Transition Points in Sexual Relationships:
Life Course Variation or Social Class Differences?

Sharon Sassler[a]
Katherine Michelmore[a]
Jennifer Holland[b]

Despite a wealth of research on union formation, to date relatively little is known about when and how relationships progress from sexual involvement to shared living and beyond, or to break-up. We examine how markers of life course stage (age, educational attainment, prior union experience) and social class (maternal educational attainment, maternal age at first birth, family structure as a child, and respondent educational attainment) differentiate the pace of transition into union formation (marriage, cohabitation), relationship dissolution, or persistence in a sexually involved relationship. Data are from women ages 18 and 39 from the 2006-2010 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) (n = 1,151) whose most recent sexual relationship began in the 12 months prior to their interview. Many sexual relationships end quickly; 31.3% of women's new sexual relationships had ended within a few months. But sexual relationships also transition rapidly into coresidential unions; 23.2% were either cohabiting with or married to that partner within 12 months. Social class indicators are better predictors of relationship transitions than are life course explanations.

[a] Department of Policy Analysis & Management, Cornell University
[b] The Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute

Transition Points in Sexual Relationships:

Life Course Variation or Social Class Differences?

Contemporary relationships in the United States are often marked by sexual relationships from early on, as sexual involvement becomes an increasingly normative part of the courtship process (Finer, 2007). To date, however, few empirical studies have examined when in the course of romantic relationships couples enter into shared living (via either cohabitation or marriage) or end the sexual relationship by breaking up. Nor do we know much about the factors that expedite or slow down the tempo of relationship progression. This is surprising, given the growing body of research calling for additional attention to how relationships unfold (Cherlin, 2009; Sassler, 2010; Surra and Boelter, 2013).

Among those concerned with how contemporary relationships develop, one consistent trope focuses on cautions regarding how rapidly relationships form and, potentially, end. Developmental psychologist Scott Stanely and his colleagues, for example, suggest that young adults are "sliding" into serious unions (such as cohabitation or marriage) without adequate time for the development of deep commitment (Glenn, 2002; Stanley, Rhoades, and Markman, 2006). Some have recommended that adults should slow down the pace at which they enter into new attachments, given the research indicating that rapid involvement may negatively influence relationship quality, reduce dedication, or be adversely associated with parenting abilities and marital stability (Cherlin 2009; Glen 2002; Stanley, Rhoades, and Whitton 2010; Stanley, Rhoades, and Markman 2006). Others suggest that rapid "churning" into and out of sexual relationships, which is more characteristic of unions in the United States than in other developed countries, creates instability that can be self-perpetuating (Cherlin, 2009; Paik, 2011; Lichter, Turner, and Sassler, 2010).

In their recent review of dating and mate selection, Surra and Boelter note, "A full understanding of mate selection requires attention to the development and maintenance of romantic relationships, including their very beginnings and endings and the ups and downs in between" (Sura and Boelter, 2013, p. 211). This paper seeks to explore relationship progression processes, beginning at the start of sexual involvement between partners to their first transition into either shared living (cohabitation or marriage) or dissolution (breaking up). We utilize unique data from the 2006-2010 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) to explore patterns of relationship progression among women aged 18 to 39 who initiated a sexual relationship with an opposite sex partner in the 12 months prior to the survey. Concentrating on this narrow window enables us to describe the tempo of transition to more serious relationships (such as shared living) or to the dissolution of the relationship, and assess how rapidly sexual relationships that transition into shared living progress.

We draw on life course theory and theory based on new research about the diverging destinies of those with more or less advantaged backgrounds to help explain the observed patterns. In particular, we explore whether relationship progression into shared living or out of the sexual relationship can better be explained by life course stage, or if it is more attributable to social class. Younger adults and those who have not completed their schooling may be less likely to enter into cohabiting unions and more likely to break up than their older counterparts, in part because they are in an exploratory life stage or have not yet acquired the prerequisites deemed necessary for more serious attachments (Cherlin, 2004; Sassler, 2010; Smock 2004). Alternatively, the tempo to cohabitation as well as dissolution may be driven by economic exigencies, with those from less advantaged backgrounds forming cohabiting unions more

rapidly, and also ending sexual relationships more expeditiously, than those from more advantaged backgrounds.

