

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; Manning 1999).
 - 56% of premarital cohabiting women classified their first child conceived within cohabitation as intended, compared to 82% of married women (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 (Jefferies et al. 2000).

Research Questions

- Are previously married, cohabiting women more or less likely to intend to have a child than remarried woman?
- 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 cohabiting partner intend to have a/nother baby at some time in the future? Intend 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.

Distribution of Fertility Intentions for All Previously Married Women who are in a Union at the Time of Interview

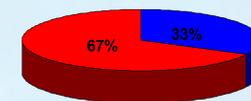


Figure 1: Fertility Intentions

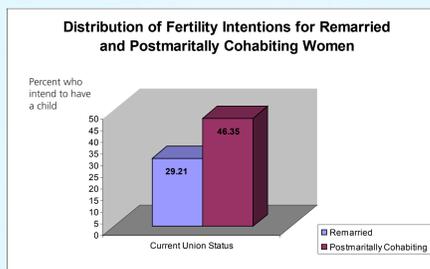


Figure 2: Fertility Intentions by Current Union Status

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.

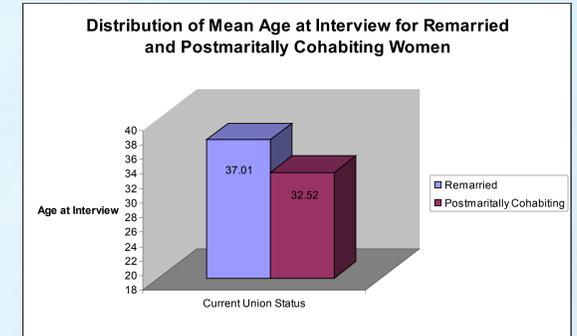


Figure 3: Age at Time of Interview by Current Union Status

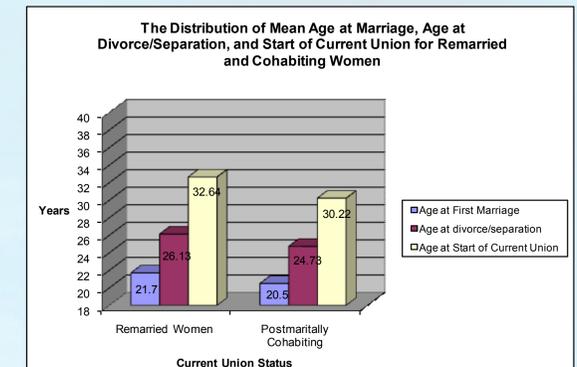


Figure 4: Age at First Marriage, Divorce/Separation, and Start of Current Union by Current Union Status

Bivariate and Multivariate Analysis

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

	Zero-Orders		Full Model	
	Exp (b)	S.E	Exp (b)	S.E
Current Postmarital Union Status				
Currently Cohabiting (reference = remarried)	2.09 *	0.79	0.98	0.39
Controls				
Age at Interview	0.86 ***	0.02	0.86 ***	0.02
Number of Children Born Prior to First Marital Dissolution	0.74	0.19	0.68 **	0.12
Race/Ethnicity (reference = White)				
African-American	2.27	1.14	2.39 *	1.15
Native-born Hispanic	1.93	0.99	1.48	0.84
Foreign-born Hispanic	2.76 **	1.30	1.77	1.19
Other	4.19 **	2.65	2.77	2.15
Education (reference = H.S graduation)				
Less than H.S. graduation	5.57 ***	3.16	3.48 **	2.07
Less than college graduation	4.03 ***	1.82	2.46 **	1.00
College graduation or higher	5.27 ***	2.91	4.20 ***	2.09
Income	0.92 *	0.05	0.94	0.05
Family Type during Childhood (reference = intact)	1.32	0.51	1.02	0.31

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

All Analyses are weighted with SVY commands in STATA.

Source: 2002 National Survey of Family Growth

Bivariate Results

- Current union status is significantly associated with the odds of intending to have a child.
- Currently cohabiting women have 109% greater odds of intending to have a child with their current partner than remarried women.

Multivariate Results

- Once controls are added to the model, the fertility intentions of current cohabitators no longer significantly differ from remarried women.
- Respondent's age at interview mediates the relationship between union status and fertility intentions.

Age at Interview

- On average, cohabiting women first marry, end their first marriages, and enter a postmarital union at younger ages than remarried women.
- Because cohabiting women enter the postmarital stage of the life course at relatively younger ages, they correspondingly have higher fertility intentions than their remarried counterparts.

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 very young women prior to first marriage.
- Cohabitators 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.