

Cross-National Comparisons of Union Stability in
Cohabiting and Married Families with Children*

Kelly Musick, Cornell University

Katherine Micheltore, Syracuse University

October 21, 2016

*Paper prepared for the 2016 Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, Washington, DC. Direct correspondence to Kelly Musick, Department of Policy Analysis and Management, Cornell University, MVR 254, Ithaca, NY 14853. Email: musick@cornell.edu. Phone: 607-255-6067. We thank Gunnar Andersson, Elizabeth Thomson, and the SPaDE/SUDA research group on cohabitation and complexity for critical conceptual and methodological guidance on our cross-country comparisons. We are also grateful to Andrew Cherlin and Robert Pollak for thoughtful comments on earlier drafts, and to Karolin Kubisch, Brienna Perelli-Harris, and other members of the Nonmarital Fertility Network for their work on the Harmonized Histories.

ABSTRACT. Increases in cohabitation, nonmarital childbearing, and partnership dissolution have reshaped the family landscape in most Western countries. The U.S. shares many features of family change common elsewhere, although it is exceptional in its high degree of union instability. This paper uses the Harmonized Histories to provide a rich, descriptive account of union instability among couples who have had a child together in the U.S., as compared to several Western European countries. First, we compare within-country differences between cohabiting and married parents in education, prior family experiences, and age at first birth. Second, we estimate differences in the stability of cohabiting and married parents, paying attention to transitions into marriage among those cohabiting at birth. Finally, we examine the extent to which cross-country differences in the characteristics of couples account for differences in union instability across countries. Although similar factors are associated with union instability across countries, some of these (childbearing with a prior partner, early childbearing) are by far more common in the U.S., accounting in part for higher shares separating. The characteristics associated with union instability also tend to be more tightly linked in the U.S. than elsewhere, leading to greater social class disparities in parental separation and suggesting greater inequality in resources for children.

Key words: nonmarital childbearing, cohabitation, union instability, family complexity, diverging destinies, second demographic transition

Increases in cohabitation, nonmarital childbearing, and partnership dissolution—components of what is commonly termed the “second demographic transition” (van de Kaa 1987)—have reshaped the family landscape over the past half century. In most Western countries, much of family life now unfolds outside the bounds of marriage. Important variation in family patterns nonetheless remain (Cherlin 2005, 2009; Kiernan 2000; Perelli-Harris and Gassen 2012), with potential implications for well-being. Changes in family life have generated concern, especially in the United States, about resources for children (Cherlin 2005, 2009; McLanahan 2004). This may in part reflect differences in how key features of family change have played out in this context. In particular, the U.S. is exceptional in its high degree of union instability—among both married and cohabiting couples (Andersson and Philipov 2002; Cherlin 2005, 2009; Dronkers 2015).

This paper provides a rich, descriptive account of U.S. union instability as compared to 7 Western European countries: the U.K., Norway, Sweden, Austria, France, Italy, and Spain. We focus on the stability of couples who have had a child together, who arguably have the most at stake in staying together (e.g., Gibson-Davis, Edin, and McLanahan 2005; Waller 2001; Tavares and Aassve 2013). These couples are of greater policy relevance than those without children because parental instability directly affects children’s living arrangements and often the resources available to them (Fomby and Cherlin 2007; Fomby and Sennott 2013; Tach, Mincy, and Edin 2010; Tach and Eads 2015). Cohabiting parents are of further concern from a policy perspective as they tend to be relatively disadvantaged (Musick and Michelmore 2015; Perelli-Harris et al. 2010).

We have three main aims: 1) compare within-country differences in the characteristics of married and cohabiting couples who have had a child together; 2) estimate differences in the

stability of cohabiting and married parents, paying attention to transitions to marriage among those cohabiting at birth; and 3) examine the extent to which cross-country differences in the characteristics of couples with children account for differences in instability across countries. This work contributes to the extant literature on comparative family change in several ways. First, we provide a richer descriptive account of differences between cohabiting and married families than much prior cross-national work on instability, examining in particular three indicators of children's resources: education, prior family experiences, and parental age at first birth (McLanahan 2004). Second, our attention to transitions into marriage following a cohabiting birth recognizes the dynamic nature of cohabitation and accounts for variation associated with subsequent stability (Kiernan 2004; Musick and Michelmore 2015). Third, we focus on couples who have had a child together, whereas recent cross-national assessments of union stability have looked at those both with and without children (Dronkers 2015; Liefbroer and Dourleijn 2006). Finally, our work extends accounts of "diverging destinies" in the U.S. and Western Europe, underscoring greater social class disparities in parental separation in the U.S.—and potentially in turn greater disparities in resources for U.S. children.

BACKGROUND

U.S. instability in comparative context

The U.S. is exceptional in its high degree of union instability—among both married and cohabiting couples (Andersson and Philipov 2002; Cherlin 2005, 2009; Dronkers 2015). Cherlin (2005, 2009) emphasized the contradicting cultural models that play into the U.S. "marriage-go-round," that is, more transitions both into and out of marriage, despite stronger attachment to the ideal of marriage as compared to Europe. Others have extended Cherlin's idea to the "family-" or

“relationship-” go-round (e.g., Tach et al., 2014; Warner et al. 2011:292), emphasizing the high degree of “churn” as a common feature of U.S. unions.

Socioeconomic disadvantage is an important feature of family instability in the U.S. and elsewhere. Lower education is strongly associated with marital dissolution in the U.S. (Martin 2006; McLanahan & Percheski 2008), and trends by education are diverging in many countries (Härkönen and Dronkers 2006; McLanahan 2004). In the U.S. and parts of Europe, long-standing upward trends in divorce have reversed for the most educated (Esping-Andersen and Billari 2015; Martin 2006). U.S. gradients by education are particularly steep: For the early 1990s first marriage cohort, about 15% of college graduates were expected to separate within 10 years, compared to 45% among those without a high school degree (Martin 2006:Figure 1).

Family instability has contributed to increases in the share of partners starting new relationships with previous union and childbearing experiences. Recent U.S. research has highlighted increases in “serial cohabitation” or multiple premarital cohabitations (Cohen and Manning 2010; Lichter, Turner, and Sassler 2010). Increases in “multipartner fertility” or childbearing across partnerships have also been documented in the U.S., Australia, Norway, and Sweden, and prevalence is particularly high in the U.S., where about a quarter of all mothers have children with two or more fathers (Thomson et al. 2014). The resultant family complexity may dilute resources for children (Halpern-Meehin and Tach 2008); prior union and childbearing experiences are also associated with subsequent instability (Carlson et al. 2004; Lichter, Qian, and Mellot 2006; Manlove et al. 2012; Musick and Michelmore 2015; Osborne, Manning, and Smock 2007; Sweeney 2010; Tach and Edin 2013; Teachman 2002, 2003). They are more common among unmarried and less educated men and women (Carlson and Furstenberg 2006; Cohen and Manning 2010; Guzzo and Furstenberg 2007a, 2007b; Lappegård, T. & Rønsen, M.

2013; Lichter et al. 2010; Tach and Edin 2013; Thomson et al. 2014), potentially compounding any disadvantage associated with family complexity.

The relatively young age at first birth further distinguishes U.S. family patterns from those across much of Western Europe (Lesthaeghe and Neidert 2006)—and plays into the dynamic of instability. Although teen birth rates in the U.S. have recently dropped to historic lows (Hamilton et al. 2015), they remain high relative to those in Western Europe. The U.K. comes closest at a rate of 15 teen births per 1,000 15-19 year-olds in 2014, compared to 24 per 1,000 in the U.S. (World Bank 2016). Early parenthood is associated with children's resources (Martin 2004; McLanahan 2004), and early family transitions are in turn associated with union instability (Teachman 2002).

Stability of married and cohabiting parents

Cohabiting parents tend to have higher rates of union dissolution than married parents (Kiernan 2004; Manning, Smock, and Majumdar 2004; Musick and Michelmore 2015; Raley and Wildsmith 2004; Tach and Edin 2013; Wu and Musick 2008). This stems in part from the relatively disadvantaged position of cohabiting parents, who are less educated, have more prior union and childbearing experiences, and are younger on average than their married counterparts (Musick and Michelmore 2015; Perelli-Harris et al. 2010; Thomson et al. 2014). Yet as childbearing within cohabitation has increased, some evidence suggests these couples have become more stable in the U.S. and Europe (Musick and Michelmore 2015; Perelli-Harris et al. 2012, Table 3).

Conceptual models of family change provide contrasting views on how we might expect the role of cohabitation and thus the stability of cohabiting families to vary across country. Drawing on the second demographic transition theory, Kiernan (2000) posited a series of stages

in which cohabitation emerges as a marginalized behavior and gradually becomes an accepted family form. Along the way, distinctions between cohabitation and marriage fade, and cohabitation transitions from a short-term and largely childless state to a much more stable arrangement in which having and raising children is commonplace. Cherlin's (2004) institutionalization hypothesis also predicts fading distinctions between cohabitation and marriage as social norms and legal structures develop to accommodate growing numbers of cohabitators. These models suggest that the childbearing behavior and relationship stability of marriage and cohabitation will be more similar in settings where cohabitation has a long tradition and is widespread.