Literature Review

Tempo

Variations by Social Class

Variations by Life Course

Expectations (Hypotheses)

Data & Methods

Data come from the 2006–2010 National Survey of Family Growth, an ongoing survey of men and women aged 15–44. The most recent wave of the 2006–10 NSFG contains information on 22,682 men and women. We focus here on women aged 18 to 39, as this allows us to best assess our theories regarding life course stage, and limit our scope to those who reported initiating a sexual relationship in the previous 12 month period. This limits our sample size considerably, but provides us with a window into the initial stages of relationships. Expanding the period of time beyond the 12 month period might result in our missing sexually relationships that form and end rapidly. Our final sample consists of 1,151 women aged 18 to 39 who initiated a sexual relationship within the previous 12 months. Over the next few months we intend to supplement this sample with the male counterparts from NSFG. This will enable us to test for gender differences in self-reports of the pace of relationship progression.

Measures

The NSFG contains a rich set of information on family background characteristics. Our primary dependent variable is a measure of *duration to a particular union status*, or the number of months from when the respondent reports first becoming sexually involved until they either a) enter into shared living with that partner, via marriage or cohabitation; or b) dissolve the sexual relationship (break up), relative to c) remaining in a dating but non-coresidential sexual relationship. Respondents who reported having a

new sexual partner within the previous 12 months were asked when they first had sexual intercourse with this partner. For those who are no longer in a sexual relationship with that partner, respondents also provide information on their date of last sex with that partner. By utilizing information on the timing of entrance into marriage or cohabitation we can construct a duration measure that captures the tempo to shared living;[1] among those whose sexual relationship had ended, we can also estimate the number of months until this break up occurred. Those whose sexual relationship remained on-going at the time of the survey serve as our reference category. We utilize this information to construct person-months of risk for the event of interest: entering coresidence; breaking up; or remaining in a sexually involved dating relationship.

Independent Variables

We divide our independent variables into indicators of life course progression or markers of social class position. Our indicators of social class position include respondents' family structure while growing up and indicators of maternal age at birth and educational attainment, and the respondent's race/ethnic background. We use information on whether the respondent always lived with biological or adoptive parents, or whether they grew up with a stepfather (none of the individuals in our sample reported a stepmother as a mother figure), a single mother household, or with neither biological parents. Given the small sample size, we group those growing up in alternative households (1 = intact biological parents; 0 = other alternatives). The age of the respondents' mother when she first gave birth is used to construct an indicator of being born to a teen mother. We also create an indicator of whether the respondent's mother did not complete high school. Our final indicator of social class position utilizes questions asked about respondents' race and ethnic background; respondents are divided into those who are non-Hispanic white (the reference), black, Hispanic, or other.

Our life course measures include age, which we group into several categories: 18 to 24 years old, 25 to 29 years old, and a larger group for those ages 30 to 39. We also incorporate a measure of the respondent's educational attainment, disaggregated into those who had less than a high school diploma, those who were either high school graduates or who had some post-secondary schooling but no college

diploma (the moderately educated), and respondents who had a college diploma (or higher). Educational attainment may also be perceived as an indicator of social class positioning. Finally, we construct an estimate whether respondents had completed their schooling at the time they moved in, utilizing the dates of high school graduation, college graduation, and the last month and year respondents were in school if they had not yet completed school; information is also provided if respondents are currently enrolled at the time of the interview. All those currently enrolled are assigned to the category not yet finished with their schooling.

Other measures enable us to ascertain respondents' prior relationship history, including when they first became sexually active and the number of sexual partners they report having in their lifetime. Information on when respondents first reporting having sexual intercourse is disaggregated into three categories: those who experienced sexual debut at a young age (< 15), those who experienced their first sexual involvement in their late teens (ages 15 to 17), and those who deferred sexual involvement until age 18 or older. We also include information about the total number of previous sexual partners the respondent has had, which is constructed as a continuous variable. Our final measure is a time varying indicator of whether respondent was pregnant in the month preceding the transition into either shared living or relationship dissolution.

