculations are for the same hypothetical woman as in the union formation analysis (i.e., a woman from an “intact” family who, like her mother, completed 12 years of schooling, has a high school diploma, and was in the 2002 sample).

Figures 2A and 2B here.

The results summarized in Figure 2A suggest that education and background characteristics explain some, but not all, of the higher first pregnancy rates for cohabiting foreign-born Mexican women compared to women in other groups. About 27% of the foreign-born Mexicans whose first co-residential union has lasted for at least two years became pregnant for the first time, compared to the 60% in the previous table of unadjusted percentages. Controlling for family background diminishes the levels of fertility in all race, ethnic, and nativity groups, but the reduction is particularly large for foreign-born Mexicans. This pattern suggests that the higher pregnancy rates of cohabiting foreign-born Mexicans compared to the U.S.-born may be largely a response to the socioeconomic disadvantages that immigrants face. However, the fact that both foreign-born and U.S.-born Mexican Americans continue to have higher levels of fertility in cohabitation than women in other groups also suggests that cohabitation is more likely to be a marriage-like institution for individuals of Mexican descent than for other women.

The adjusted percentages in Figure 2B for pregnancy in first marriages compared to the unadjusted percentages in Table 3 show that controlling for family background and limited socioeconomic characteristics does little to alter variation in levels of marital fertility by nativity status. Half of foreign-born Mexicans experienced their first pregnancy after two or more years

of marriage, even after taking account of family background (vs. the unadjusted 76% in Table 3). At the same marital duration, 11% of U.S.-born Mexican Americans and 9% of Whites experienced their first pregnancies. Most of the differences in marital pregnancy rates among U.S.-born women disappear once we control for socioeconomic status and family background characteristics. However, U.S.-born Mexican Americans are still slightly more likely to become pregnant than White or Black women.

Differences in levels of fertility by nativity status are particularly large in the early years of marriage. Close to a quarter of foreign-born Mexicans who experienced their first pregnancy in marriage got pregnant within 6 months of marrying, compared to only 3% of U.S.-born Mexican American women.

The significantly lower pregnancy rates in cohabiting relationships than in marriages when socioeconomic and family background are controlled imply that marriage is still the preferred setting for childbearing when couples have sufficient resources. The results in Figures 2A and 2B, however, do not address the question of whether the race, ethnic, and nativity groups differ in the extent to which couples treat cohabitation and marriage as similarly appropriate contexts for childbearing. To answer this question we estimated a third discrete-time logistic regression of first pregnancy as a function of type of first union (cohabitation or marriage), group status, the interaction of union type and group status, and the same control variables as in the union-specific analyses (not shown). The coefficients for the interactions of union type by group status indicate that foreign-born Mexicans and Whites are substantially more likely than other women to experience their first pregnancies in marriage instead of cohabitation. Although U.S.-born Mexican Americans and Blacks are also more likely to become pregnant in marriage than cohabitation, their preference for marriage over cohabitation as a setting for childrearing is not as

striking.

Whether a woman marries or moves in with her partner after becoming pregnant also provides insight into the type of union that individuals (or couples) consider to be an appropriate setting for childrearing. In Table 5, we report the percentages of cohabiting women who have married by the time their child is born and the percentages of pregnant single women who either marry or begin to cohabit. Small sample sizes require that we combine foreign-born and U.S.-born Mexican Americans. Approximately two thirds of women who experienced their first pregnancy in a cohabiting relationship were still cohabiting when their child was born. The majority of cohabiting women who change their union status make the transition to marriage. Single (noncohabiting) women who become pregnant are typically still single when their child is born. Just over 60% of women who became pregnant while single were still single when they gave birth. Like women who became pregnant while cohabiting, the majority of single women who “legitimate” their children do so by marrying the child’s father instead of forming a nonmarital co-residential union.

Table 5 here.

White women who have a non-marital pregnancy are substantially more likely than women in other groups to “legitimate” their births by marrying a partner prior to childbirth regardless of their relationship status when they became pregnant. Approximately equal percentages of single and cohabiting White women who became pregnant have married by the time their child is born, about 40%. This compares to only 11% of cohabiting Mexican Americans and 18% of cohabiting Black women who marry by the birth of their child. Although Mexican American women who became pregnant in cohabiting relationships are substantially less likely than other women to “legitimate” their children by marrying prior to childbirth,

among single women, Mexican Americans who became pregnant were much more likely to marry before giving birth than Black women (32% vs. 12%, respectively). Single Mexican American women who become pregnant are almost as likely as White women to marry (32% vs. 41%, respectively). Regardless of their race and ethnicity, single women seldom legitimate their children by forming cohabiting relationships. Fewer than 10% of single women in each race-ethnic group moved in with a cohabiting partner before the child was born.

Stability of Cohabiting Unions and the Transition to Marriage

Whether a cohabiting couple eventually marries and, if they do marry, how quickly this happens is another important indication of whether the cohabitation is a stage in the courtship process or an alternative to marriage. Table 6 shows life table estimates of the cumulative percentages of women in a first cohabiting union who married or separated by union duration. Foreign-born Mexicans have more stable cohabiting unions than U.S.-born women. A third of foreign-born Mexicans are still cohabiting after 3 years, but only 9-11% of U.S.-born women are in unions that have lasted this long. Whites are more likely than other women to marry their first cohabiting partner. Nearly 60% of Whites eventually marry their partners, compared to 39% of Blacks and 52% of U.S.-born Mexican Americans. Interestingly, in the first year of a cohabiting relationship, Whites and foreign-born Mexicans have somewhat similar marriage rates. At longer durations, however, Whites are increasingly more likely to transition to marriage, and the difference between Whites and foreign-born Mexicans widens. This suggests that there may be two types of foreign-born Mexican cohabitators: those for whom cohabitation is a short stage in the courtship process and those for whom it is a substitute to marriage.

Table 6 here.

In line with findings from previous work, Black women's cohabiting unions are more

unstable than the unions of women in other groups. Half of Black women have separated from their first cohabiting partners after three years. This compares to less than a quarter for foreign-born Mexicans and a third for Whites.

