The (R)Evolution in the Measurement of Cohabitation as a Family Form

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Measurement Questions
The 2020 census is introducing a differentiation between opposite-sex and same-sex couples in order to improve the bureau's data about same-sex couples. The bureau previously produced counts of same-sex couples from 2000 and 2010 census data using responses to questions about sex and relationship. Some opposite-sex couples mismarked their sex and were incorrectly counted as same-sex couples in initial estimates.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATA</th>
<th>QUESTION WORDING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NATIONAL SURVEY OF FAMILY GROWTH (2017-2019)</td>
<td>Are you not married but living together with a partner of the opposite sex?</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATIONAL HEALTH INTERVIEW SURVEY 2019</td>
<td>The next questions are about marriage and cohabitation. Are you now married, living with a partner together as an unmarried couple, or neither?</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSID (TA) 2019</td>
<td>Are you CURRENTLY living with a partner in a marriage-like relationship?</td>
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<td>ADD HEALTH Wave 5</td>
<td>Roster: What is {INITIALS} relationship to you?” (response categories: husband/wife, partner/boyfriend/girlfriend, son/daughter, etc.)</td>
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<td>Survey: Are you currently living with a romantic or sexual partner?</td>
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<tr>
<td>NLSY-97</td>
<td>Roster: Here is a list of people who usually live in the household at your current residence at this time. What is [this person]'s relationship to you? (response categories: Wife, Husband, Mother, Father, Sister (Full/Half/Step/Adoptive), Brother (Full/Half/Step/Adoptive), Lover/Romantic Partner, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Survey: Since the date of our last interview, have you been, married to someone, or lived with a partner of the opposite sex in a marriage-like relationship where you established one household and lived together</td>
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</table>
Cohabitation as a Fuzzy Concept (Knab 2005)

- Language
- Starting and Ending: Dates, Gradual, Churning, Number of Nights, Duration
- Co-residence is not binary – part-time and full time
- Limited to one partner – Cohab and Marriage Discrete Multiple partners
- Ever Cohabit and Histories
New Pandemic Data Collections

Census Pulse Surveys: Cohabitation Not Included

NCHAT: National Couples’ Health and Time Use Study

Inclusive survey – non-heterosexist

Coresidential partnerships – “are you currently living with a spouse/husband/wife or partner/girlfriend/boyfriend most of the time?”

Oversamples of individuals with sexual minority identities and Asian, Black, and Latino/Hispanic identities
Lessons Learned

Explicit Measurement

Consistency across surveys

Multi-method

Multidisciplinary
Thank you!

Please share your work and send any questions or comments.  
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