Analysis Plan

We estimate discrete-time event history models treating entrance into coresidence (both direct marriage and cohabitation), relationship dissolution, and continuance in sexually intimate non-coresidential relationships as competing risks (Allison, 1984). As the data are measured in relatively short periods (months), our approach is quite similar to a continuous-time hazard model (Allison, 1984; Kalbfleisch and Prentice, 2002). For comparison's sake, we also ran proportional hazards models. As results were similar, we present the results from the discrete-time models.

Our analysis proceeds in several stages. We ran sequential models, incorporating our measures of social class, then life course, before adding in our final control variables. Then we run interactions of the duration measures by our discrete indicators of social class and life course. These interactions allow us to determine whether the outcomes are the result of changes in quantum effects (how union transitions are associated with particular life course or social class measures, or controls) or tempo effects. Taken together, these analyses enable us to assess factors important in shaping the pace of relationship progression among contemporary emerging and young adults.

Preliminary Results

Our preliminary results indicate that many sexual relationships are relatively short-lived. Nearly one-third of women who began a sexual relationship with a new partner in the prior 12 months (31.3%) were no longer involved with that partner. On the other hand, a sizable proportion had entered into shared living with their new partner within a year – 23.2%. Respondents whose sexual relationships ended differ in important ways from those who entered cohabiting unions or remained in dating relationships.

[Figure 1 about Here]

Descriptive results (means and standard deviations) from the variables utilized in our analysis, divided by type of relationship, are presented in Table 1. Our bivariate indicators provide some evidence that social class differentiates transitions into shared living and relationship dissolution. Respondents from less advantaged backgrounds (such as those born to mothers who did not complete high school) are significantly more likely to have entered into shared living, but are less often found among those who remain dating or break up. On the other hand, respondents whose mothers were college educated are underrepresented among those who

entered rapidly into shared living, and more likely to be found among those in dating relationships or have broken up. As suggested in the literature, Black women are overrepresented among those who remained in dating relationships, and underrepresented among those who entered into coresidential unions or broke up. We also find some evidence that life course measures are associated with relationship outcomes. The youngest respondents (those 18 to 24) are overrepresented among those whose sexual relationship broke up, whereas the older respondents (especially those ages 30 to 39) were overrepresented both among those who entered into shared living and remained dating. college graduates are significantly less likely to have transitioned into coresidence, and are overrepresented among those women who were in dating relationships.

[Table 1 about Here]

To what extent do life course or social class indicators will shift the duration measure – to shared living or out of the union – up or down remains to be explored. In order to assess the relative importance of these life course and social class characteristics for the quantum and tempo influence, we model the competing risk of transitions into coresidence or out of the relationship, relative to remaining sexually involved, within an event history framework (multinomial logistic regression). We utilize the individual (retrospective) records of female respondents to construct person-month records detailing the duration from sexual initiation to either entrance into shared living, the end of the relationship, or the date respondents were interviewed. Each person-month record contains historical information on the respondent, as well as current time-varying characteristics of the respondent, such as whether they were pregnant or had completed their schooling. Our 1,151 respondents contributed over 5,000 person months of risk. Results from our analyses are presented in Table 2. Hazard rates are presented, for easier interpretations.

[Table 2 about Here]

Model 1 of Table 2 includes our duration measures alone. With increasing duration since first sexual involvement, the hazard of breaking up decreases significantly, but begins rising at later durations (the inflection point occurs at around 7 months). Women are also significantly more likely to enter a cohabiting union than they are to break up as the months of sexual involvement increase, though the probability of entering into a cohabiting union tends to diminish as the months of sexual involvement increases, falling after about 4 months.

Similar associations are observed upon including indicators of social class (Model 2). The duration measures are largely the same. Most of the social class indicators do not reach conventional levels of significance. Among women who grew up with both biological parents, the hazards of transitioning into a cohabiting union are diminished, relative to both remaining in a dating relationship and breaking up. Women who grew up in intact families, then, appear to have more stable and on-going, non-coresidential sexual relationships than those who experience more alternative family living arrangements. Our other measures of social class – being born to a mother who began childbearing in her teens, and having a mother who lacked a high school degree – do not attain significance. Relative to their white counterparts, Black women are significantly less likely to cohabit than to remain in a dating relationship or to break up. Hispanic women appear to break up more rapidly than white women, but that is only significant at the .10 level.