An alternative view points to potential differences in the experiences of marriage and cohabitation, despite high levels of cohabitation. These forecasts draw on U.S. accounts of the growing symbolic significance of marriage as a marker of prestige (Cherlin 2009; Furstenberg 1996) and findings that men and women of all education levels place a high value on marriage but perceive substantial economic prerequisites (Carlson, McLanahan, and England 2004; Edin and Kefalas 2005; Gibson-Davis 2009; Gibson-Davis et al. 2005; Smock, Manning, and Porter, 2005). Short of these prerequisites, couples with less education and income forego marriage and opt into cohabitation as a "budget" route to family formation (Furstenberg 1996). The increasing social value of marriage relative to cohabitation is consistent with McLanahan's (2004) discussion of the differential impact of the second demographic transition on women, with associated economic and ideational changes undermining stable relationships for women at the bottom of the education distribution and strengthening them for women at the top. It is also consistent with Perelli-Harris et al. (2010)'s cross-national investigation of cohabiting fertility, which emphasized the link between economic instability and the impermanence of cohabitation.

Together, these strands of research suggest that despite increases in cohabiting fertility, the experiences of marital and cohabiting families may remain distinct.

We might expect differences in the experiences of marriage and cohabitation to be particularly persistent in the U.S. First, the symbolic value of marriage is stronger in the U.S. than Western Europe, evident (for example) in public policies to promote marriage, clashes over who can marry, and the scale of the wedding industry (Cherlin 2005, 2009). Second, the “diverging destinies”—or growing disparities in children’s resources—common to the second demographic transition appear particularly steep and more closely tied to marriage in the U.S. (e.g., Kennedy and Bumpass 2008; McLanahan 2004:Table 2).

APPROACH

We compare data from the U.S. and 7 Western European countries: the U.K., Norway, Sweden, Austria, France, Italy, and Spain. In welfare state typologies, the U.S. and U.K. are classified as liberal welfare regimes, where social support is often means-tested and care is seen largely as a private family responsibility (Esping-Andersen 1990; Sainsbury 1999). Norway and Sweden are considered social democratic regimes and provide the sharpest contrast to liberal welfare regimes in terms of the generosity of social transfers, support for parents, and low levels of socioeconomic inequality (OECD 2008). The Nordic countries have also been at the forefront of family change and continue to have the highest share of births to cohabiting parents (Heuveline and Timberlake 2004; Perelli-Harris et al. 2012).

The other countries in our study—Austria, France, Italy, and Spain— are classified as conservative regimes in Esping-Andersen’s welfare state typology (1990) and tend to fall in between the liberal and social democratic regimes in terms of generosity of social policies and socioeconomic inequality. In Austria and France, spending on family policies is relatively high,

although priorities differ: Austrian policies have prioritized the male breadwinner model (e.g., through generous maternity leave), whereas France has been more supportive of maternal employment (e.g., through public provision of childcare for ages 3-6) (Gornick, Meyers, and Ross 1997; Neyer and Andersson 2008). Italy and Spain, historically more tradition-bound, stand out in their patterns of family change. Notably, both countries have been characterized by lowest low fertility (Kohler, Billari, and Ortega 2002) and, until very recently, had relatively low levels of cohabitation and childbearing outside of marriage (Kiernan 2000; Ventura 2009).

Our study countries lend themselves to comparisons across 4 country pairs that share similarities in policy and family context: the U.S. and U.K; Norway and Sweden; Austria and France; Italy and Spain. We posit that this is a useful heuristic setup for leveraging variation within and across countries, yet acknowledge that it does not account for pairwise differences in policy and context that may be important in shaping union dissolution. For example, we anticipate that U.S. parents will look most similar to U.K. parents in their characteristics and shares separating, yet will nonetheless stand out in the degree of disparity in family resources available to children and instability following childbirth.

We use the Harmonized Histories to provide a rich, descriptive account of the stability of cohabiting and married parents in cross-national perspective. We compare children's resources in married and cohabiting families across countries in terms of mother's education, prior union and childbearing experiences, and age at first birth. We control for the mothers' age at first union and foreign-born status, and the couple's subsequent childbearing, characteristics that may vary cross-nationally and play into union instability (Phillips and Sweeney 2006; Teachman 2002, 2003). The Harmonized Histories allow for a detailed comparison of union formation, dissolution, and childbearing and allow us to account for critical differences in couples'

experiences across countries; nonetheless, comparable indicators of family background and partner characteristics are limited, and some social indicators do not translate cross-nationally (e.g., standard measures of race and ethnicity in the U.S.).

We assess union stability from the time of a couple's first birth together, differentiating between those who are married and cohabiting at birth. In our event history analyses, we further account for transitions into marriage among cohabiting parents, a critical dimension of variation among cohabiting parents. Cohabiting parents who subsequently marry look more similar to those married at birth in their separation chances (Kiernan 2004:Figure 4). Among recent U.S. cohorts, cohabiting parents who subsequently marry are indistinguishable in their probability of separation from couples married at birth, net of socio-demographic characteristics; cohabiting parents who do not marry are twice as likely to separate over five years (Musick and Michelmore 2015). Given declines in the normative imperative to marry prior to a birth, cohabiting parents may jointly plan marriage and childbirth with little concern for which comes first. For committed couples on the margin of marriage, greater legal protections may incentivize transitions into marriage after childbirth (Perelli-Harris and Gassen 2012).

We address the following questions: 1) How do within-country differences between cohabiting and married parents in education, prior family experiences, and age at first birth compare—and is the marriage gradient in children's resources particularly steep in the U.S.? 2) How do probabilities of separation compare for couples married at birth, married after having a birth within cohabitation, and cohabiting at birth without subsequently marrying—and are the differences particularly stark in the U.S.? 3) To what extent do cross-country differences in the characteristics of couples account for differences in union instability across countries—and can they account for the relatively high levels of instability in the U.S.? In addressing this final

question, we pay particular attention to how social class shapes patterns of parental separation in the U.S. and comparison countries.

DATA AND METHOD

Harmonized Histories

Data come from the Harmonized Histories File created by the Non-Marital Fertility Network coordinated by Brienna Perelli-Harris (Perelli-Harris, Kreyenfeld, and Kubisch 2010).¹ Data for Austria, France, Italy, Norway, and Sweden come from the Gender and Generations Programme (GGP), a longitudinal survey of adults in 19 European countries.² In Austria, data are further drawn from the Fertility and Family Survey (FFS), the predecessor to the GGS. U.K. data are from the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS), and Spanish data come from the Spanish Fertility Survey. The U.S. files are from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG; we supplemented the Harmonized File with the release of the 2011-2013 data). Appendix Table 1 summarizes data sources.

Our sample is limited to women (men were not interviewed in Italy or Spain) ages 15-45 at interview (corresponding to the upper age bounds in the Austrian, Swedish, and U.S. surveys).

¹ Thanks go to the individual contributors of the Harmonized Histories data file (<http://www.nonmarital.org>), and especially to Karolin Kubisch at the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research who managed survey standardization, cleaning, documentation, and updates.

² The Italian version of the Harmonized Histories does not include the month and year of birth for household children. We obtained child birth dates from the Istituto nazionale di statistica (<http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/4967>).

From this sample of women, we generated a union-level file that includes all marriages and cohabitations bearing a child within 10 years of interview. Restricting our analysis to a ten-year window limits retrospection bias in union history reports (Hayford and Morgan 2008) and the disproportionate weighting of observed family processes by young mothers.³ Although uncommon, women may contribute more than one union to the analysis file (models account for clustering, as described below). Across countries, interviews were conducted between 2005-2013. Sample weights for each country adjust for sample design and (in some cases) differential attrition; they are applied to all descriptives and models presented here (for more on GGP weights, see Fokkema et al. 2016).

Union stability, union status, and transitions around first birth

Our data include the month and year of the female partners' (respondents') marriages, cohabitations, births, and separations, which we use to construct union records. We define union births as those born to coresidential couples. We compare dates to determine whether couples were married or cohabiting at the time of their first union birth, whether and when cohabiting parents transitioned to marriage, and whether and when couples separated.

³ Limiting our window to births within 10 years of interview (when women are ages 15-45) includes women up to age 35 at the start of the window; going further back in time disproportionately includes the experiences of younger mothers (e.g., going back 20 years prior to interview, women are at oldest 25 at the start of the window, etc.). Among mothers 40-45 in our study countries, only a small share experienced their first union birth after age 35 (ranging from 11% in Norway to 15% in France).

Education, prior family experiences, and parental age

Education of the female partner is coded following Perelli-Harris et al (2010), using the ISCED-7 codes and grouping as follows: low (1-2), middle (3-4) and high (5-6). Low education corresponds to primary/lower secondary school (no high school degree in the U.S. context), middle corresponds to secondary and post-secondary school (high school degree and some college in the U.S. context), and high corresponds to tertiary education (college degree).

We generate two indicators of *prior family experiences*, making a clear distinction between prior relationships with and without children, on the basis that these would have potentially very different implications for subsequent relationship stability. The first indicator relies on the union and childbearing histories of the female respondent to assess whether she had a *prior childless union*, i.e., a marriage or cohabitation that preceded her current union and produced no children. The second indicator relies additionally on the respondent's proxy reports of whether her partner had children at the start of their union. It assesses whether *either partner had a child prior to the current union*. We examined more detailed indicators in supplementary analyses, including: whether the female partner had a prior childless marriage or cohabitation; whether it was the female partner, male partner, or both who had a child prior to the current relationship. We show these more detailed indicators in our descriptive tables, but we use the summary indicators (female partner had a prior childless union; either partner had a prior child) in our models. Supplementary results (available upon request) showed that associations between union stability and whether the female partner had a prior childless marriage or cohabitation were similar, as were associations between union stability and her, his, or their prior childbearing.