We investigated whether these group differences in the stability and outcomes of first cohabiting unions can be explained by other characteristics of women that vary across groups. Figures 3A and 3B show the adjusted cumulative percentages of cohabitations ending in marriage (3A) or dissolving (3B) by race, ethnicity, and nativity status. Predictions use parameter estimates from a discrete time multinomial logistic regression controlling for family background and socioeconomic, and are reported for the same hypothetical woman as in the previous figures. The results in Figure 3A are generally consistent with those in Table 6. Compared to other women, Whites are more likely to marry their first cohabiting partners. Foreign-born Mexicans are less likely than Whites and U.S.-born Mexican Americans to marry. The adjusted cumulative percentages of foreign-born Mexicans who marry their partner are very similar to those of Blacks. As for other outcomes, the experiences of U.S.-born Mexican Americans are midway between those of Whites and foreign-born Mexican Americans. U.S. born Mexicans are more likely than foreign-born Mexicans but less likely than Whites to marry their cohabiting partner.

Figures 3A and 3B here.

Although foreign-born Mexicans are less likely to marry their cohabiting partner than are women in other groups, the cohabiting relationships of foreign-born Mexicans are more stable unions. Figure 3B shows that foreign-born Mexicans are less likely than women in other groups to separate from their cohabiting partner. Other groups differ little in their dissolution rates once background characteristics are taken into account. The adjusted percentages of women whose

relationships end are substantially lower than the unadjusted percentages, suggesting that family background and women's education are important determinants of union stability.

CONCLUSION

We describe the demographic processes of cohabitating union and marriage formation, childbearing, and dissolution to provide insight into the meaning of cohabitation and its place in the kinship systems of U.S.-born Whites, Blacks, Mexican-Americans, and foreign-born Mexicans. Our findings for U.S.-born Whites are consistent with others' observations that cohabitation is a stage in the courtship process or premarital engagement (Casper and Bianchi 2002). Whites' cohabiting unions do not last long, are unlikely to involve childbearing, and are often followed by marriage. Blacks' cohabiting unions, like their marriages, are short-lived compared to the unions of women in other race, ethnic, and nativity status groups. Compared to others, Black women are more likely to cohabit than to marry as their first union, and their cohabiting relationships are more likely to dissolve than to be formalized by marriage. Although Black single women (i.e., those not in a co-residential union) have high fertility rates compared to other women (Chandra et al. 2005), Blacks who wait to have children in the context of a co-residential union are more likely to do so in marriage than in cohabiting relationships.

We find pronounced differences between the cohabitation patterns of U.S.-born Mexican Americans and foreign-born Mexicans. In fact, nativity status differences in cohabitation are more striking in some respects than Black-White differences. Although foreign-born Mexicans are more likely to marry than cohabit as their first union, when they do cohabit, foreign-born Mexicans' unions last longer than other women's unions and are likely to involve childbearing. For this minority of foreign-born Mexicans, cohabitation appears to substitute for formal

marriage. Nevertheless, most foreign-born Mexicans have their first child in marriage. How much marriage appears to be preferred over cohabitation as a setting for childbearing depends on whether socioeconomic differences between foreign-born and U.S.-born women are taken into account. Our unadjusted results show that differences in first birth rates are much smaller between married and cohabiting foreign-born Mexicans than between U.S.-born married and cohabiting women. Once differences in women's education and family background are taken into account, the gap between marital and cohabiting fertility increases and is more similar to the gap for White women.

U.S.-born Mexican Americans have cumulative rates of cohabitation that are between those of foreign-born Mexicans and U.S-born Whites, but U.S.-born Mexican Americans form cohabiting relationships earlier than Whites do. Processes of assimilation and the educational disadvantages of Mexican Americans which make it more difficult to attain the socially-determined economic prerequisites of marriage probably account for these differentials. The age pattern for U.S.-born Mexican Americans is intriguing and probably attributable to the earlier school-leaving ages of Mexican Americans compared to Whites (Lloyd 2006; Schneider et al. 2006). This early exit may launch Mexican Americans more rapidly into other aspects of the transition to adulthood such as establishing co-residential unions and parenthood (Raley et al. 2004).

That some differences among the race, ethnic, and nativity groups remain even after we control for family and socioeconomic background suggests that differences in attitudes and values about marriage and cohabitation contribute to differences in the types of unions women form. The greater likelihood that Mexican Americans, especially the foreign-born, choose marriage as their first union probably reflects the cultural significance of marriage in the

Mexican community (Oropesa 1996). This value difference is reinforced by U.S. immigration laws that favor married over single women combined with the militarization of the U.S. border with Mexico, which makes crossing the border without appropriate documentation a particularly difficult and costly endeavor for women (Donato et al. 2008; Raley et al. 2004; Raley and Sweeney 2007). The select group of foreign-born Mexican women whose cohabiting unions appear much like formal marriages may present themselves as married when they migrate, much as U.S. couples in common-law marriages present themselves as married.

The NSFG design that enabled us to pool two cross-sectional samples is a valuable resource for studying the union patterns and fertility of U.S.-born and foreign-born Mexican Americans who would not be represented in most single-wave studies in sufficient numbers to support demographic analyses. This strategy of combining data from different surveys has disadvantages as well. We were unable to conduct a more rigorous test of socioeconomic explanations for group differences because some socioeconomic characteristics available in the 1995 NSFG are not in the 2002 NSFG. The latter does not include retrospective histories of women's school enrollment and employment. Because the NSFG is now a continuous survey, future researchers may encounter fewer discontinuities in the measurement and content of information. Studies of small subgroups will still require that investigators combine data across releases of the public data files to obtain sufficiently sample sizes.

Our study suffers from two important omitted variables. The first is the absence of direct measures of women's attitudes measured prior to the behavioral outcomes we consider. This is inevitable in cross-sectional designs that rely on retrospective history data about union formation and dissolution. The second is the exclusion of information about partners' and potential partners' characteristics. The economic resources available to actual partners (spouses and

cohabiting partners) and their views on family behavior are crucial for determining who marries or cohabits, who becomes a parent, whether children are born in formal marriages, and the stability of unions (Manning and Landale 1996; Oppenheimer et al. 1997). Characteristics of potential partners/spouses also affect these outcomes because potential partners are among the alternatives women face when they consider marriage, becoming pregnant while single or cohabiting, and remaining in a union (Weiss, 1997).

These limitations notwithstanding, our findings illustrate the importance of taking into account women's nativity status when investigating race and ethnic differences in cohabitation. Studies that combine the immigrant and U.S.-born members of a race-ethnic group overstate differences among the U.S.-born, underestimate the degree of socioeconomic and cultural integration of contemporary immigrant groups, and gloss over the possibility that some of the differences may be due to the migration processes. Studies that compare the family behavior of immigrants and the U.S.-born also have the potential to show how receiving communities influence the family patterns of immigrants.