Upon including measures of life course characteristics (Model 3), the association of family structure and entrance into coresidential unions is further weakened, as is the relationship between being an Hispanic woman and the hazard of breaking up. Several life course indicators are significant predictors of relationship transitions. Younger respondents, those who were 18 to 24, were more likely to break off their sexual relationships, but less likely to enter cohabiting unions, relative to remaining in a dating relationship. Our findings highlight the relationship churning that occurs among our youngest respondents. On the other hand, we see weak effects of having a college degree on relationship pathways, which suggest that more educated respondents are less likely than their moderately educated partners to

move in together or break up. School completion, on the other hand, is associated with the exit from a sexual relationship, though this is only weakly significant.

Many of the associations between social class and life course are attenuated upon including controls for relationship history (Model 4). While we still observe statistically significant duration differentials between the various relationship pathways, the only class marker that remains statistically significant is race: Black women are less likely to enter into coresidential realtionships than White women, relative to remaining sexually involved. The only life course indicator to attain significance in Model 4 is school completion: women who have finished their schooling break up at a higher rate than those who have not. As for how the indicators of relationship history shape transitions, the results indicate that those who were young at sexual debut enter cohabiting unions at a significantly more rapid pace than they break up. Similarly, those who have previously lived with a partner are less likely to break off their sexual relationships than those who have never lived with a partner. They also are significantly more likely to enter a cohabiting union than to break up. They seem to have learned to persist in relationships, to give them more time to flourish.

[Table 3 about Here]

[Figure 2 about Here]

As indicated earlier, interaction terms enable us to ascertain if our results highlight changes in not just the quantum but the tempo, or pacing, of relationship transitions. Utilizing the full model (Model 4), we include interaction terms on our social class and life course indicators. Few of our interaction effects reach conventional levels of significance, perhaps due to our small sample size. The duration measure remains highly significant for breaking up. When duration is interacted with age, we see that transitions to cohabitation are faster for youngest respondents (those 18 to 24) relative to those who are 25 to 29, but the pacing differential between groups diminishes as the months progress. In Figure 2, we show the predicted probabilities of breaking up or entering into shared living, for two different populations (18 to 24 year olds, and those 30 to 39), by month since the start of the sexual relationship. If we

look first at the predicted probabilities that a young adult (aged 18 to 24) would break up as a function of how long they had been sexually involved, it is clear that the odds of dissolution are quite high for the initial three month period but drop precipitously, before rising again at about 8 months and continuing to grow. Their older counterparts, those 30 to 39, demonstrate a very similar pattern of relationship dissolution, though they start at a much lower level and their increase after 8 months is more gradual. Figure 2 suggests that age variation in the likelihood of breaking up are the result of quantum effects. Breaking up is more strongly associated with being young, perhaps because young adults are not aware of what they want in a relationship and therefore churn quickly through them. Alternatively, young adults may not be in search of long-term partners, and may therefore begin and end sexual unions rapidly. But a closer look at the outcomes for entering into shared living suggests that this is a tempo effect. Whereas the predicted probability of entering into shared living is rather flat for the youngest respondents, among older respondents the predicted probability of entering into shared living increases for the first four months of the sexual relationship, but declines after four months to near zero. In other words, older adults are forming shared living arrangements at a much faster pace than their younger counterparts.

[Figure 3 about Here]

With respect to differential pacing of transitions by social class, there are no significant tempo differences in transitions to cohabitation or break up for those who grow up in intact families relative to those who did not or to those who grow up with a mother who began childbearing early or who deferred. We also do not find that there are salient timing differences for Black versus White women t regarding their transitions into either shared living or breaking up. We do, however, see some evidence that women with higher levels of educational attainment progress into shared living arrangements at a considerably more tempered pace than do women with less than a college degree (Figure 3). This association is only

