

Adolescents' Union Formation Expectations and Subsequent Behavior during Young Adulthood

Lindsey M. Cooper (lcooper@bgsu.edu), Wendy D. Manning, Monica A. Longmore, & Peggy C. Giordano

Department of Sociology
Bowling Green State University

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) timing of cohabitation and marriage
- We expected that positive union formation expectations during adolescence would be associated with young adult union transitions.

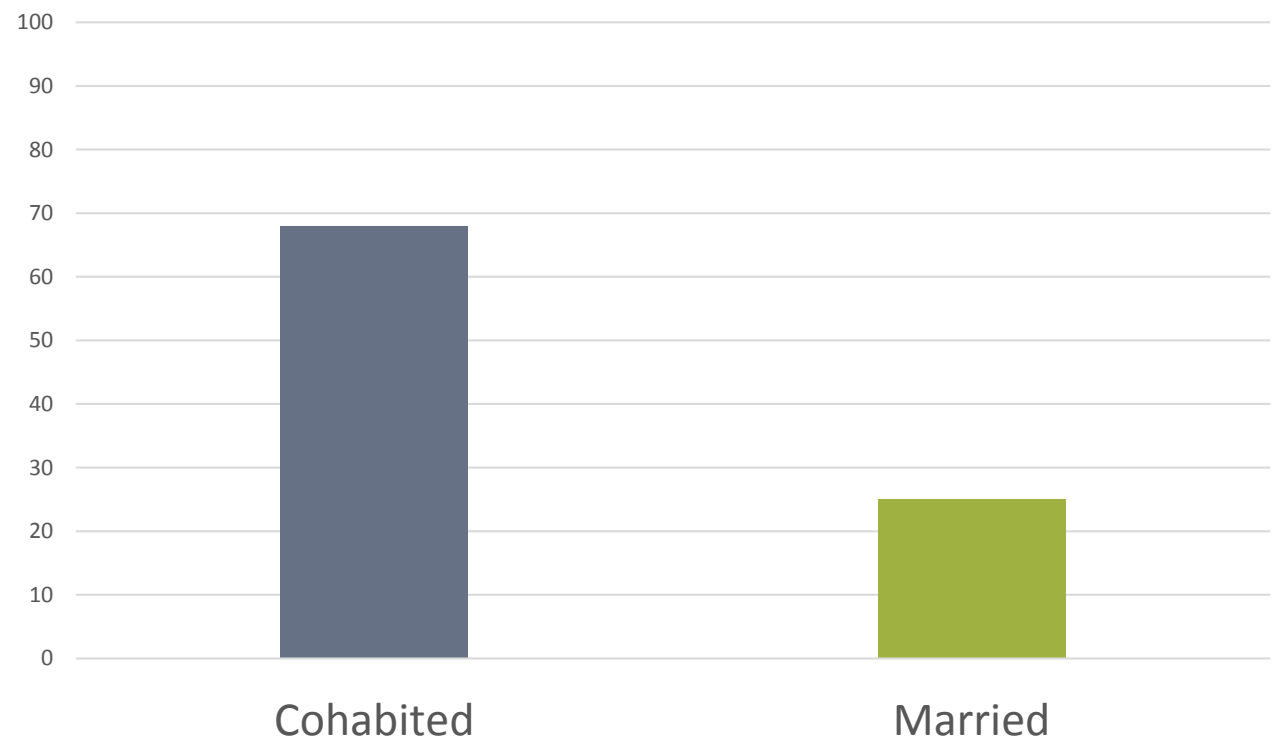
Data and Sample

- Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study (TARS)
 - Five waves of data collected (2001-2011)
 - Respondents aged 22-29 at the fifth interview
- Sample (n=593)
 - Respondents who were aged 15-17 at the first interview and 25+ at the fifth interview