Our study calls attention to the importance of comparing fertility in cohabiting relationships to fertility in marriage to better understand the place of cohabitation in the kinship systems of different race, ethnicity, and nativity groups. Foreign-born Mexicans have higher fertility in cohabiting relationships than do other women. We find that foreign-born Mexican women's higher fertility in cohabitation is largely due to the higher overall fertility among foreign-born Mexicans rather than due to the greater acceptability of cohabitation as a childbearing institution. Comparing behavior in cohabitation to behavior in marriage provides information about the relative meaning of these two union types. Lastly, our study extends knowledge about race, ethnic, and nativity group differences that must be explained by theories

about union formation and dissolution (Casper et al. 2008). The development of new data sources either by pooling across survey studies or by developing new data sources will enhance researchers' ability to test theories about the meaning of cohabitation and will contribute to a better understanding of the family contexts in which immigrants from Latin American countries make their homes.

REFERENCES

- Abma, J.C., W.D. Mosher, L. Peterson, and L. Piccinino. 1997. "Fertility, Family Planning, and Women's Health: New Data from the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth." *Vital and Health Statistics Vol. 23 No.19*. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics.
- Bramlett, M.D. and W.D. Mosher. 2002. "Cohabitation, Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the United States." *Vital and Health Statistics Vol. 23 No. 22*. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics.
- Brien, M., L. Lillard, and L. Waite. 1999. "Interrelated family-building behaviors: Cohabitation, marriage, and nonmarital conception." *Demography* 36(4): 535-551.
- Brown, S., J. Van Hook, and J. Glick. 2008. "Generational Differences in Cohabitation and Marriage in the U.S." *Population Research and Policy Development* 27(5): 531-550.
- Bulcroft, R.A. and K.A. Bulcroft. 1993. "Race Differences in Attitudinal and Motivational Factors in the Decision to Marry." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 55(2): 338-355.
- Bumpass, L. and H.H. Lu. 2000. "Trends in Cohabitation and Implications for Children's Family Contexts in the United States." *Population Studies* 54(1): 29-41.
- Carlson, M., S. McLanahan, and P. England. 2004. "Union Formation in Fragile Families." *Demography* 41(2): 237-261.
- Casper, L. and S. Bianchi. 2002. *Continuity and Change in the American Family*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Casper, L., P. Brandon, T. DiPrete, S. Sanders, and P. Smock. (2008). Rethinking Change and Variation in Unions [electronic resource]. In *Designing New Models for Explaining Family Change and Variation*. Final report submitted to the U.S. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Website://<http://www.soc.duke.edu/~efc/Docs/pubs/EFC%20FINAL%20AUG%202018%20complete%20w%20appendice.pdf>
- Castro Martin, T. 2002. "Consensual Unions in Latin America: Persistence of a Dual Nuptiality System." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 33(1): 35-55.
- Chandra, A., G. M. Martinez, G. M., W. D. Mosher, J. C. Abma, and J. Jones. 2005. "Fertility, Family Planning, and Reproductive Health of U.S. Women: Data from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth." National Center for Health Statistics. *Vital Health Statistics* 23(25).
- Cooney, T. and P. Uhlenberg. 1992. "Support from Parents over the Life Course: The Adult Child's Perspective." *Social Forces* 71(1): 63-84.
- Edin, K., M. J. Kefalas., and J. M. Reed. 2004. "A Peek Inside the Black Box: What Marriage

- Means for Poor Unmarried Parents.” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66(4): 1007-1014.
- Edin, K. and J. M. Reed. 2005. “Why Don't They Just Get Married? Barriers to Marriage among the Disadvantaged.” *Future of Children* 15(2): 117-137.
- Eggebeen, D. 1992. “Family Structure and Intergenerational Exchange.” *Research on Aging* 14(4):427-447.
- Hamilton, B. E., J. A. Martin, and S. J. Ventura. 2007. “Births: Preliminary Data for 2006.” National Vital Statistics Reports Vol.56 No. 7. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics.
- Heuveline, P. and J. M. Timberlake. 2004. “The Role of Cohabitation in Family Formation: The United States in Comparative Perspective.” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66(5): 1214-1230.
- Hogan, D., L. Hao, and W. Parish. 1990. “Race, Kin, and Assistance to Mother-Headed Families.” *Social Forces* 68(3): 797-812.
- Hogan, D., D. Eggebeen, and C. Clogg. 1993. “The Structure of Intergenerational Exchanges in American Families.” *American Journal of Sociology* 98(6): 1428-1458.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. 1994. *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigrations*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Kennedy, S. and L. Bumpass. 2008. “Cohabitation and Children’s Living Arrangements: New Estimates from the United States.” *Demographic Research* 19(47): 1663-1692.
- Knauper, B. 1998. “Filter questions and question interpretation: presuppositions at work.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 62(1) :70–78.
- Landale, N. and K. Fennelly. 1992. “Informal Unions among Mainland Puerto Ricans: Cohabitation or an Alternative to Legal Marriage?” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 54(2): 269-280.
- Landale, N. and R. Forste. 1991. “Patterns of Entry into Cohabitation and Marriage Among Mainland Puerto Rican Women.” *Demography* 28(4): 587-607.
- Landale, N. and S. Haun. 1996. “Migration and Premarital Childbearing Among Puerto Rican Women.” *Demography* 28(4): 587-607.
- Landale, N. and R. S. Oropesa. 2007. “Hispanic Families: Stability and Change.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 33: 381-405.
- Leach, M. 2005. “The Incorporation of Mexican Immigrants in New Destinations: A Research Agenda.” Presented at the Summer Institute of Immigration. University of California,

Irvine, CA.