significant at the .10 level, perhaps because of small sample size, but this finding is consistent with qualitative research that details social class differences in how cohabiting relationships progress (Sassler and Miller, 2011). In Figure 3, we show the predicted probabilities of breaking up or entering into shared living by month since the start of the sexual relationship for those who have not completed a high school degree and those with a college degree. Among the high school drop outs, the predicted probability of ending a sexual relationship is the highest within the first few months, falling rapidly until the 5th month, and continuing to decrease until it begins a slow incline nearly a year after the relationship's start. Among college graduates, relationship dissolution is even higher in the initial month of a sexual relationship than for high school drop outs, but the decline is far more precipitous, falling through month 8 until it begins to climb once more. Among women with less than a high school degree, transitions into share living are highest in the first few months, but decline consistently over the first year. College graduates, in contrast, again demonstrate a very different pattern. Their probability of entering into shared living rises for the first few months, reaching a plateau after 4 months and then declining with increased duration. Among college graduates, the tempo to shared living is more tempered initially than it is for high school drop-outs. The highly educated appear to either exit their sexual relationships rapidly, or enter into shared living with a slight delay relative to their counterparts with limited schooling.

We also find that previous union experience also matters. Those who have already been married or cohabited with a partner also have an increased pace of entering into a cohabiting union than those who have not previously lived with a partner, suggesting that they are more cautious and take their time about moving in with a new partner. Women who had an early sexual debut also break up at a more rapid pace than women who did not engage in sexual relationships until their later teens or beyond.

Discussion and Next Steps

Our event-history analyses suggested that prior to accounting for relationship history (Model 3) both age and educational attainment delayed or expedited entrance into either shared living or breaking up. Results from our interactions of these indicators with duration also suggested that they operated in varying ways for different groups. It is clear that both life course and social class characteristics influence both the incidence and timing of relationship transitions following the start of a sexual relationship. In future steps, we will utilize data for men aged 18-39 and refining our models and clarifying the interaction results to better illustrate the quantum and tempo influences of individual characteristics on relationship transitions.

There are an additional 1,462 men between the ages of 18 and 39. The descriptive results (Table 4) indicate that men who entered into coresidential unions (cohabitation) were significantly more likely to have been born to a teen mother, and to have lived in a step-family situation or with no biological parents; men who entered into cohabiting unions were also significantly more likely than men who remained in sexually involved relationships but did not coreside or who broke up to have mothers with low levels of education. We therefore find additional evidence that men who rapidly enter into cohabiting unions are from less advantaged social class backgrounds. In terms of their own personal characteristics, men who cohabit are significantly older, particularly in being more likely to be in their 30s, than men who date or break off their sexual relationship. They also have lower levels of educational attainment.

[Table 4 about Here]

References

Allison, P. D. (1984). *Event history analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cherlin, Andrew J. (2009). *The marriage-go-round.* New York: Random House.

Finer, Lawrence B. (2007). Trends in premarital sex in the United States, 1954-2003. *Public Health Reports* 122(1):73-78.

Glenn, N. D. (2002). A plea for greater concern about the quality of marital matching. In A. J. Hawkins, L. D. Wardle, & D. O. Coolidge (Eds.), *Revitalizing the institution of marriage for the twenty-first century* (pp. 46 – 58). Westport, CT: Praeger.

Kalbfleisch, John D. and Prentice, Ross L. (2002). *The Statistical Analysis of Failure Time Data*. Wiley Series in Probability and Statistics (Book 360).

Paik, A. (2011). Adolescent sexuality and the risk of marital dissolution. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 73,* 472 – 485. doi:10.1111/j.1741 – 3737.2010.00819.x

Sassler, Sharon. (2010). Partnering Across the Life Course: Sex, Relationships, and Mate Selection." *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 72(3):557-575.

Sassler, Sharon, Addo, Fenaba, and Lichter, Daniel T. 2012. "The Tempo of Sexual Activity and Later Relationship Quality." *Journal of Marriage and Family,* 74:708-725.

Sassler, Sharon and Miller, Amanda J. (2011). "Class Differences in Cohabitation Processes." *Family Relations,* 60(2):163-177.

Smock, P. J. (2004). The wax and wane of marriage: Prospects for marriage in the 21st century. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 66,* 966 – 974.