Data on the male partner's prior family experiences are more limited than on the female's. Reports are not available in all countries about the prior cohabitation and marriage experiences of the male partner (e.g., in the U.S., we know only about his prior marriages). Further, we lack detailed information on paternity status and thus cannot be certain that children born outside a coresidential union are children from a prior relationship, i.e., some subset could be joint children born prior to coresidence. This would be more likely the younger the child at the start of the cohabitation or marriage. In supplementary analyses (available upon request), we treated births occurring within one year of the coresidential union as the first union birth; we found the same pattern of results based on this alternative sample definition.

For our final indicator of children's resources, we generate a categorical variable for the female partner's *age at first birth in the current union*: <22, 22-25, 26-29, and 30+ years. 80% of these births are the woman's first birth, ranging from 74% in the United States to 97% in Italy.

Controls

In addition to these key measures, full models control for other characteristics of unions and individuals that may be associated with union instability. We include the number of months from the start of the union to the couple's first birth together and an indicator for whether the couple goes on to have another child ("turning on" at the time of second birth). We also control for stable characteristics of the female partner: whether she was foreign born and whether she lived with both her biological parents from birth to age 15.⁴ Data include few additional family

⁴ In Italy and Spain, data were not available on whether the respondent lived with both biological parents to age 15. For these two countries, we instead used information on whether the respondent's parents *ever* separated or divorced.

background variables. For example, the education level of the respondent's mother is not available in all countries (i.e., it is missing in Spain). We tested the sensitivity of our models to including mother's education and found very similar results; we left this variable out of final analyses for purposes of comparability. Data on the male partners across countries are also limited (as noted), constraining what we can learn about the interaction of partner characteristics.

Event history models of separation

To explore cross-national differences in union stability, we transform our union-level file into a union-month file. We assess union duration in units of a month to allow for relative precision in the timing of transitions into marriage and separation, which commonly occur at short durations among cohabitators. Time to separation is clocked from childbirth to reflect our interest in the stability of couples who have had a child together, a group of significance from scientific and policy perspectives. Our union-month file thus includes one record for every month at risk of union dissolution from the time of birth until separation or censoring at interview, for up to 120 months.

Following the strategy of Musick and Michelmore (2015; see also Wu and Musick 2008), we model union transitions around the time of birth, assessing differences in stability across 3 union-birth trajectories: 1) married at birth ($M \rightarrow B$); 2) cohabiting at birth and married at some time t following the birth ($C \rightarrow B \rightarrow M$); and 3) cohabiting at birth without ever marrying ($C \rightarrow B$). To examine the link between these trajectories and union stability, we estimate discrete-time event history models of the general form, separately by country:

$$(1) \quad \log [P_t / (1 - P_t)] = \alpha_1 + \alpha_2 \text{dur}_t + \alpha_3 \text{dur}_t^2 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_{2t} + \text{socio-demographic characteristics}$$

where the log odds or logit of separation is an additive function of covariates and t indexes union duration in months from a couple's first birth. The parameters α_1 , α_2 , and α_3 represent the baseline hazard, modeled as a quadratic function of duration, or the value of the log odds of separation at duration t when all other covariates are zero. The x s represent union status: a time-invariant indicator $x_1 = 1$ if cohabiting at birth (0 if married at birth); a time-varying indicator $x_{2t} = 1$ if married in month t following birth (0 if cohabiting). Net of socio-demographic characteristics, this model yields the following parameters for our three union-birth trajectories and selected contrasts among them:

Trajectories	Parameters	Key contrasts
1) M→B	β_2	2 vs. 1: β_1
2) C→B→M	$\beta_1 + \beta_2$	3 vs. 1: $\beta_1 - \beta_2$
3) C→B	β_1	3 vs. 2: $-\beta_2$

Parameter estimates are clustered at the individual-level to account for correlation in error terms among women contributing more than one union. We test the statistical significance of contrasts (across union-birth trajectories and across countries) using the Wald test, which is computed based on the estimated coefficients and covariance matrix and is asymptotically equivalent to the likelihood-ratio test.

To illustrate the implications of our models and differences in couple characteristics across countries, we generate a set of hypothetical scenarios of union stability. We use model estimates and vary assumptions about country-level couple characteristics to generate predicted probabilities of separation within 5 years of birth. Five-year separation probabilities provide a more intuitive measure than either an estimated odds ratio or predicted monthly probability. We first estimate predicted probabilities of separation for each month over 5 years, p_1 - p_{60} . In doing

so, we allow the baseline hazard to vary freely in each month, set key characteristics to hypothetical values, and hold all others at their month 1 weighted mean values. We then multiply these (conditional) monthly predicted probabilities to generate the probability of separation within 5 years of birth, equal to $1 - (1-p_{60})(1-p_{59}) \dots (1-p_1)$. In what follows, we estimate a range of predictions based on observed characteristics and various counterfactuals to shed light on key findings.

RESULTS

Characteristics of cohabiting and married parents

Table 1 shows union status indicators around the time of first birth. Among all first births in union, the share to cohabiting couples is lowest in the Mediterranean countries (Italy at 8% and Spain at 29%) and highest in the Nordic countries (Norway at 62% and Sweden at 64%). Austria and France are both at 45% cohabiting at birth. The U.S. and U.K. are likewise very similar, falling mid-range at 41% and 40%, respectively. Among those cohabiting at birth, the shares transitioning to marriage within 5 years range from a low in Spain of 23% to a high of 55% in Italy; the U.S. falls mid-range at 44%.

Table 2 describes explanatory variables and controls by country. In terms of education, only Italy and Spain have a higher share in the bottom education category than the U.S. (33% and 37%, respectively, vs. 16% in the U.S.), and all but Austria, Italy, and Spain have a higher share in the top education category (18%, 14%, and 25%, respectively, vs. 29% in the U.S.).⁵

⁵ As noted, we use a standard harmonization procedure for education (the ISCED-7 codes); nonetheless, distributions may be affected by country-specific particulars of the education system.

Indicators of prior family experiences present a mixed picture of where the U.S. fits relative to its European counterparts. In prior *childless* unions, the U.S. is in the middle-range: 15% of U.S. women report having an earlier marriage or cohabitation in which no children were born, compared to a high of 35% in Sweden and low of 3% in Italy. If we look separately at marriages and cohabitations, we find that the vast majority of these prior childless unions were prior cohabitations (nearly all in Norway and Sweden). In contrast to its mid-range levels of prior childless unions, the U.S. has the highest share of couples with children at the start of their union (37%). The U.K. is closest on this count with 29% of couples with children born prior to the start of their union. Despite having the highest share of women with prior childless unions, Sweden falls on the lower end in terms of couples with children from a prior union (15%); Italy has the lowest share (3%). Notably, the U.S. also has the highest share of young mothers, with nearly a quarter under age 22 at the time of the focal birth (first birth with the current partner). Again the U.K. is the closest on this count (although still far behind), with 14% of focal births to mothers under 22. Given U.S. couples more often start their unions with children from a prior partnership, we would expect ever steeper gaps in age at *first* birth.

Table 3 shows differences in key variables—education, prior childbearing, and early parenthood—for couples cohabiting versus married at the time of their first birth. Social gradients are evident across countries: births to cohabiting parents occur more often to women with lower levels of education, to parents with children from prior unions, and to younger women. Education gradients are by far steepest in the U.S., with two-thirds of births occurring within cohabitation among women with low education compared to less than 10% among the highly educated. Next in line is the U.K., where 76% versus 30% of births are to cohabiting couples in the lowest versus highest education group; this amounts 2.5 times the share of

cohabitators within the lowest (vs. highest) education category in the U.K., as compared to nearly 7 times in the U.S. The U.S. also has relatively steep gradients by family complexity, measured here by whether either partner had a child prior to the start of the union: 65% of births to couples with prior children occur within cohabitation compared to 36% of those to couples with no prior children. The differential in the U.K is similar. Only in Italy and Spain (where both cohabitation and prior childbearing are overall much less prevalent) are there bigger differences in union status between those with and without children from a prior union. Finally, cohabiting births are much more concentrated among young parents in the U.S. and U.K. (where early childbearing is also much higher) than is true in other countries. In both countries, most births to young mothers (<22) occur within cohabitation (69% and 91% in the U.S. and U.K., respectively), whereas the vast majority of births to women 30+ (nearly 80% in both countries) occur within marriage.

Union stability across union-birth trajectories and countries

Table 4 shows results from discrete-time event history models predicting the monthly log-odds of separation among couples who had a child together within 10 years of interview, separately by country. Model 1 (Panel 1) includes only our union status indicators and duration from the couple's first birth modeled as a quadratic (duration variables are included but not shown). Model 2 (Panel 2) adds our full set of controls for education, family complexity, parental age, and other sociodemographic characteristics. Union-birth trajectories are represented in these models by two dummy variables: a time-invariant indicator for cohabiting at birth and a time-varying indicator for married at time t . Odds ratios (i.e., the exponentiated coefficients) on these indicators are difficult to interpret without some manipulation of the coefficients. We thus show odds ratios for contrasts among our three key union-birth trajectories in Table 5: MB = married at birth; CMB = cohabiting at birth and married at t following birth; CB = cohabiting at

birth without subsequently marrying. These are derived from combinations of Table 4 coefficients on cohabiting at birth and married at time t , as described in the method section.

In Table 5, the modal pattern that emerges from Models 1 and 2 is a high relative odds of separation among couples cohabiting at birth who do not subsequently marry (CB), compared to couples married at birth (MB). The higher odds of separation among the cohabitators who do not marry range from 2.03 (Sweden) to 5.08 (Italy) in Model 1 without controls, and from 1.44 (Spain, not statistically significant) to 3.67 (Italy) in Model 2 with all controls. Only in Spain—and net of controls—is the difference in stability between these two groups not statistically significant. Another common pattern across countries evident in Table 5 is the similarity in separation odds between couples cohabiting at birth who subsequently marry (CMB) and those married at birth (MB). Net of controls, only in Austria and Spain are the separation odds of these couples significantly different from those married at birth (although odds are high but not statistically significant in Italy; they are closer to 1.00 elsewhere).