- Lepkowski, J., W. D. Mosher, K. E. Davis, R. M. Groves, J. Van Hoewky, and J. Willem. 2006. "National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle 6: Sample Design, Weighting, Imputation, and Variance Estimation." Vital Health and Statistics Series. 2 No.142. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics.
- Lloyd, K. M. 2006. "Latinas' Transition to First Marriage: An Examination of Four Theoretical Perspectives." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68(4): 993-1014.
- Manning, W. D. 1995. "Cohabitation, Marriage, and Entry into Motherhood." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 57(1): 191-20.
- Manning, W. D. and N. Landale. 1996. "Racial and Ethnic Differences in the Role of Cohabitation in Premarital Childbearing." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58(1): 63-77.
- Manning, W. D. 2001. "Childbearing in Cohabiting Unions: Racial and Ethnic Differences." *Family Planning Perspectives* 33(5): 217-223.
- Massey, J. T., T. F. Moore, V. L. Parsons, and W. Tadros. 1989. "Design and Estimation for the National Health Interview Survey, 1985-94." Vital Health and Statistics Series 2 No. 110. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics.
- Mincieli, L., J. Manlove, M. McGarrett, K. Moore, and S. Ryan. 2007. "The Relationship Context of Births Outside of Marriage: The Rise of Cohabitation." *Child Trends Research Brief* 13: 1-4.
- Mosher, W. D. 1998. "Design and Operation of the 1995 NSFG." *Family Planning Perspectives* 30(1): 43-46.
- Munson, M. and P. Sutton. 2006. "Births, Marriages, Divorces, and Deaths: Provisional Data for 2005." National Vital Statistics Reports Vol. 54 No. 20. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.
- Musick, K. 2007. "Cohabitation, Nonmarital childbearing, and marriage processes." *Demographic Research* 16(9): 249-286.
- Newman, K. E. and M. Tienda. 1994. "The Settlement and Secondary Migration Patterns of Legalized Immigrants: Insights from Administrative Records." Pp. 157-226 in Barry Edmonston and Jeffrey S. Passel (eds). *Immigration and Ethnicity*. Washington DC: The Urban Institute.
- Oropesa, R. S. 1996. "Normative Beliefs about Marriage and Cohabitation: A Comparison of Non-Latino Whites, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 58(1): 49-62.

- Oropesa, R. S., D. Lichter, and R. Anderson. 1994. "Marriage Markets and the Paradox of Mexican-American Nuptiality." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 56(4): 889-907.
- Oppenheimer, V. 2003. "Cohabiting and Marriage During Young Men's Career Development Process." *Demography* 40(1): 127-149.
- Oppenheimer, V., M. Kalmijn, and N. Lim. 1997. "Men's Career Development and Marriage Timing during a Period of Rising Inequality." *Demography* 34(3): 311-330.
- Parish, W., L. Hao, and D. Hogan. 1991. "Family Support Networks, Welfare, and Work among Young Mothers." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53(1):203-215.
- Plateris, A. 1978. "Divorce and Divorce rates: United States." Vital Health and Statistics Series 21 No. 29. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics.
- Potter, F. J., V. G. Iannacchione, W. D. Mosher, R. E. Mason, and J. D. Kavee. 1998. "Sample Design, Sampling Weights, Imputation, and Variance Estimation in the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth." Vital and Health Statistics Series 2 No. 124. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics.
- Raley, R. K. 1996. "A Shortage of Marriageable Men? A Note on the Role of Cohabitation in Race Differences in Marriage." *American Sociological Review* 61(6): 973-983.
- Raley, R. K. 2000. "Recent Trends in Marriage and Cohabitation: The United States." Pp. 19-39 in L. Waite, C. Bachrach, M. Hindin, E. Thomson, and A. Thornton, (eds). *Ties that Bind: Perspectives on Marriage and Cohabitation*. Hawthorne: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Raley, R. K. 2001. "Increasing Fertility in Cohabiting Unions: Evidence for a Second Demographic Transition in the United States?" *Demography* 38(1): 59-66.
- Raley, R. K. and L. Bumpass. 2003. "The Topography of the Divorce Plateau: Levels and Trends in Union Stability in the United States after 1980." *Demographic Research* 8(8):245-260.
- Raley, R. K., T. Durden, and E. Wildsmith. 2004. "Understanding Mexican Marriage Patterns Using a Life Course Approach." *Social Science Quarterly* 85(4): 872-890.
- Raley, R. K. and M. M. Sweeney. 2007. "What Explains Race and Ethnic Variation in Cohabitation, Marriage, Divorce, and Nonmarital Fertility?" *CCPR Working Paper Series 26-07*, California Center for Population Research, University of California, Los Angeles. http://www.ccpr.ucla.edu/ccprwpseries/ccpr_026_07.pdf
- Reed, J. 2006. "Not Crossing the "Extra Line": How Cohabitators With Children View Their Unions." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68(5): 1117-1131.

- Rumbaut, R. 2006. "The Making of A People". Pp. 16-65 in M. Tienda and F. Mitchell (eds.). *Hispanics and the American Future*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Sarkisian, N., M. Gerena, and N. Gerstel. 2007. "Extended Family Integration Among Euro and Mexican Americans: Ethnicity, Gender, and Class." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69(1): 40-54.
- Sarkisian, N. and N. Gerstel. 2004. "Kin Support Among Blacks and Whites: Race and Family Organization." *American Sociological Review* 69(6): 812-837.
- Sassler, S., and R. Schoen. 1999. "The Effect of Attitudes and Economic Activity on Marriage." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61(1): 147-159.
- Schneider, B., S. Martinez, and A. Owens. 2006. "Barriers to Educational Opportunities for Hispanics in the United States." Pp. 179-221 in M. Tienda and F. Mitchell (eds.). *Hispanics and the American Future*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Seltzer, J. A. 2000. "Families Formed Outside of Marriage." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 62(4): 1247-1268.
- Seltzer, J. A. 2004. "Cohabitation and Family Change." Pp. 57-78 in M. Coleman and L. Ganong (eds.). *Handbook of Contemporary Families: Considering the Past, Contemplating the Future*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Smock, P. J. 2000. "Cohabitation in the United States: An Appraisal of Research Themes, Findings, and Implications." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 1-20.
- Smock, P. J. and W. D. Manning. 1995. "Why Marry? Race and the Transition to Marriage Among Cohabitors." *Demography* 32(4): 509-520.
- South, S. 1993. "Racial and Ethnic Differences in the Desire to Marry." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 55(2): 357-370.
- Terrazas, A. and J. Batalova. 2008. "The Most Up-to-Date Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants in the United States." *Migration Information Source*. Website: <http://www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=714#1>
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2008 "Table MS-2. Estimated Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890 to the Present." Downloaded March 26, 2009. www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/ms2.xls - 2008-07-28
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. December 2004. "Public Use Data File Documentation National Survey of Family Growth Cycle 6: 2002 User's Guide." Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics.