Stanley, S. M., Rhoades, G. K., & Markman, H. J. (2006). Sliding versus deciding: Inertia and the premarital cohabitation effect. *Family Relations, 55,* 499 – 509. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3729.2006.00418.x

Stanley, S. M., Rhoades, G. K., & Whitton, S. W. (2010). Commitment: Functions, formation, and the securing of romantic attachment. *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 2,* 243 – 257. doi:10. 1111/j.1756 – 2589.2010.00060.x

Surra, Catherine A. and Boelter, Jill M. (2013). Dating and mate selection." In G.W. Peterson and K.R. Bush (Eds.), *Handbook of Marriage and the Family (pp. 211-232).* Springer.

Table 1. Characteristics of Women age 18-39, by current union status

	All Women		Entered coresidential union			Dating			Broke Up		
MEASURES	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		Mean	SD		Mean	SD	
Time to coresidence	n/a		2.36	2.63		n/a			n/a		
Duration of relationship: from first sex to interview or break-up	4.92	3.77	6.24	3.97	b	6.25	3.09	b	2.01	2.73	a
SOCIAL CLASS MEASURES											
Family Structure at age 14											
Lived with both parents (reference)	57.9%	0.49	50.5%	0.50	a,b	58.3%	0.49		62.7%	0.48	
Lived with single parent	19.3%	0.39	17.0%	0.38	a,b	22.9%	0.42	b	15.8%	0.37	a
Lived with step- & biological parent	16.9%	0.38	27.0%	0.44	a,b	12.7%	0.33		15.7%	0.36	
Lived with no biological parents	5.9%	0.24	5.6%	0.23		6.2%	0.24		5.7%	0.23	
Mother was a teenager at first birth	28.9%	0.45	36.2%	0.48	b	30.1%	0.46	b	21.7%	0.41	a
Mother's Education											
Less than HS Degree	15.5%	0.36	24.3%	0.43	a,b	13.9%	0.35		11.2%	0.32	
HS Degree (reference)	29.0%	0.45	34.0%	0.44	a	27.9%	0.31		28.6%	0.57	
Some College	29.2%	0.45	26.3%	0.44	b	27.6%	0.45	b	33.4%	0.47	a
College Degree	25.9%	0.44	15.4%	0.36	a,b	30.6%	0.46		26.8%	0.44	
Race											
White (reference)	63.3%	0.48	66.3%	0.47		61.7%	0.49		63.4%	0.48	
Black	16.7%	0.37	8.6%	0.28	a,b	22.6%	0.42	b	14.1%	0.35	a
Hispanic	14.3%	0.35	20.5%	0.40	a	10.2%	0.30	b	15.6%	0.36	a
Other	5.8%	0.23	4.7%	0.21		5.5%	0.23		6.9%	0.25	
LIFE COURES MEASURS											
Birth Year	1982.7	6.0	1981.6	5.84	b	1982.1	6.33	b	1984.2	5.37	a
Age at interview	24.88	5.12	25.60	5.81	b	25.53	5.32	b	23.40	5.30	a
18-24	57.2%	0.50	50.8%	0.50	b	53.7%	0.50	b	66.9%	0.47	a
25-29	20.2%	0.40	23.6%	0.43		19.8%	0.40		18.3%	0.39	
30-39	22.6%	0.42	25.6%	0.44	b	26.5%	0.44	b	14.8%	0.36	a
Educational Attainment											
Less than HS	19.8%	0.40	30.3%	0.46	a,b	17.1%	0.38		15.8%	0.37	
HS Degree (reference)	27.5%	0.45	29.9%	0.46		26.6%	0.44		27.2%	0.45	
Some College	34.1%	0.47	28.8%	0.45	b	33.7%	0.47		38.7%	0.49	
College Degree	18.6%	0.39	11.0%	0.31	a,b	22.6%	0.42		18.3%	0.44	
Age at sexual debut											
<15	18.0%	0.38	30.7%	0.46	a,b	17.7%	0.38	b	9.3%	0.29	a
15-17	50.3%	0.44	46.6%	0.41		51.8%	0.42		50.9%	0.47	
18+	31.7%	0.47	22.8%	0.42	a,b	30.6%	0.46	b	39.9%	0.49	a
Relationship History											
Number of Other Sexual Partners	7.94	7.95	8.75	8.65	c	8.17	7.99	c	7.00	7.27	a,b
Respondent previously married	12.0%	0.96	18.3%	0.39	b	17.0%	0.38	b	0.0%	0.00	a
Respondent previously cohabited	39.2%	0.49	50.7%	0.50	b,c	42.7%	0.50	a,c	25.5%	0.44	a,b
Observations	1151		230			562			359		

Source: 2006-10 NSFG Female respondent file. Women between the ages of 18-36 who are married, cohabiting, or never married at the

Note: "a" indicates significant difference from dating ($p < .05$), "b" indicates significant difference broke up ($p < .05$).