When assessed *relative to marriage*, U.S. cohabitators do not stand out in their odds of separation (Table 5). U.S. cohabiting parents who do not transition to marriage have an odds of separation of 4.09 (Model 1) and 2.06 (Model 2) times that of couples married at birth; net of controls, the odds of separation among cohabiting parents who marry after a birth are no different than those of couples married at birth (Model 2). There are few statistically significant differences between the U.S. and other countries in odds ratios comparing union-birth trajectories, as indicated in Table 5. Where there are differences, cohabitators in the U.S. do not consistently have higher odds of separation relative to married couples (e.g., in Model 2, cohabiting couples in Austria have higher odds of separation relative to those married at birth).

Comparing odds ratios across models in Table 5 gives an approximation of the extent to which differences between married and cohabiting couples in observed covariates account for within-country differences in union stability across union-birth trajectories. In the U.S., the greater odds of separation among cohabiting parents (both those who marry and those who do not, i.e., CMB and CB) versus married parents (MB) diminish by about half from Model 1 (no controls) to Model 2 (all controls). This decline in the estimated odds of separation accounting for controls among cohabiting parents relative to married parents is common across countries, although accounting for controls seems to make the most difference in the U.S. and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the U.K. The social gradients between marriage and cohabitation are steepest in the U.S. and the U.K., and accounting for the relatively disadvantaged position of cohabiting parents accounts for a relatively large share of the gap in stability between cohabiting and married parents in these countries.

Turning back to Table 4 to look more closely at socio-demographic characteristics, we find similar patterns of association between observed covariates and union instability across countries. Education patterns suggest lower odds of separation among those in the top education category (odds ratios <1) for all but the U.K. and Italy, although contrasts are statistically significant only in the U.S. and Sweden. Patterns point to a positive association between prior union and childbearing experiences and couple instability, although associations with prior childbearing are overall stronger and more consistent. Having a prior childless union is marginally statistically significant only in the U.K.; having a child from a prior partnership is associated with statistically significant, substantially increased odds in the U.S. (odds ratio 1.58), Norway (1.90), France (2.97), Italy (5.71), and Spain (2.07, $p < .10$). Age at focal birth is also strongly and consistently associated with instability. Relative to a birth prior to age 22, births to

older mothers are associated with less instability (with at least one contrast statistically significant in all countries but Italy). Differences in stability by mother's age are substantial; for example, mothers 30 and older at birth have an odds of separation 60-75% lower than mothers under 22 at birth in all but Austria and Italy. Other controls are associated with union instability largely as expected: longer duration from union start to birth, having another child together, and the respondent living with both biological parents growing up are associated with reduced odds of separation in most study countries. Foreign-born status is statistically significant only in the U.S., and is associated with a 43% lower odds of separation (likely due to the composition of U.S. immigrants, who tend to come from countries with more traditional family patterns).

Table 6 shows predicted probabilities of separation within 5 years by country and union status derived from Model 2 (in Table 4). In the first row, overall estimates are the product of monthly predicted probabilities allowing the baseline hazard to vary with month and holding all other covariates (including time-varying covariates) to their weighted mean values in month 1. Estimates in the next 3 rows are generated in a similar way, although varying indicators of union status to illustrate differences in separation probabilities by union-birth trajectory, holding all else constant. The final two rows show ratios of predicted probabilities of separation for union-birth trajectories involving cohabitation relative to couples married at birth.

The highest overall proportion separating within 5 years is in the U.S. (24%). Proportions separating in other countries are much lower, ranging from 6% (Italy and Spain) to 14% (U.K.). Looking across countries by union-birth trajectory, cohabiting couples who do not subsequently transition to marriage (CB) have the highest predicted probabilities of separation within 5 years in all countries but Spain. Predicted probabilities for this group are generally in the range of 1.5-2.5 times higher (higher in Italy, at 3.43 times) versus couples married at birth (MB). Differences

between cohabiting parents who subsequently marry (CBM) and married couples at birth (MB) are typically much smaller. This is not the case in Austria and Spain (recall from Table 5 these differences were statistically significant only in Austria and Spain). The overall higher rates of instability in the U.S. are striking, where parents married at birth are estimated to separate at proportions more in line with cohabitators elsewhere (indeed, at substantially *higher* proportions than cohabiting parents in Norway and Sweden).

Hypothetical scenarios exploring cross-country differences in stability

Next we examine two sets of “simulations” or thought experiments to further flesh out the implications of our descriptives and models—one to explore how differences in the characteristics of U.S. couples play into cross-country differences in union instability, and the other to highlight the magnitude of social class differences in union instability across countries. These simulations are meant to help synthesize results across countries and do not represent causal or behavioral processes.

The first set is shown in Table 7. The first row in panel 1 shows the “baseline” predicted probabilities of separation within 5 years allowing duration to vary with month and holding all covariates at their country-specific weighted mean values in month 1 (these are the same predicted probabilities as shown in the first row of Table 6). Subsequent rows show predicted probabilities generated in much the same way, but instead of setting all characteristics to country-specific observed values, we assign U.S. values on specified characteristics. Estimates thus highlight differences in couple profiles between the U.S. and comparison countries, given country-specific associations between socio-demographic characteristics and union instability (i.e., odds ratios in Model 2, Table 4). The second panel of Table 7 shows the percent change in predicted probabilities of separation that result from the simulation; positive numbers indicate

that differences between own and U.S. couple characteristics would increase proportions separating relative to that country's baseline, whereas negative numbers indicate that differences would reduce proportions separating relative to baseline.

The second row of Table 7 shows that assigning U.S. cohabitation and marriage distributions (0.41 cohabiting at birth and 0.72 married at time t , as shown in Table 1) to comparison countries has mixed results in terms of change in predicted probabilities of separation relative to baseline. Given the positive association between parental cohabitation and separation across countries, this simulation mechanically *reduces* estimates of instability in countries that have higher levels of cohabitation than the U.S. and *increases* estimates in countries with lower levels. In Norway, where cohabitation is more common (0.62 cohabiting at birth and 0.49 married at time t), assigning the lower level of cohabitation observed in the U.S. reduces the predicted probability of union dissolution (from 13% to 12%, or by about 8% as show in panel 2). In Italy, where cohabitation is much less common (0.08 cohabiting at birth and 0.96 married at time t), assigning the U.S. level of cohabitation increases the predicted probability of union dissolution by 50%.

The following rows show how differences in education, age, and family complexity play into differences in union stability between the U.S. and comparison countries. Assigning U.S. education values to countries with a greater share of college graduates increases estimates of union instability where associations between education and union instability are negative (Norway, Sweden, France). It also increases estimates of union instability in Italy, where there are *fewer* college graduates but evidence of a *positive* association between high education and instability (not statistically significant).

Assigning the younger age distribution of U.S. mothers to other countries results in higher estimated probabilities of separation across the board, on the order of 4-22%. This includes the U.K. (19% increase relative to baseline proportions separating), which is the only other country with substantial teen fertility. Older age at first birth is strongly associated with stability, and the relevant distinctions go beyond teen versus other, i.e., the gains to age continue to accrue into the late 20s and 30s. In all countries but the U.S., about two-thirds of mothers in this sample (and upwards of three-quarters in Sweden, Italy, and Spain) were over age 25; in the U.S., about half of sample mothers were over 25.

Assigning U.S. levels of prior union and childbearing experiences to other countries also results in nearly across-the-board higher estimates of separation, ranging from increases in predicted probabilities relative to baseline of 8% in Norway to 95% in Italy (and little change in the U.K. or Austria). Summing over all simulations yields an estimated increase in predicted probabilities relative to country-specific baselines in the range of 17-61% for most countries (these simulations result in little change in Austria and a 238% increase in Italy, where cohabitation, family complexity, and union instability remain low). This descriptive accounting suggests that the observed characteristics of U.S. couples—in particular, education, age, and prior family experiences—play some role in the country’s substantially higher levels of instability.

In the next set of simulations, we explore social class differences in union instability across countries. We do so by estimating predicted probabilities of separation among the high- and low-education groups while simultaneously varying all other covariates so that each education group is assigned their own, country-specific characteristics. Thus, instead of trying to isolate the association between education and instability by holding all else constant (as we did

in estimating predicted probabilities of separation for union-birth trajectories), we ask how education and the package of characteristics that goes along with it together play into differences in union stability across education groups. This exercise puts the well-documented U.S. social class gradients in family life in comparative context and asks: to what extent are social gradients in the U.S. distinct, and to what extent might they play into higher overall levels of union instability in the U.S.?

Table 8 shows results of these simulations. In the U.S., predicted probabilities of separation for women with the lowest levels of education (less than high school) are 0.38, relative to 0.09 among women with the highest levels of education (college degree or more). These differences reflect the lower odds of separation among college graduates (0.64 the odds of separation relative to the least educated, Model 2, Table 4); they also reflect the very different characteristics of U.S. women and couples by education. This is apparent in the lower share cohabiting at birth among college graduates (Table 3), as well as the lower share with a child from a prior relationship and older age at birth (Appendix Table 2 summarizes education differences in couple characteristics across countries).