- Ventura, S. and C. Bachrach. 2000. "Nonmarital Childbearing in the United States, 1940-99." National Vital Statistics Reports Vol. 48 No. 16. Hyattsville, Maryland: National Center for Health Statistics.
- Waldinger, R. 2008. "Mexican Immigrants in an Unequal America: Starting out at the bottom, moving ahead?" Institute of Research on Labor and Unemployment (IRLE) Working Paper Series Paper No. 15. Website: <http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=uclairle>
- Waters, M. and T. Jimenez. 2005. "ASSESSING IMMIGRANT ASSIMILATION: New Empirical and Theoretical Challenges." *Annual. Review of Sociology* 31:105–125.
- Weiss, Y. 1997. "The Formation and Dissolution of Families." Pp. 81-123 in M. Rosenzweig and O. Stark, (eds). *Handbook of Population and Family Economics* Vol 1A. Amsterdam: Elsevier Science.
- Wildsmith, E., and R. K. Raley. 2005. "Race-Ethnic Differences in Nonmarital Fertility: A Focus on Mexican American women." Presented in the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, Philadelphia, PA.
- Wildsmith, E., and R. K. Raley. 2006. "Race-Ethnic Differences in Nonmarital Fertility: A Focus on Mexican American women." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68(2): 491-508.

TABLE**Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics of the Analytical Sample**

	1995		2002		Total	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Race, ethnicity, and nativity status						
White	78	3,333	73	2,037	76	5,370
Black	14	1,316	15	708	15	2,024
U.S.-born Mexican American	4	282	5	256	5	538
Foreign-born Mexican	3	237	6	259	5	496
Mother's education (years)						
Less than 12	26	1,527	21	767	24	2,294
12	45	2,243	36	1,129	41	3,372
13+	28	1,372	42	1,331	35	2,703
Missing	1	26	1	33	1	59
Family structure at age 14						
Two biological/adoptive parents	66	3,288	70	2,213	68	5,501
Step father, biological mother	6	302	10	308	8	610
Single mother	16	950	11	398	14	1,348
Other	11	628	9	341	10	969
Respondent's own education (years)						
Less than 12	16	905	19	654	17	1,559
12	34	1,771	21	726	28	2,497
13-15	25	1,315	29	945	27	2,260
16+	25	1,177	31	935	28	2,112
GED						
No GED	94	4,842	92	3,000	93	7,842
GED	6	326	8	260	7	586
Year						
1995	-	-	-	-	53	5,168
2002	-	-	-	-	48	3,260
Age at survey						
22 to 24	16	788	18	644	17	1,432
25 to 29	30	1,476	28	975	29	2,451
30 to 34	33	1,823	32	1,039	33	2,862
35 to 37	20	1,081	21	602	21	1,683

Notes: Female respondents ages 22-37. Sample restricted to U.S.-born Whites, Blacks, Mexican Americans and foreign-born Mexicans. Weighted percentages and unweighted Ns.

Table 2. Percentage Distribution of Family Background and Socio-economic Characteristics of the Analytical Sample by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity Status

	U.S.-born			Foreign-born	Total
	White	Black	Mexican American	Mexican	
Mother's education (years)					
Less than 12	17	30	53	88	24
12	45	38	25	6	41
13+	38	32	21	5	35
Missing	1	1	1	1	1
Family structure at 14					
Two biological/adoptive parents	71	50	70	81	68
Step father, biological mother	8	7	6	4	8
Single mother	12	27	13	6	14
Other	9	16	11	10	10
Respondent's own education (years)					
Less than 12	13	20	30	64	17
12	27	33	27	18	28
13-15	27	29	30	12	27
16+	32	18	13	6	28
GED					
GED	7	8	8	3	7
Survey year					
1995	54	51	45	37	53
2002	46	49	55	63	48
Age at survey					
22 to 24	17	19	24	15	17
25 to 29	29	29	28	38	29
30 to 34	33	31	33	31	33
35 to 37	21	21	14	16	21

Notes: Female respondents ages 22-37. Weighted percentages and unweighted Ns. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Table 3. Percent of Women Who are Currently Cohabiting, Who Ever Cohabited, and Who Cohabited Before First Marriage by Survey Year and Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity Status

	Currently Cohabiting			Ever Cohabited			Cohabited Prior to Marriage		
	1995	2002	Total	1995	2002	Total	1995	2002	Total
Race, ethnicity, and nativity status									
White	9	9	9	50	61	55	44	56	49
Black	9	11	10	48	63	55	44	60	52
U.S.-born Mexican American	9	11	10	51	55	53	41	51	46
Foreign-born Mexican	12	18	16	31	42	38	28	39	35
Total	9	10	10	49	60	54	43	55	49
N	5,168	3,260	8,428	5,168	3,260	8,428	5,168	3,260	8,428

Notes: Female respondents ages 22-37. Weighted percentages and unweighted Ns.

Table 4. Cumulative Percentage of Women Who Experience A First Pregnancy by Type of First Union and Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity Status

	Union Duration (months)								N
	3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24+	
COHABITATION									
White	2	4	5	6	7	8	8	11	2,315
Black	4	6	9	11	14	14	16	22	625
U.S.-born Mexican American	7	17	19	22	23	25	26	30	179
Foreign-born Mexican	14	28	40	43	47	51	55	60	128
Total	3	6	7	9	10	11	11	15	3,247
MARRIAGE									
White	3	7	11	14	18	20	24	56	1,715
Black	3	10	14	15	18	21	24	40	252
U.S.-born Mexican American	8	16	21	25	31	36	40	62	158
Foreign-born Mexican	16	35	44	48	54	58	60	76	240
Total	4	9	14	17	21	24	28	56	2,365

Notes: Female respondents ages 22-37. Excludes female respondents whose first pregnancies occurred prior to first co-residential union. Weighted percentages and unweighted Ns.