Table 2. Hazard rates from discrete-time event history models predicting who cohabits or breaks up before cohabiting for all individuals in sexual relationships, as a function of duration since first sex (in months)

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	Cohabit	Break Up		Cohabit	Break Up		Cohabit	Break Up		Cohabit	Break Up		Cohabit	Break Up	
TEMPO	vs. Sexually Involved[a]			vs. Sexually Involved[a]			vs. Sexually Involved[a]			vs. Sexually Involved[a]			vs. Sexually Involved[a]		
Duration (months) since first sex	1.171	0.398	***	1.230	0.401	***	1.238	0.403	***	1.238	0.403	***	1.214	0.406	***
Duration squared	0.977	1.070	***	0.973	1.070	***	0.973	1.069	***	0.972	1.069	***	0.974	1.069	***
SOCIAL CLASS MARKERS															
Lived with both parents at age 14				0.507	* 1.153		0.579	† 1.145		0.636	0.997		0.611	† 1.002	
Mom was a teen at first birth				1.206	0.784		1.153	0.782		1.031	0.856		0.987	0.862	
Mom had LTHS				1.143	0.705		0.970	0.710		0.881	0.742		0.833	0.727	
Race/Ethnicity															
White (reference)				--	--		--	--		--	--		--	--	
Black				0.228	*** 0.811		0.205	*** 0.786		0.233	*** 0.670	†	0.221	*** 0.691	
Hispanic				1.047	1.468	†	0.990	1.354		1.145	1.185		1.156	1.217	
Other				0.709	1.430		0.732	1.590		0.804	1.459		0.781	1.474	
LIFE COURSE INDICATORS															
Current age															
18-24							0.510	* 1.471	†	0.633	1.124		0.662	1.114	
25-29 (reference)															
30-39							0.604	0.722		0.590	0.871		0.651	0.858	
Educational Attainment															
Less than HS							1.329	0.934		1.184	1.128		1.204	1.144	
HS degree/ Some Coll (ref)															
College degree							0.513	† 0.922		0.535	0.772		0.559	0.761	
Completed schooling (time-varying)							1.184	1.386	†	1.154	1.535	*	1.135	1.543	*
Relationship History															
Age at first overall sex															
<15										1.750	0.586	†	1.736	0.581	*
15-17 (ref)															
18+										1.352	1.169		1.346	1.174	
Number of lifetime sexual partners										1.002	1.006		1.000	1.007	
Respondent had prior coresidential union										1.392	0.464	***	1.389	0.462	***
Respondent is pregnant (time-varying)													2.360	0.474	
Pseudo R-squared	0.056			0.0722			0.0843			0.0989			0.1009		
Number of Observations	5,068			5,025			5,025			5,025			5,025		

Source: 2006-10 NSFG Female respondent file. Note: *** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05. † p < .10.

Table 3. Interaction results for duration and independent variables				
	Interactions			
	Cohabit		Break Up	
Model 4 Coefficient on Duration	1.238		0.403	***
Model 4 Coefficient on Duration squared	0.972		1.069	***
Age 18-24*Duration	0.513	†	1.043	
Age 18-24*Duration squared	1.077	†	0.998	
Age 30-39*Duration	1.371		0.976	
Age 30-39*Duration squared	0.946		0.999	
Live with both parents*Duration	1.401		0.869	
Live with both parents*Duration squared	0.979		1.001	
Teenage mom*Duration	0.835		1.327	
Teenage mom*Duration squared	1.013		0.9835	
Black*Duration	1.013		0.9358	
Black*Duration squared	1.011		1.005	
Less than HS*Duration	0.590		1.566	†
Less than HS*Duration squared	1.023		0.968	
College Degree*Duration	5.987	†	1.079	
College Degree*Duration squared	0.792	†	0.9895	
Prior coresident unions*Duration	2.283	*	1.378	
Prior coresident unions*Duration squared	0.897	**	0.977	
Early age at sexual debut	1.125		1.724	†
	1.001		0.956	
Mother was a HS Drop-out	0.906		1.03	
	1.02		1.014	