U.S. college graduates look similar to their European counterparts in terms of prior childbearing (16% were in a union in which there were children from a previous relationship) and age at birth (46% were 30 or older at the time of the focal birth), although they are less often cohabiting at birth (10%). Their probabilities of separation are well in line with their high-educated European counterparts, which range from 4% in Spain to 10% in Austria. By contrast, less educated mothers in the U.S. are more often in complex families (46% were in a union in which there were children from a previous relationship), younger at birth (33% were less than 22 at the time of the focal birth), and more disadvantaged (less than half lived with both biological

parents growing up). Their predicted probabilities of separation are higher than their European counterparts, which range from 4% in Italy to 29% in Sweden among the least educated.

Higher levels of separation among the least educated are observed in all countries with the exception of Italy (here we also see no education gradient in cohabiting births, Table 3), but the magnitude of difference stands out in the U.S. The gap in separation probabilities between the low- and high-education groups in the U.S. is the largest observed at 0.29 points. The gaps elsewhere tend to be much smaller, e.g., less than 0.10 points in the U.K., Norway, and Austria.. Although levels are lower, the difference in union instability between the low and high-education groups is also striking in Sweden. This gap (0.29 predicted probability of separation among the least educated vs. 0.04 among the highest educated) is due in large part to the strong association between education and instability in Sweden, where the odds of separation are almost 80% lower among college graduates versus the least educated (Table 4). Only 6% of Swedish mothers in this sample fall into the low-education group, compared to 16% of U.S. mothers (Table 2).

In sum, this descriptive accounting highlights how differences in the characteristics of U.S. couples play into the higher overall levels of instability in the U.S. relative to comparison countries. Further, it highlights how exceptional college graduates are in the U.S. context. Whereas average characteristics of U.S. couples and overall proportions separating are quite different relative to comparison countries, U.S. college graduates look remarkably similar in many ways to their European counterparts. Social class gaps are much wider in the U.S., and the high overall levels of separation among U.S. couples compared to Western Europe appears largely driven by couples with less than a college degree.

DISCUSSION

Results highlight important differences between the U.S. and Western Europe along many dimensions of family formation and stability. Despite some similarities with the U.K. (e.g., the share of births to cohabiting couples and high levels of prior childbearing, young age at birth, and steep social gradients in marital and cohabiting families relative to other study countries), we found that proportions separating within 5 years of a birth were 1.8 times greater in the U.S. than in the U.K. They were over 3 and 4 times greater than in Sweden and Italy, respectively. Indeed, in fully controlled models, it appears that U.S. *marriages* are about as stable as *cohabitations* in most of the countries we studied; they are *less stable* than cohabitations in Norway and Sweden. Cohabitation is also much more socially graded in the U.S. relative to Europe: the proportion of births within cohabitation (vs. marriage) was about 7 times higher among couples with low (vs. high) education, 2 times higher among those in which neither (vs. either) had a child at union start, and 3 times higher among those with a birth prior to age 22 (vs. 30 or older). Controlling for these differences goes further in the U.S. than elsewhere to account for differences in the stability of marriage and cohabitation.

There were a few notable dimensions, however, on which the U.S. resembled its European counterparts. In the U.S., couples who were cohabiting at birth and *did not subsequently marry* were over twice as likely to separate than couples who were married at birth, net of all controls (differences were larger without taking socio-demographic differences into account). This group had higher probabilities of separation relative to couples married at birth in all countries, and they were mostly in the same range of about 2 times higher, although varied from a low of 1.44 times higher in Spain (not statistically significant) to 3.67 ($p < .10$) in Italy. Given the stronger symbolic value of marriage in the U.S. and the greater degree of difference in

the characteristics of married and cohabiting families, we expected U.S. cohabitators to be less stable relative to their married counterparts. Instead, we found that levels of instability were high irrespective of the legal form of relationship in the U.S., and that relative differences between cohabitation and marriage were very similar to comparison countries.

In the U.S. and most other countries, we found that the odds of separation among cohabiting parents *who subsequently married* were statistically indistinguishable from those married at birth. Only in Austria and Spain were the odds of separation among these couples significantly higher than those married at birth. This is an important distinction that is not often emphasized in the literature. If cohabiting parents who married after a birth experienced less stability than those who married before, it might suggest that marriages following childbirth were largely in response to unplanned or ambivalently timed pregnancies. Similarity in the subsequent stability of couples who marry before and after parenthood suggests instead that many parents may be jointly planning marriage and childbirth as the quality and commitment of their relationships grow, with little regard to which comes first. This is consistent with waning societal pressure to marry and the blurring of boundaries between marriage and cohabitation (e.g., Cherlin 2004; van de Kaa 1987).

Other factors associated with union stability were also similar in the U.S. and comparison countries. Patterns across countries (not always statistically significant) pointed to a positive association between couple instability and low education, prior union and childbearing experiences, and early age at first birth. Associations with prior childbearing were overall stronger and more consistent than those with prior union experience. Relevant to growing research in the U.S. on family complexity, mothers in our U.S. sample were not more likely to have a prior *childless union* (15% vs. a low of 3% in Italy and 35% in Sweden), but they were

much more likely to have a *prior union that resulted in children*, as were their partners. In the U.S., 37% of couples had children from prior unions versus a range elsewhere of 3% in Italy to 29% in the U.K. It appears that the U.S. does not stand out in the dissolution of childless unions, and that what distinguishes churn in U.S. relationships is the involvement of children. This is a fruitful area for further research.

Simulations explored how differences in the characteristics of U.S. couples play into cross-country differences in union instability. We found that observed characteristics of U.S. couples—in particular, education differences, prior childbearing experiences, and younger age at birth—account for a substantial share of the gap in instability between the U.S. and many of our comparison countries. For example, taking the U.K. model of instability and assigning U.S. distributions on union status, education, age, and family complexity, we estimated predicted probabilities of separation over 5 years that were 17% higher than those derived from observed characteristics in the U.K. In Sweden, where couple characteristics differ to a greater extent from those in the U.S., this simulation resulted in a 50% increase in predicted probabilities relative to baseline.

A second set of simulations suggested that the high overall levels of separation among U.S. couples compared to Western Europe are largely driven by couples with less than a college degree. High levels of instability among less-educated U.S. couples reflect both their higher odds of separation and their very different characteristics relative to college graduates. U.S. college graduates are exceptional in the U.S. context, with little cohabitation at birth, few children with prior partners, and an older age at birth. They look very much like their European counterparts, with one striking exception: their low share cohabiting at birth. Only 10% of college graduates in the U.S. were cohabiting at birth, on par with college graduates in Italy but lower than those in

all other countries (ranging from 22% of college graduates in Spain to 57% in Sweden). Thus U.S. college graduates are exceptional to some extent both in the U.S. and cross-national context. Less-educated U.S. couples, however, appear to be the outliers in the cross-national context in all but their detachment from marriage. Is the hold that college graduates have on marriage a durable phenomenon, or an echo of past U.S. family patterns that will also fade away? We have seen fading education differences in cohabiting births among the less and the moderately educated in the U.S. (Musick and Michelmore 2015). If this trend continues into the higher education ranks of college graduates, what should we expect in terms of the stability of these unions? Answers to these questions have important implications for how we understand changing families and their social implications. The characteristics associated with union instability tend to be more tightly linked in the U.S. than elsewhere, leading to greater disparities in parental separation and suggesting greater inequality in resources for children.

REFERENCES

- Andersson, G., & Philipov, D. (2002). Life-table representations of family dynamics in Sweden, Hungary and 14 other FFS countries: A project of description of demographic behaviour. *Demographic Research*, 7 (4), 67-144.
- Carlson, M. J., & Furstenberg, F. F. (2006). The prevalence and correlates of multipartnered fertility among urban US parents. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(3), 718-732.
- Carlson, M., McLanahan, S., & England, P. (2004). Union formation in fragile families. *Demography*, 41 (2), 237-261.
- Cherlin, A. J. (2004). The deinstitutionalization of American marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66 (4), 848-861.
- Cherlin, A. J. (2005). American marriage in the early twenty-first century. *Future of the Family*, 15 (2), 33-55.
- Cherlin, A. J. (2009). *The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Cohen, J.A. & Manning, W. (2010). The relationship context of premarital serial cohabitation. *Social Science Research* 39(5): 766-776.
- Dronkers, J. (2015). Cohabitation, marriage, and union instability in Europe. Posted 9/21 on the Blog of the Institute for Family Studies. Accessed 9/23/15 at <http://family-studies.org/cohabitation-marriage-and-union-instability-in-europe/>
- Edin, K. & Kefalas, M.J. (2005). *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage*. University of California Press. Berkeley, CA.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990). *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Polity Press.

- Esping-Andersen, G. & Billari, F. C. (2015). Re-theorizing family demographics. *Population and Development Review*, 41, (1):1-31.
- Fokkema, T., Kveder, A., Hiekel, N., Emery, T., & Liefbroer, A.C. (2016). Generations and Gender Programme Wave 1 data collection: An overview and assessment of sampling and fieldwork methods, weighting procedures, and cross-sectional representativeness. *Demographic Research*, 34, (18), 499-524.
- Fomby, P., & Cherlin, A. J. (2007). Family instability and child well-being. *American Sociological Review*, 72, (2), 181-204.
- Fomby, P., & Sennott, C. (2013). Family structure instability and mobility: The consequences for adolescents' problem behavior. *Social Science Research*, 42, (1), 181–206.
- Furstenberg, Frank F., Jr. (1996). The future of marriage. *American Demographics*, 18, (6), 34-37, 39-40.
- Gibson-Davis, C. M. (2009). Money, marriage, and children: Testing the financial expectations and family formation theory. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 71 (1), 146-160.
- Gibson-Davis, C. M., Edin, K., & McLanahan, S. (2005). High hopes but even higher expectations: The retreat from marriage among low-income couples. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, (5), 1301-1312.
- Gornick, J., Meyers, M., & Ross, K. (1997). Supporting the employment of mothers: Policy variation across fourteen welfare states. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 7 (1), 45-70.
- Guzzo, K. B., & Furstenberg, F. F. (2007a). *Multipartnered fertility among American men*. *Demography*, 44, (3), 583-601.