Key Measures

Union Formation

Figure 1. Union Formation by Age 25



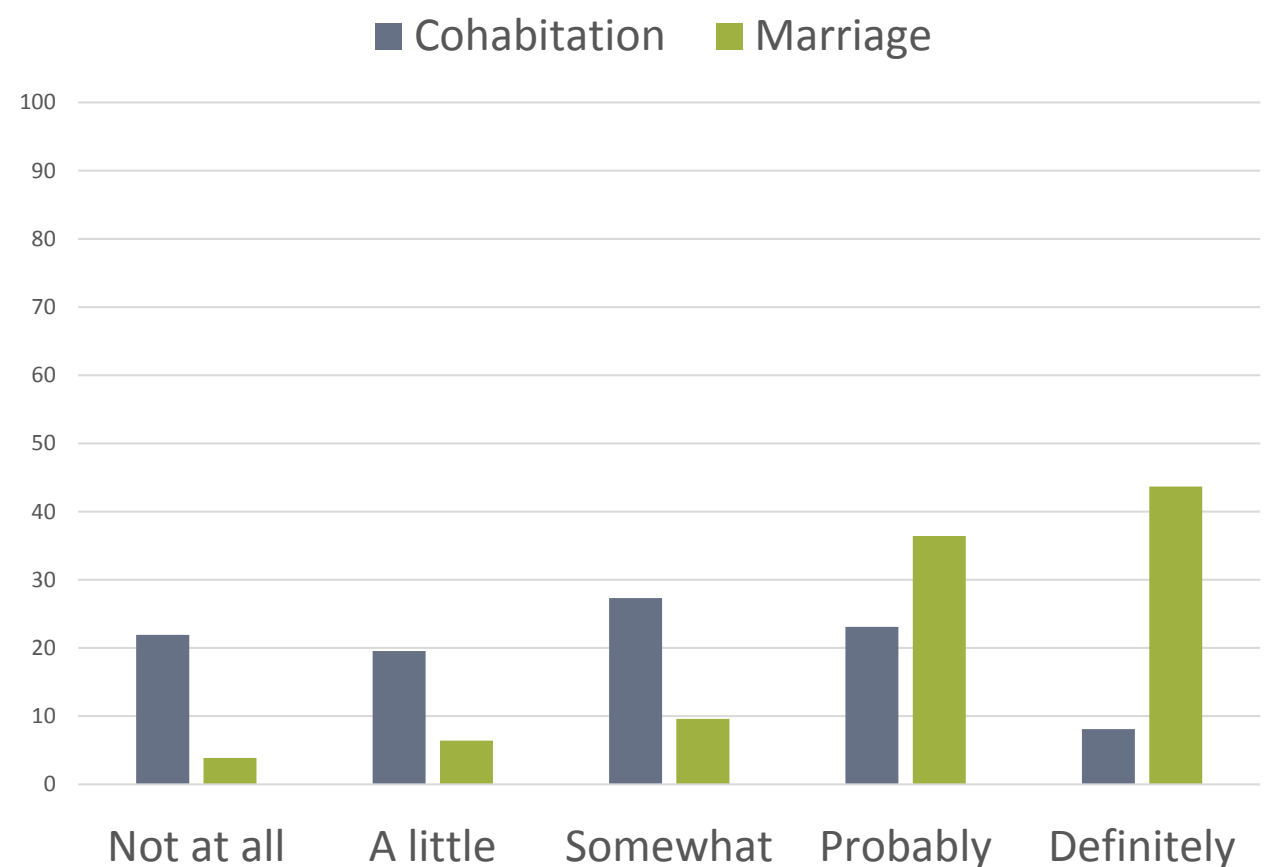
Cohabitation Expectations

- “When you think of your future, do you see yourself living with someone without being married?”

Marital Expectations

- “When you think of your future, do you expect to marry?”