Table 5. Union Status at Childbirth by Union Status at Pregnancy (Percentages)

Union Status at Pregnancy	Union Status at Birth			Total	N
	Single	Cohabiting	Married		
COHABITING					
White	5	57	38	100	284
Black	5	77	18	100	159
Mexican American	2	87	11	100	134
Total	4	67	29	100	577
SINGLE					
White	52	7	41	100	754
Black	84	5	12	100	640
Mexican American	60	8	32	100	269
Total	61	7	32	100	1,663

Notes: Female respondents ages 22-37 who experienced their first pregnancy while cohabiting (top panel) or outside a co-residential union (bottom panel). Weighted percentages and unweighted Ns. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Table 6. Cumulative Percentage of First Cohabitations that Remain Together, End in Marriage, or Dissolve by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity Status, and Duration

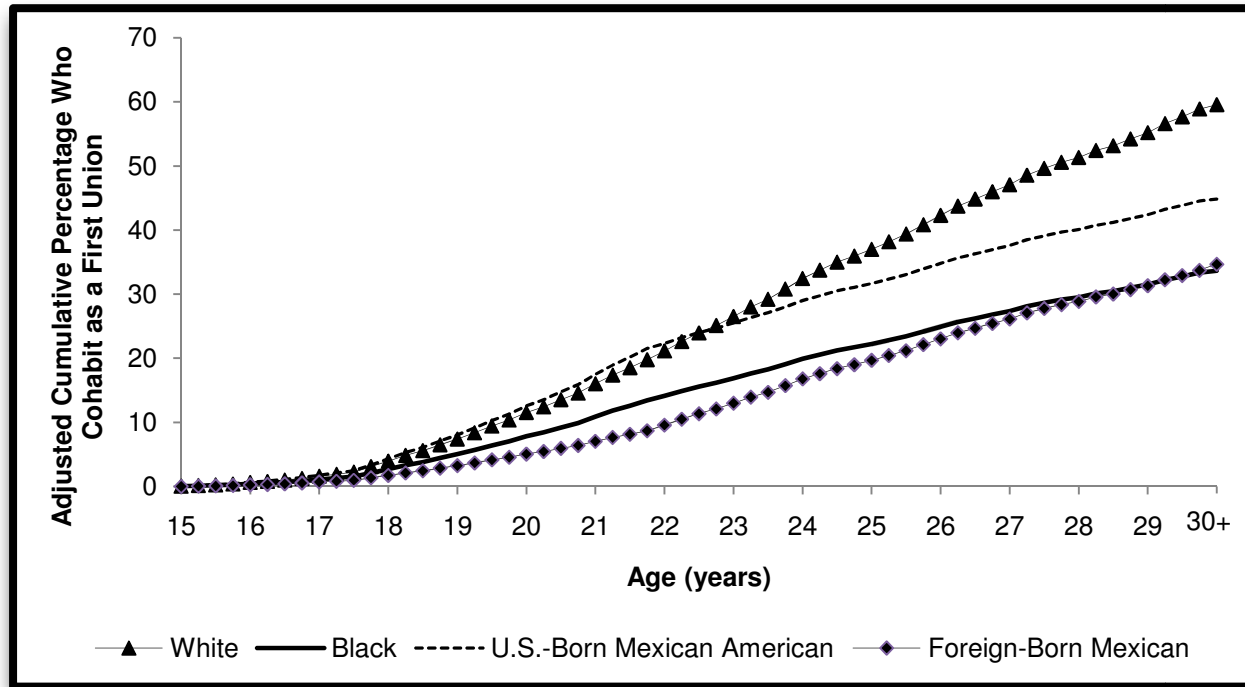
	Union Duration (months)						N
	6	12	18	24	30	36+	
White							
Remain in cohabitation	80	62	47	39	31	9	2,583
Marry	14	25	35	39	44	58	
Dissolve	7	13	19	22	25	34	
Black							
Remain in cohabitation	86	72	62	53	45	11	1025
Marry	7	14	17	22	25	39	
Dissolve	7	14	21	25	31	50	
U.S.-Born Mexican American							
Remain in cohabitation	81	70	57	51	45	10	248
Marry	12	20	28	31	34	52	
Dissolve	6	10	15	17	20	38	
Foreign-Born Mexican							
Remain in cohabitation	80	72	68	65	62	33	174
Marry	18	25	27	28	31	44	
Dissolve	2	3	5	6	7	23	

Notes: Female respondents ages 22-37 who have ever cohabited. Weighted percentages and unweighted Ns.

FIGURES

Figure 1A.

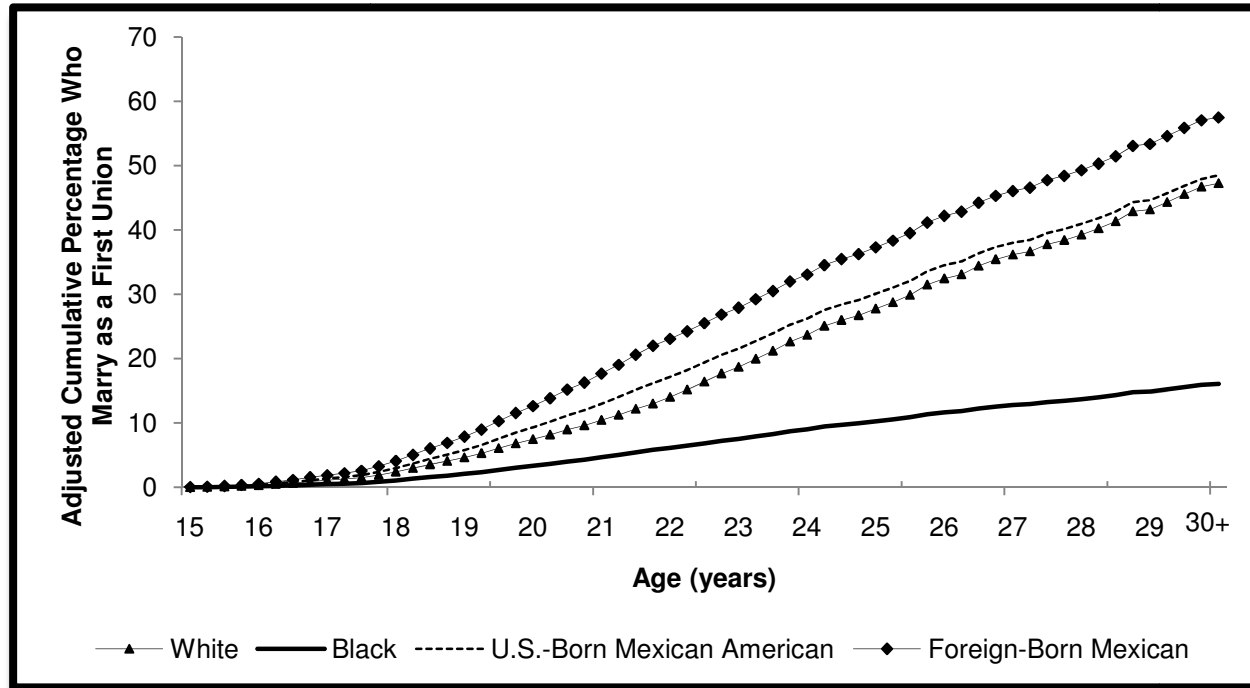
Adjusted Cumulative Percentage of Women Who Cohabit as a First Union by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity Status



Notes: Results from a discrete-time multinomial logistic regression model predicting entry into cohabitation adjusting for socioeconomic status and family background (see text). Risk begins at age 15.