- Guzzo, K. B., & Furstenberg, F. F. (2007b). Multipartnered fertility among young women with a nonmarital first birth: Prevalence and risk factors. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 39, (1), 29-38.
- Halpern-Meekin, S. & Tach, L. (2008). Heterogeneity in two-parent families and adolescent well-being. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 70, (2) 435-51.
- Hamilton, B. E., Martin, J. A., Osterman, M. J. K., Curtin, S. C., Mathews, T. J. (2015). Births: Final Data for 2014. *National Vital Statistics Reports* 64, (12). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Accessed 3/18/16 at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nvsr64_12.pdf
- Härkönen, J. & Dronkers, J. (2006). Stability and change in the educational gradient of divorce: A comparison of seventeen countries. *European Sociological Review*, 22, (5), 501–17.
- Hayford, S. R., & Morgan, S. P. (2008). The quality of retrospective data on cohabitation. *Demography*, 45 (1), 129-141.
- Heuveline, P., & Timberlake, J. M. (2004). The role of cohabitation in family formation: the United States in comparative perspective. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, 1214-30.
- Kennedy, S., & Bumpass, L. (2008). Cohabitation and children's living arrangements: New estimates from the United States. *Demographic Research*, 19, 1663-1692.
- Kiernan, K. (2000). European perspectives on union formation. Pp. 40-58 in *Ties That Bind: Perspectives on Marriage and Cohabitation*, edited by L. Waite, C. Bachrach, M. Hindin, E. Thomson, and A. Thornton. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine.
- Kiernan, K. (2004). Unmarried cohabitation and parenthood in Britain and Europe. *Law & Policy*, 26 (1), 33-55.

- Kohler, H-P, F. Billari, and J.A. Ortega. (2002). The emergence of lowest-low fertility in Europe during the 1990s. *Population Development Review*, 28 (4), 641-680.
- Lappegård, T. & Rønsen, M. (2013). Socioeconomic differentials in multi-partner fertility among fathers. *Demography* 50, (3), 1135-53.
- Lesthaeghe, R.J. and L. Neidert. (2006). The Second Demographic Transition in the United States: Exception or textbook example? *Population and Development Review*, 32 (4), 669-98.
- Lichter, D. T., Qian, Z., & Mellott, L. M. (2006). Marriage or dissolution? Union transitions among poor cohabiting women. *Demography*, 43, (2), 223-240.
- Lichter, D. T., Turner, R. N., & Sassler, S. (2010). National estimates of the rise in serial cohabitation. *Social Science Research*, 39, (5), 754-765.
- Liefbroer, A.C., & E. Dourleijn. (2006). Unmarried cohabitation and union stability: Testing the role of diffusion using data from 16 European countries. *Demography*, 43 (2), 203-221.
- Manlove, J., Wildsmith, E., Ikramullah, E., Ryan, S., Holcombe, E., Scott, M. Peterson, K. 2012. Union transitions following the birth of a child to cohabiting parents. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 31, 361-386.
- Manning, W. D., Smock, P. J., & Majumdar, D. (2004). The relative stability of cohabiting and marital unions for children. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 23, (2), 135-159.
- Martin, S. P. (2004). Women's education and family timing: Outcomes and trends associated with age at marriage and first birth. Pp. 79-118 in *Social Inequality*, edited by K.M. Neckerman. New York: Russell Sage.
- Martin, S. P. (2006). Trends in marital dissolution by women's education in the United States. *Demographic Research*, 15, (20), 537-560.

- Martinez, G., Daniels, K., & Chandra, A. (2012). Fertility of men and women aged 15-44 years in the United States: National Survey of Family Growth, 2006-2010. *National health statistics reports*, 51. At <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr051.pdf>
- McLanahan, S. (2004). Diverging destinies: How children fare under the second demographic transition. *Demography* 41 (4), 607-627.
- McLanahan, S. & Percheski, C. (2008). Family structure and the reproduction of inequalities. *Annual Review of Sociology* 34: 257-276.
- Musick, K. & Michelmore, K. 2015. Trends in the relative stability of marital and cohabiting unions following a first birth. *Demography*, 52 (5):1463-85.
- Neyer, G., & Andersson, G. (2008). Consequences of family policies on childbearing behavior: Effects or artifacts? *Population and Development Review*, 34 (4), 699-724.
- OECD. (2008). *Growing Unequal? Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries*. Paris, France: OECD Publishing. Accessed 9/23/15 at <http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/growingunequalincomedistributionandpovertyinoecdcountries.htm>
- Osborne, C., Manning, W. D., & Smock, P. J. (2007). Married and cohabiting parents' relationship stability: A focus on race and ethnicity. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69, (5), 1345-1366.
- Perelli-Harris, B., Kreyenfeld, M., & Kubisch, K. (2010). Technical manual for the Harmonized Histories database. *MPIDR Working paper 2010-011*.
- Perelli-Harris, B., Sigle-Rushton, W., Kreyenfeld, M., Lappegård, T., Keizer, R., & Berghammer, C. (2010). The educational gradient of childbearing within cohabitation in Europe. *Population and Development Review*, 36, (4), 775-801.

- Perelli-Harris, B., Kreyenfeld, M., Sigle-Rushton, W., Keizer, R., Lappegård, T., Jasilioniene, A., & Di Giulio, P. (2012). Changes in union status during the transition to parenthood in eleven European countries, 1970s to early 2000s. *Population Studies*, 66, (2), 167-182.
- Perelli-Harris, B., & Gassen, N. S. (2012). How similar are cohabitation and marriage? Legal approaches to cohabitation across Western Europe. *Population and Development Review*, 38, (3), 435-467.
- Phillips, J. A., & Sweeney, M. M. (2006). Can differential exposure to risk factors explain recent racial and ethnic variation in marital disruption?. *Social Science Research*, 35(2), 409-434.
- Raley, K. R. & Wildsmith, E. (2004). Cohabitation and children's family instability. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66 (1), 210-219.
- Sainsbury, D. 1999. Gender, Policy Regimes, and Politics. In D. Sainsbury (ed.) *Gender and Welfare State Regimes*. Oxford University Press.
- Smock, P. J., Manning, W. D., & Porter, M. (2005). Everything's there except money: How money shapes decisions to marry among cohabitators. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, (3), 680-696.
- Sweeney, M. M. (2010). Remarriage and stepfamilies: Strategic sites for family scholarship in the 21st century. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72, (3), 667-684.
- Tach, L. & Eads, A. (2015). Trends in the economic consequences of marital and cohabitation dissolution in the United States. *Demography*, 52, 401-432.
- Tach, L. & Edin, K. (2013). The compositional and institutional sources of union dissolution for married and unmarried parents in the United States. *Demography*, 50 (5), 1789-1818.

- Tach, L., Edin, K., Harvey, H., & Bryant, B. (2014). The family-go-round: Family complexity and father involvement from a father's perspective. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 654, (1), 169-184.
- Tach, L., Mincy, R., & Edin, K. (2010). Parenting as a “package deal”: Relationships, fertility, and nonresident father involvement among unmarried parents. *Demography*, 47 (1), 181-204.
- Tavares, L. P., & Aassve, A. (2013). Psychological distress of marital and cohabitation breakups. *Social science research*, 42 (6), 1599-1611.
- Teachman, J. D. (2002). Stability across cohorts in divorce risk factors. *Demography*, 39 (2), 331-351.
- Teachman, J. (2003). Premarital sex, premarital cohabitation, and the risk of subsequent marital dissolution among women. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65 (2), 444-455.
- Thomson, E., Lappegård, T., Carlson, M., Evans, A., & Gray, E. (2014). Childbearing across partnerships in Australia, the United States, Norway, and Sweden. *Demography*, 51, (2), 485-508.
- van de Kaa, D. (1987). Europe's second demographic transition. *Population Bulletin*, 42, (1). Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau.
- Ventura, S. (2009). Changing patterns of nonmarital childbearing in the United States. NCHS Data Brief No. 18. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Accessed 9/23/15 at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db18.pdf>
- Waller, M. R. (2001). High hopes: Unwed parents' expectations about marriage. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 23, (6), 457-484.

Warner, T. C., Manning, W. D., Giordano, P. C., & Longmore, M. A. (2011). "Relationship formation and stability in emerging adulthood: Do sex ratios matter? *Social Forces*, 90, (1), 269-95.

World Bank 2016 at <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT>

Wu, L. L., & Musick, K. (2008). Stability of marital and cohabiting unions following a first birth. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 27 (6), 713-727.