Figure 2. Union Formation Expectations



Analyses

Figure 3. Odds Ratios of Cohabitation by 25

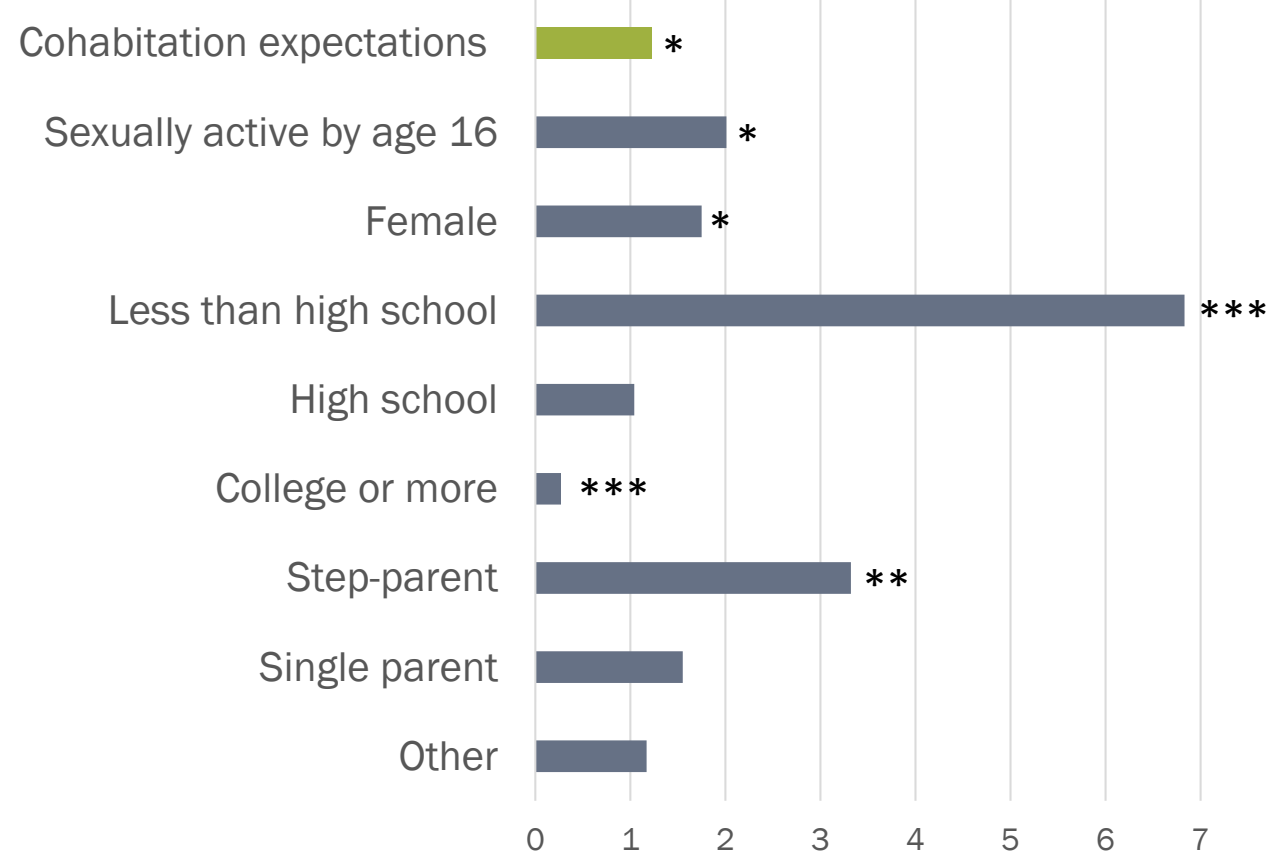


Figure 4. Odds Ratios of Marriage by 25

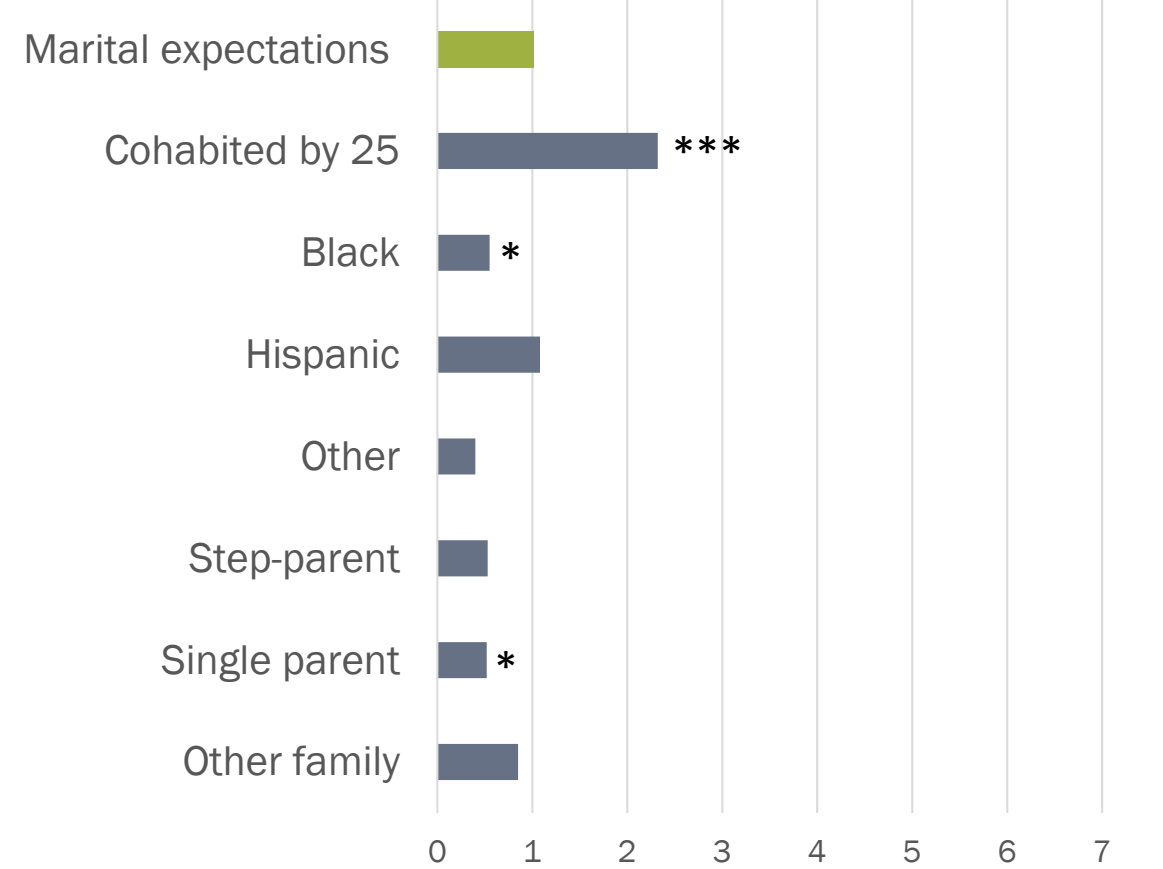


Table 1. OLS Regression of Age at Cohabitation/Marriage on Cohabitation/Marital Expectations and Control Variables

	Age at Cohabitation (n=406) Full Model	Age at Marriage (n=149) Full Model
<i>Independent Variables</i>		
Cohabitation Expectations	-0.29***	
Marital Expectations		0.05
<i>Adolescent Behaviors</i>		
Grades in School	0.07	0.05
Number of Dating Partners	-0.02	0.00
Adolescent Sexual Activity (Ref=Not sexually active by age 16)		
Sexually active by age 16	-0.53*	0.09
Delinquency	0.00	-0.04
<i>Sociodemographic Characteristics</i>		
Age	0.24*	0.03
Gender		
Female	-0.73***	-0.73*
Race (Ref=White)		
Black	0.12	-0.55
Hispanic	-0.21	0.06
Other	-0.31	0.42
Education (Ref=Some college)		
Less than high school	-2.34***	-2.90***
High school	-0.90**	-1.27**
College or more	2.27***	0.81
Religiosity	0.10	-0.04
Family Structure (Ref=Two biological parent)		
Step-parent	0.03	-1.28*
Single parent	-0.31	-0.93
Other	-0.34	-0.35
Cohabitation (Ref=Did not cohabit by 25)		
Cohabited by age 25		0.85*
R ²	0.42	0.37

Note: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

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

CONTRIBUTIONS

- Incorporated cohabitation expectations
- Examined the long reach of adolescent relationship expectations
- Controlled for variety of adolescent academic, romantic, and risk behaviors

NEXT STEPS

- Use multidimensional construct of union formation expectations
- Explore these associations using other samples
- Examine union formation at later age

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.