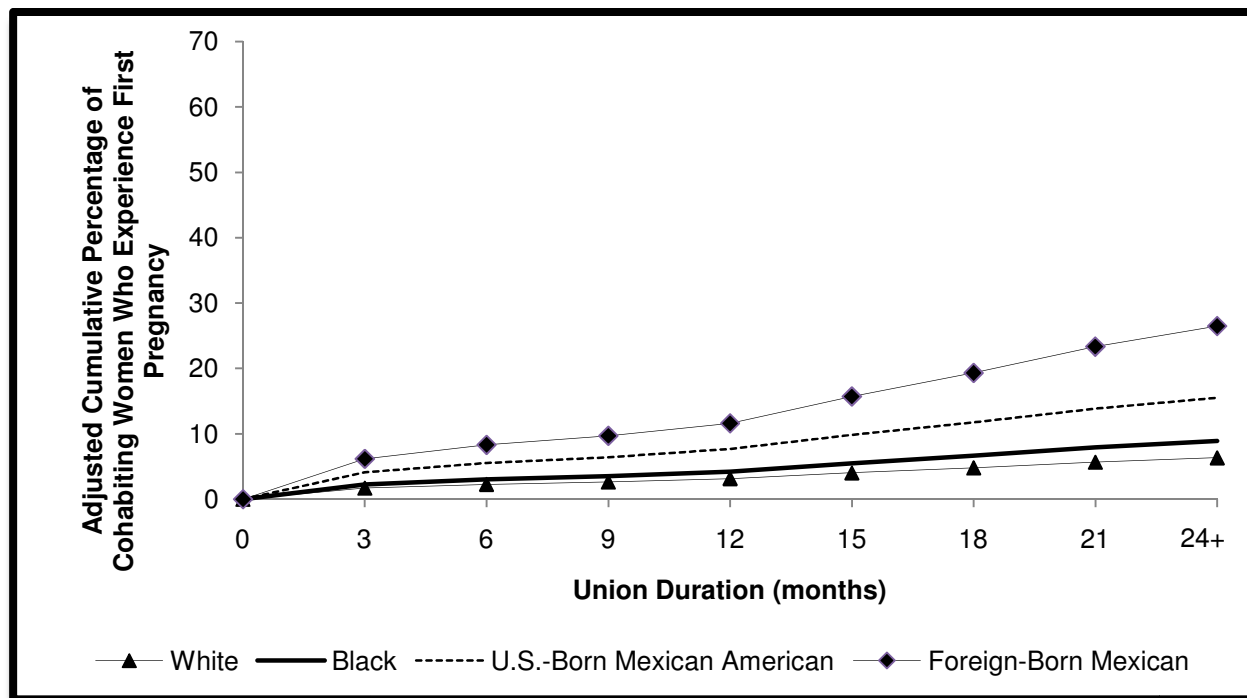
Figure 1B.

Adjusted Cumulative Percentage of Women Who Marry as a First Union by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity Status



Notes: Results from a discrete-time multinomial logistic regression model predicting entry into marriage adjusting for socioeconomic status and family background (see text). Risk begins at age 15.

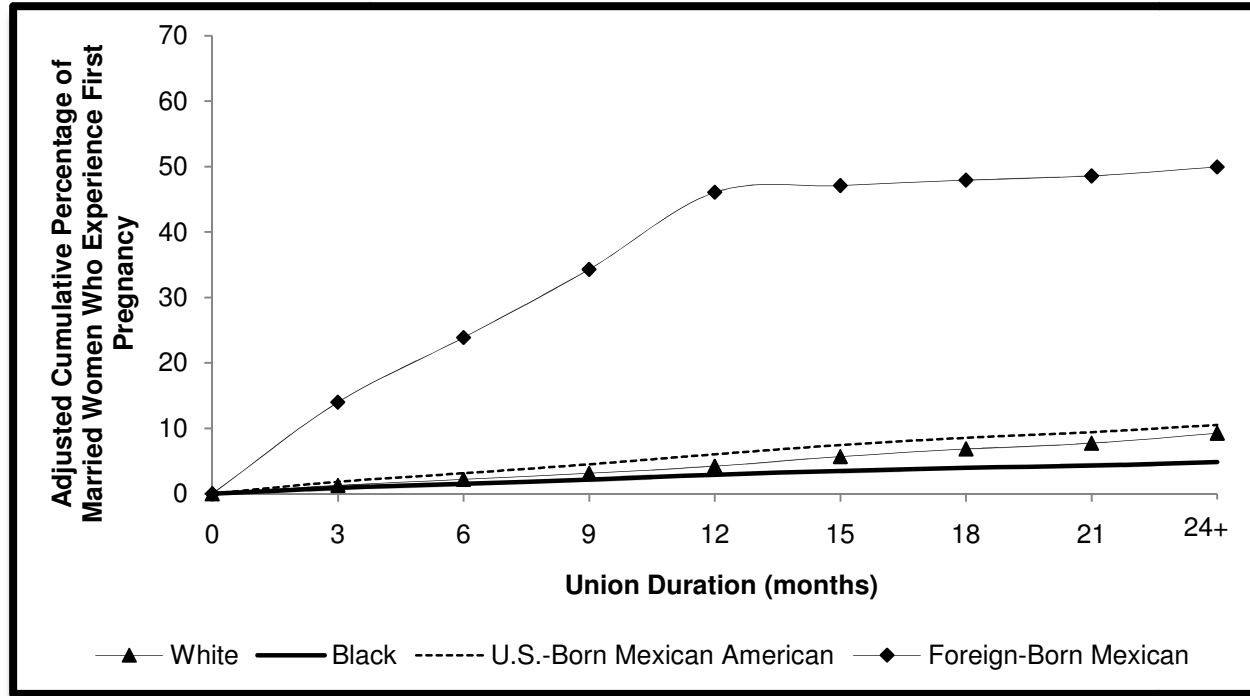
Figure 2A.
Adjusted Cumulative Percentage of Cohabiting Women Who Experience First Pregnancy by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity Status



Notes:
 Results from a discrete-time logistic regression model predicting first pregnancy adjusting for socioeconomic status and family background (see text). Risk of pregnancy begins at the start of cohabitation.

