Adolescents’ Union Formation Expectations and Subsequent Behavior during Young Adulthood

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Background
- Research has increasingly focused on the association between union formation expectations and union transitions.
- Few scholars have considered cohabitation expectations.
- Empirical investigation of adolescents’ union formation expectations and behavior in young adulthood has also been limited.

Current Investigation
- We examined the extent to which adolescents’ union formation expectations are associated with later behavior in young adulthood.
  1. (odds of cohabiting and marrying by age 25)
  2. (timings of cohabitation and marriage)
- We expected that positive union formation expectations during adolescence would be associated with young adult union transitions.

Data and Sample
- Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS)
  1. Five waves of data collected (2001-2011)
  2. Respondents aged 15-17 at the first interview and 22-29 at the fifth interview
- Sample (n=593)
  1. Respondents who were aged 15-17 at the first interview and 22-29 at the fifth interview

Key Measures
- Union Formation
- Cohabitation Expectations
  1. “When you think of your future, do you see yourself living with someone without being married?”
- Marital Expectations
  1. “When you think of your future, do you expect to marry?”

Analyses
- Table 1: Cross-tabulation of Age at Cohabitation/Marriage by Cohabitation Expectations
- Table 2: Odds Ratios of Cohabitation by 25

Results
- Positive expectations to cohabit in adolescence were associated with higher odds of cohabitation and earlier entry into a cohabiting union in young adulthood.
- Adolescents’ marital expectations were not related to marriage in young adulthood.
- Marital expectations were associated with higher odds of marrying among young adults with no cohabitation experience.

Discussion

Conclusions
- Adolescents’ union formation expectations provide a lens for understanding future trends in cohabitation and marriage.
- Cohabitation experiences may contribute to bifurcations in young adult marital trajectories.

Notes:
- *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001
- Odds ratios of cohabitation by age 25: Ref=Not sexually active by age 16
- Odds ratios of marriage by age 25: Ref=Did not cohabit by 25