Table 1. Union status around a couple's first birth, by country

	US	UK	Norway	Sweden	Austria	France	Italy	Spain
Union status indicators								
Cohabiting at birth ($x_1 = 1$)	0.41	0.40	0.62	0.64	0.45	0.45	0.08	0.29
Proportion of all months spent married following birth ($x_{2t} = 1$)	0.72	0.71	0.49	0.44	0.65	0.56	0.96	0.78
N (unions)	5,232	628	1,142	710	817	795	689	1,281
N (union-months)	244,529	34,933	66,065	40,721	44,375	44,941	41,147	67,641
Transitions to marriage among those cohabiting at birth								
Married within 1 year	0.11	0.07	0.09	0.08	0.11	0.09	0.23	0.06
Married within 2 years	0.22	0.20	0.18	0.16	0.22	0.17	0.39	0.11
Married within 5 years	0.44	0.46	0.35	0.37	0.48	0.36	0.55	0.23
N (unions)	2525	282	696	452	365	425	56	347
N (union-months)	99,729	14,520	38,259	25,486	17,953	21,942	2,472	15,282

Notes: N 's are unweighted. All means are weighted using SVY procedures in STATA 12. Cohabiting at birth is measured in the month of the couple's first birth together (i.e., the first month of the union-month file). Married in month t is estimated from the full union-month sample. Transitions to marriage are generated from life tables that treat union dissolution as a competing risk.

Source: Harmonized Histories and the 2006-2010 and 2011-2013 National Survey of Family Growth (women only, under 45 years of age). Sample limited to couples with a first child together within 10 years of interview.

Table 2. Characteristics of couples with a first birth together, by country

	US	UK	Norway	Sweden	Austria	France	Italy	Spain
R's education								
Low	0.16	0.05	0.19	0.06	0.12	0.13	0.33	0.37
Middle	0.56	0.41	0.35	0.44	0.70	0.45	0.53	0.39
High	0.29	0.54	0.46	0.50	0.18	0.41	0.14	0.25
R had prior childless union	0.15	0.13	0.23	0.35	0.17	0.14	0.03	0.06
R had prior childless marriage	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.02
R had prior childless cohab	0.11	0.11	0.21	0.34	0.14	0.12	0.01	0.04
R or P had children at union start	0.37	0.29	0.23	0.15	0.21	0.18	0.03	0.15
R had children	0.26	0.20	0.15	0.08	0.12	0.11	0.03	0.10
P had children	0.22	0.16	0.12	0.09	0.11	0.10	0.00	0.06
R's age at focal birth								
<22	0.24	0.14	0.08	0.05	0.13	0.09	0.03	0.10
22-25	0.25	0.20	0.22	0.16	0.25	0.24	0.10	0.14
26-29	0.24	0.26	0.35	0.31	0.30	0.33	0.33	0.32
30+	0.27	0.40	0.35	0.48	0.32	0.33	0.54	0.44
	0.51	0.66	0.69	0.78	0.62	0.67	0.87	0.77
Duration from union start to birth (in months)	35.05	40.66	41.63	49.37	46.39	44.55	39.18	43.35
Couple had another child together (<i>t</i>)	0.35	0.37	0.38	0.43	0.32	0.34	0.26	0.26
R foreign-born	0.17	0.03	0.10	0.15	0.27	0.09	0.05	0.15
R lived with both biological parents through age 15	0.59	0.75	0.85	0.71	0.77	0.84	0.97	0.92
<i>N</i> (unions-months)	244,529	34,933	66,065	40,721	44,375	44,941	41,147	67,641
<i>N</i> (unions)	5,232	628	1,142	710	817	795	689	1,281

Notes: *N*'s are unweighted. All means are weighted using SVY procedures in STATA 12. Time-invariant characteristics are measured in the month of the couple's first birth together (i.e., the first month of the union-month file). Couples' (time-varying) subsequent childbearing is estimated from the full union-month sample. R = respondent, P = partner. Parental separation was not available at age 15 for Italy and Spain. For those countries, we evaluated whether the parents ever separated rather than by age 15.

Source: Harmonized Histories and the 2006-2010 and 2011-2013 National Survey of Family Growth (women only, under 45 years). Sample limited to couples with a first child together within 10 years of interview.

Table 3. Proportion births within cohabitation (vs. marriage) by education, prior childbearing, and parental age, by country

	Education			R or P had children at union start			R's age at first birth				Ratio (<20: 30+)	
	Low	Middle	High	Ratio (low to high)	Either had children	Neither had children	Ratio (either to neither)	<22	22-25	26-29		30+
US	0.66	0.50	0.10	6.9	0.65	0.36	1.8	0.69	0.48	0.28	0.22	3.2
UK	0.76	0.48	0.30	2.5	0.61	0.39	1.6	0.91	0.48	0.32	0.23	3.9
Norway	0.70	0.73	0.55	1.3	0.76	0.56	1.3	0.83	0.67	0.56	0.60	1.4
Sweden	0.58	0.72	0.57	1.0	0.76	0.62	1.2	0.68	0.68	0.66	0.60	1.1
Austria	0.46	0.46	0.37	1.2	0.52	0.43	1.2	0.64	0.45	0.40	0.40	1.6
France	0.68	0.59	0.41	1.7	0.67	0.50	1.3	0.84	0.55	0.42	0.53	1.6
Italy	0.10	0.07	0.10	1.0	0.25	0.07	3.4	0.21	0.07	0.04	0.10	2.1
Spain	0.33	0.29	0.22	1.5	0.55	0.22	2.5	0.52	0.38	0.24	0.24	2.1

Notes: *N*'s are unweighted. All means are weighted using SVY procedures in STATA 12. Characteristics are measured in the month of the couple's first birth together. R = respondent, P = partner.

Source: Harmonized Histories and the 2006-2010 and 2011-2013 National Survey of Family Growth (women only, under 45 years). Sample limited to couples with a first child together within 10 years of interview.

Table 4. Odds ratios from discrete-time event history models of separation within 10 years of birth, by country

	US	UK	Norway	Sweden	Austria	France	Italy	Spain
<i>Panel 1: Model 1</i>								
Cohabiting at birth	1.98 **	1.99	1.46	1.86	3.05 *	0.85	1.77	4.47 *
Married at time <i>t</i>	0.49 **	0.40	0.69	0.92	1.04	0.22 *	0.35	1.84
<i>Panel 2: Model 2</i>								
Cohabiting at birth	0.88	1.21	1.02	1.11	2.14	0.45	2.16	4.03 †
Married at time <i>t</i>	0.43 ***	0.45	0.67	0.67	0.91	0.18 *	0.59	2.79
R's education								
Low (reference)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Middle	1.10	1.89	1.55 †	0.59	1.10	1.37	1.71	1.14
High	0.64 **	1.60	0.79	0.22 **	0.84	0.88	2.29	0.91
Family complexity								
R had prior childless union	0.84	2.04 †	1.09	1.09	1.12	0.79	2.20	1.79
R or P had children at union start	1.58 ***	0.93	1.90 **	1.57	0.85	2.97 ***	5.71 *	2.07 †
R's age at focal birth								
<22 (reference)	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
22-25	0.71 **	0.62	0.38 **	0.67	0.42 **	0.47 *	2.08	0.70
26-29	0.44 ***	0.24 ***	0.38 **	0.51	0.64	0.51 *	1.67	0.71
30+	0.41 ***	0.24 **	0.27 ***	0.40 *	0.73	0.25 ***	1.09	0.28 *
Number of months from union start to birth								
Couple had another child together (<i>t</i>)	0.995 *	0.998	1.001	0.993	0.985 **	0.993	1.008	1.007 †
	0.64 ***	0.31 ***	0.62 †	0.73	0.54 †	0.36 ***	0.31 †	0.47 †
Foreign born								
Lived with both biological parents through age 15	0.57 ***	0.63	0.77	1.63	1.09	1.76	0.49	1.23
	0.73 ***	0.60 †	0.57 *	0.46 **	0.80	0.69	0.42	0.47 †
<i>N</i> (unions)	244,616	34,288	64,470	40,126	44,241	44,565	41,147	66,319

Notes: *N*'s unweighted. All models weighted using SVY procedures in STATA 12. Union duration is measured in months from first birth. Duration from first birth and duration-squared are included in Models 1 and 2 (but not shown). R = respondent, P = partner.

Source: Harmonized Histories and the 2006-2010 and 2011-2013 National Survey of Family Growth (women only, under 45 years). Sample limited to couples with a first child together within 10 years of interview.

†*p* < .10, **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001 (differences from 1.00).

Table 5. Odds ratios associated with union-birth trajectories, derived from discrete-time event history models of separation within 10 years of birth, by country

U.S.	Model 1			Model 2		
	MB	CBM	CB	MB	CBM	CB
MB	1.00	1.98 **	4.09 ***	1.00	0.88	2.06 ***
CBM		1.00	2.06		1.00	2.34 ***
CB			1.00			1.00
<i>U.K.</i>						
MB	1.00	1.99	5.02 ***	1.00	1.21	2.70 *
CBM		1.00	2.52		1.00	2.23
CB			1.00			1.00
<i>Norway</i>						
MB	1.00	1.46	2.12 ***	1.00	1.02	1.53 **
CBM		1.00	1.45		1.00	1.50
CB			1.00			1.00
<i>Sweden</i>						
MB	1.00	1.86	2.03 *	1.00	1.11	1.67 *
CBM		1.00	1.09		1.00	1.50
CB			1.00			1.00
<i>Austria</i>						
MB	1.00	3.05 *	2.94 ***	1.00	2.14 ^a ***	2.35 ^a ***
CBM		1.00	0.96		1.00	1.10 ^a
CB			1.00			1.00
<i>France</i>						
MB	1.00	0.85	3.81 ***	1.00	0.45	2.52 ***
CBM		1.00	4.48		1.00	5.53
CB			1.00			1.00
<i>Italy</i>						
MB	1.00	1.77	5.08 **	1.00	2.16	3.67 †
CBM		1.00	2.87		1.00	1.70
CB			1.00			1.00
<i>Spain</i>						
MB	1.00	4.47 **	2.43 **	1.00	4.03 ^a †	1.44 ^a
CBM		1.00	0.54		1.00	0.36 ^a
CB			1.00			1.00

Notes: Table is derived from combining and testing coefficients in Table 4. Union duration is measured in months from first birth. Union-birth trajectories: MB = married at birth; CMB = cohabiting at birth and married at t following birth; CB = cohabiting at birth without ever marrying.