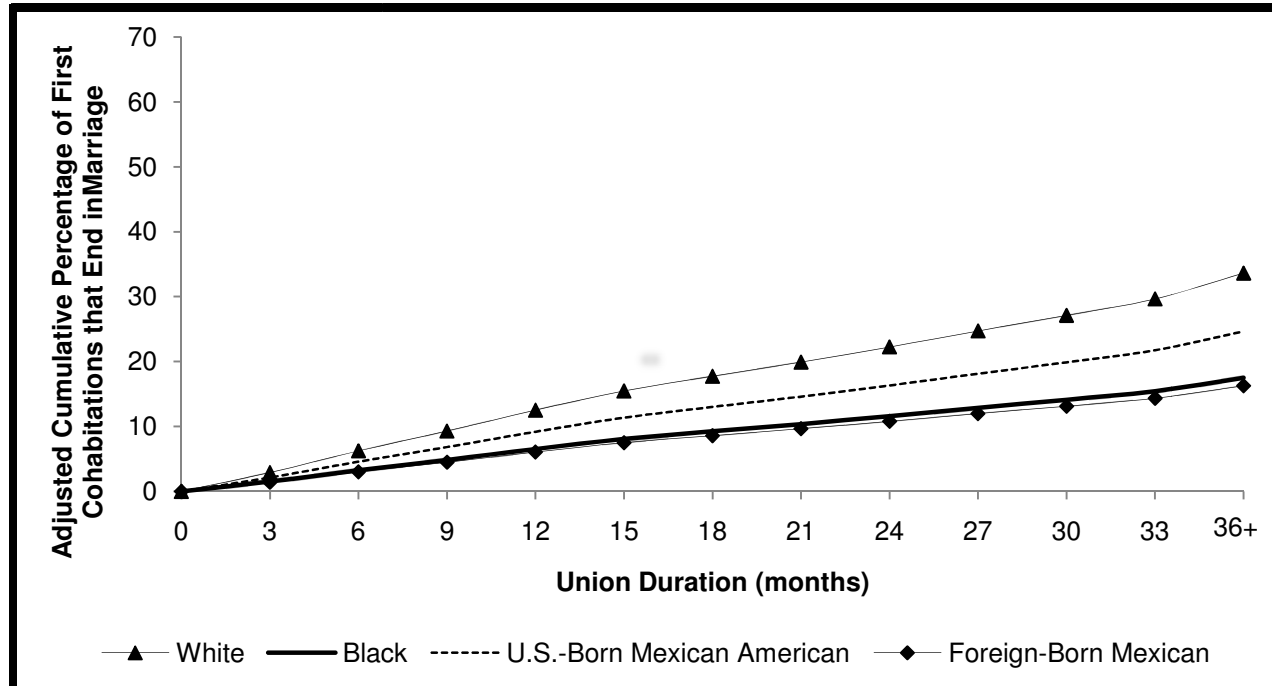
Figure 2B.

Adjusted Cumulative Percentage of Married Women Who Experience First Pregnancy by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity Status



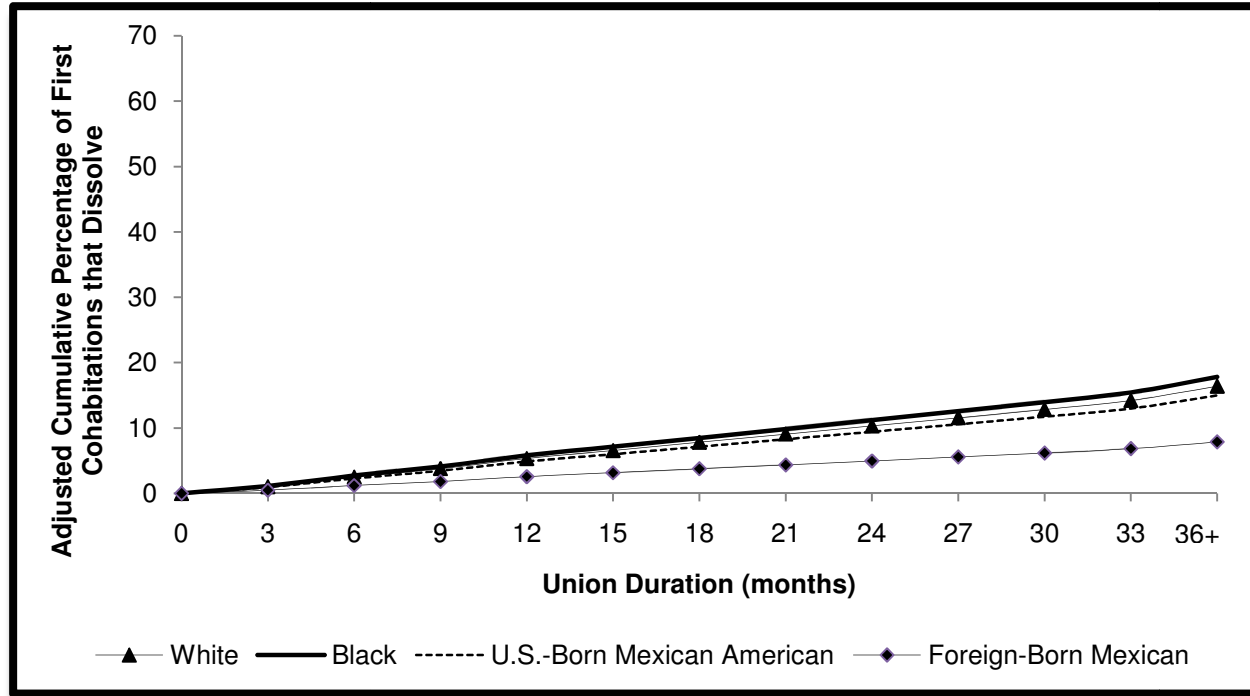
Notes: Results from a discrete-time logistic regression model predicting first pregnancy adjusting for socioeconomic status and family background (see text). Risk of pregnancy begins at the start of marriage.

Figure 3A.
Adjusted Cumulative Percentage of First Cohabitations that End in Marriage by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity Status



Notes: Results from a discrete-time multinomial logistic regression model predicting dissolution of first cohabitation adjusting for socioeconomic status and family background (see text). Risk begins at start of first cohabiting union.

Figure 3B.
Adjusted Cumulative Percentage of First Cohabitations that Dissolve by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity Status



Notes: Results from a discrete-time multinomial logistic regression model predicting dissolution of first cohabitation adjusting for socioeconomic status and family background (see text). Risk begins at start of first cohabiting union.