Fertility Intentions Following First Marriage Dissolution: Does Union Status Matter?

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Overview
• Approximately half of all first marriages are estimated to end in dissolution (Raley and Bumpass 2003).
• The vast majority of nonmarital births (77%) occur to women older than 20 years of age (Martin et al. 2009).
• Unwed mothers tend to be cohabiting with a partner at the time of their child’s birth (Bumpass and Lu 2000).
• Almost one-third of nonmarital births are to women who have experienced a divorce or separation (Bumpass and McLanahan 1989).
• This study focuses on fertility intentions after first marriage dissolution by comparing previously married, cohabiting women to their remarried counterparts.

Previous Empirical Findings
• Prior work suggests that premarital cohabiting women may have lower fertility intentions than married women (Musick 2002; Stewart 2002; Manning 2001).
• Nonmarital births are considerably less likely to be planned than marital births (Musick 2002).
• Findings in the U.S. and the Netherlands:
  ▪ Repartnering after a first marital dissolution significantly increases the odds of a postmarital birth (Brown 2000; Kalmijn and Gelissen 2006).
• Findings in Great Britain:
  ▪ Almost half of previously married, cohabiting women have at least one birth following their first marital dissolution.
  ▪ Previously married, cohabiting women are less likely to bear children than remarried women (Jeffries et al. 2000).

Research Questions
• Are previously married, cohabiting women more or less likely to intend to have a child than remarried women?
• If so, what socio-economic variables explain this difference?

Data and Methods
• Cycle 6 of the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) collected in 2002.
• The NSFG is based on a national probability sample, representing the household population of the United States, ages 15-44 years.
• Analytic sample:
  ▪ The sample is restricted to women who have ended their first marriage and are currently cohabiting or are remarried. Only respondents who gave a valid response to the fertility intentions question are included. Additionally, only women who report that they and their current partner are both biologically able to bear children are included in the sample.
  ▪ N=278
  ▪ n=75 currently cohabiting women
  ▪ n=203 currently remarried women

Analysis
• Both zero order and full models are estimated to predict the log odds of intending to have a child with a current partner.
• Dependent variable: Fertility Intentions
  ▪ Intends to have a child (1) vs. does not intend to have a child (0)
• Main independent variable: Current Union Status
  ▪ Currently postmaritally cohabiting (1) vs. currently remarried (0)

Fertility Intentions
• Do you and your current husband or cohabitating partner intend to have another baby at some time in the future? Intent refers to what you and your husband or partner are actually going to try to do.
• About 33% of previously married women intend to have a child with their current partner.

Fertility Intentions by Current Status
• About 46% of postmaritally cohabiting women report that they and their current partner intend to have a child, while only 29% of remarried women report similar fertility intentions.

Bivariate and Multivariate Analysis

Table 1. Odds Ratios from Binary Logistic Regression Zero-Order and Full Models Predicting the Fertility Intentions to Have a Child Among Previously Married Women (N=278)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Exp(b)</th>
<th>S.E</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Postmarital Union Status</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently Cohabiting (reference = remarried)</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce/Separation (reference = intact)</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female birth (reference = male)</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-born Hispanic</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (reference = high school graduate)</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than H.S. graduation</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Type during Childhood (reference = intact)</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .10; ** p < .05; *** p < .01

Discussion
• About one-third of previously married women intend to have a child with their current partner. Thus, family formation and non-marital childbearing are not restricted to young women prior to first marriage.
• Cohabiters are more likely to intend to have a child after their first marriage dissolution than remarried women. The relatively high fertility intentions of cohabiting women suggest that cohabitation may serve as an alternative to marriage for the previously married.