Source: Harmonized Histories and the 2006-2010 and 2011-2013 National Survey of Family Growth (women only, under 45 years). Sample limited to couples with a first child together within 10 years of interview.

^aSignificantly different from U.S. at $p < .10$ level (two-way t-tests).

† $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (differences from 1.00).

Table 6. Predicted probabilities of separation within 5 years of birth derived from discrete-time event history models, by country and union status

	US	UK	Norway	Sweden	Austria	France	Italy	Spain
Overall	0.24	0.14	0.13	0.07	0.13	0.13	0.06	0.06
MB	0.19	0.09	0.10	0.05	0.09	0.08	0.05	0.05
CBM	0.17	0.11	0.10	0.06	0.18	0.04	0.11	0.20
CB	0.35	0.23	0.15	0.09	0.20	0.19	0.17	0.08
Ratio CBM/MB	0.89	1.19	1.02	1.11	2.03	0.47	2.09	3.70
Ratio CB/MB	1.85	2.48	1.49	1.64	2.21	2.37	3.43	1.43

Notes: Predicted probabilities of separation are derived from Model 2 (with all controls) in Table 4, allowing duration to vary with month, varying union status, and holding all other covariates (including time-varying variables) at their weighted mean values in month 1. Monthly conditional probabilities of separation are multiplied to generate estimated proportions separating within 5 years. Union-birth trajectories: MB = married at birth; CBM = cohabiting at birth and married at t following birth; CB = cohabiting at birth without ever marrying.

Source: Harmonized Histories and the 2006-2010 and 2011-2013 National Survey of Family Growth (women only, under 45 years). Sample limited to couples with a first child together within 10 years of interview.

Table 7. Simulations derived from discrete-time event history models, assigning specified U.S. characteristics to generate estimates of separation within 5 years of birth, by country

	UK	Norway	Sweden	Austria	France	Italy	Spain
<i>Predicted probabilities assigning U.S. couple characteristics</i>							
Baseline—all own characteristics	0.14	0.13	0.07	0.13	0.13	0.06	0.06
Union status	0.14	0.12	0.07	0.12	0.11	0.08	0.06
Education	0.13	0.14	0.09	0.12	0.13	0.06	0.06
Age	0.16	0.15	0.09	0.13	0.14	0.06	0.07
Family complexity	0.14	0.14	0.08	0.12	0.15	0.11	0.07
All of the above	0.16	0.17	0.11	0.12	0.16	0.19	0.10
<i>Percent change in predicted probabilities</i>							
Union status	0.7%	-8.1%	-10.7%	-3.1%	-10.7%	50.2%	5.7%
Education	-2.7%	12.7%	28.5%	-3.0%	4.6%	14.2%	1.9%
Age	18.7%	17.8%	21.0%	4.2%	14.4%	3.8%	22.4%
Family complexity	0.4%	7.9%	8.6%	-2.7%	20.8%	94.8%	22.5%
All of the above	16.7%	31.4%	50.4%	-4.7%	28.9%	237.8%	60.9%

Notes: Predicted probabilities of separation are derived from Model 2 (with all controls) in Table 4, allowing duration to vary with month, varying key covariates, and holding all others (including time-varying variables) at their country-specific weighted mean values in month 1. Baseline estimates hold all covariates at their country-specific weighted means. Simulations in subsequent rows assign U.S. means on specified characteristics. Monthly conditional probabilities of separation are multiplied to generate estimated proportions separating within 5 years.

Source: Harmonized Histories and the 2006-2010 and 2011-2013 National Survey of Family Growth (women only, under 45 years). Sample limited to couples with a first child together within 10 years of interview.

Table 8. Simulations derived from discrete-time event history models, assigning country-specific characteristics of high low education groups to generate predicted probabilities of separation across countries

	US	UK	Norway	Sweden	Austria	France	Italy	Spain
<i>Baseline</i>	0.24	0.14	0.13	0.07	0.13	0.13	0.06	0.06
<i>Within country simulation by education</i>								
Low education	0.38	0.17	0.17	0.29	0.16	0.21	0.04	0.07
High education	0.09	0.10	0.09	0.04	0.10	0.07	0.08	0.04
Gap between low and high	0.29	0.07	0.08	0.26	0.07	0.14	-0.04	0.03
Ratio low to high	4.12	1.71	1.96	8.22	1.69	2.95	0.53	1.64

Notes: Predicted probabilities of separation are derived from Model 2 (with all controls) in Table 4, varying education and holding all covariates (including time-varying variables) at the country-specific weighted mean values in month 1 for the low and high education groups. Low education = < high school or the equivalent; high education = college + or the equivalent. Monthly conditional probabilities of separation are multiplied to generate estimated proportions separating within 5 years.

Source: Harmonized Histories and the 2006-2010 and 2011-2013 National Survey of Family Growth (women only, under 45 years). Sample limited to couples with a first child together within 10 years of interview.

Appendix Table 1. Harmonized Histories survey names, dates, respondent upper age limits, and sample sizes

Country	Survey name	Survey dates			Survey age range	Number of women in survey	Number of women in analysis	Number of unions in analysis
		From	To					
Austria ^a	Generations and Gender Survey	Sep-08	Mar-09	18-46	3001	772	817	
France	Generations and Gender Survey	Sep-05	Dec-05	17-79	5708	750	795	
Italy ^b	Generations and Gender Survey	Jan-03	Dec-03	18-64	5115	680	689	
Norway	Generations and Gender Survey	Jan-07	Oct-08	19-81	7541	1050	1142	
Spain	Spanish Fertility Survey	Apr-06	May-06	16-98	9737	1210	1281	
Sweden ^c	Generations and Gender Survey	Apr-12	Apr-13	18-44	4991	670	710	
U.K.	British Household Panel Survey	Sep-05	May-06	16-80	7856	783	855	
U.S. ^c	National Survey of Family Growth 2006-10, 2011-13	Jun-06	Dec-13	15-45	17880	4616	5232	

Source: Harmonized Histories manual (Perelli-Harris, Kreyenfeld, and Kubisch 2011).

^a Parental death year was imputed from the original GGS to assess whether the respondent experienced a parental death by age 15.

^b The Italian version of the Harmonized Histories does not include the month and year of birth for household children. We obtained child birth dates from the Istituto nazionale di statistica (<http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/4967>).

^c The harmonized histories contained missing data for parental separation by age 15 for Sweden. We imputed this information from the original Sweden GGS.

^d The U.S. version of the Harmonized Histories is supplemented with the release of the 2011-2013 NSFG.

Appendix Table 2. Characteristics of couples with a first birth together, by country and education

	Low and middle education								High education							
	US	UK	Norway	Sweden	Austria	France	Italy	Spain	US	UK	Norway	Sweden	Austria	France	Italy	Spain
R had prior childless union	0.14	0.10	0.21	0.31	0.15	0.13	0.03	0.06	0.16	0.16	0.26	0.39	0.25	0.14	0.04	0.09
R or P had children at union start	0.46	0.37	0.31	0.22	0.22	0.24	0.03	0.16	0.16	0.22	0.15	0.07	0.16	0.11	0.00	0.11
R's age at focal birth																
<22	0.33	0.20	0.14	0.09	0.15	0.15	0.03	0.12	0.02	0.08	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.02
22-25	0.29	0.25	0.24	0.25	0.29	0.28	0.12	0.17	0.15	0.15	0.17	0.08	0.08	0.19	0.02	0.05
26-29	0.19	0.27	0.32	0.26	0.29	0.28	0.34	0.33	0.38	0.26	0.39	0.35	0.32	0.41	0.28	0.28
30+	0.19	0.28	0.30	0.40	0.27	0.29	0.51	0.38	0.46	0.51	0.41	0.55	0.58	0.39	0.70	0.65
Duration from union start to birth (in months)	29.70	31.25	39.14	45.29	44.95	39.99	39.25	41.76	48.39	48.80	46.05	53.61	53.05	51.04	38.80	48.77
Couple had another child together (t)	0.33	0.34	0.33	0.32	0.34	0.36	0.26	0.22	0.38	0.34	0.44	0.45	0.35	0.38	0.27	0.30
Foreign-born	0.17	0.03	0.08	0.15	0.27	0.11	0.05	0.15	0.18	0.03	0.03	0.15	0.28	0.07	0.05	0.14
Lived with both biological parents through age 15	0.53	0.69	0.83	0.62	0.77	0.79	0.97	0.91	0.74	0.80	0.88	0.80	0.81	0.90	0.97	0.94
N (unions-months)	48,596	2,784	7,995	1,907	5,086	6,023	14,122	24,840	61,839	19,674	33,717	21,003	7,423	18,410	4,874	14,124
N (unions)	4,073	299	522	351	674	470	593	952	1,158	314	586	355	142	325	96	301

Notes: *N*'s are unweighted. All means are weighted using SVY procedures in STATA 12. Time-invariant characteristics are measured in the month of the couple's first birth together (i.e., the first month of the union-month file). Couples' (time-varying) subsequent childbearing is estimated from the full union-month sample. R = respondent, P = partner.

Source: Harmonized Histories and the 2006-2010 and 2011-2013 National Survey of Family Growth (women only, under 45 years). Sample limited to couples with a first child together within 10 years of interview.