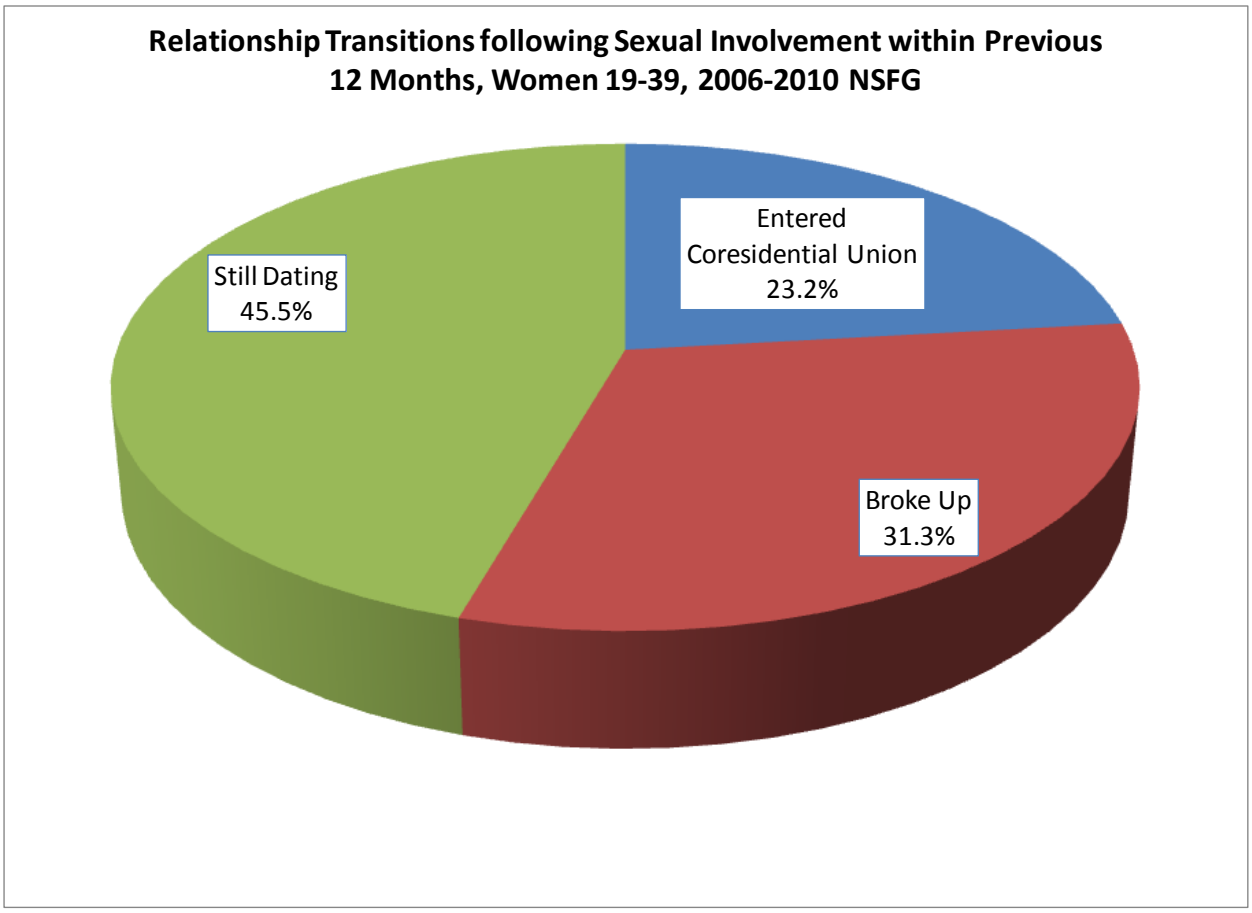
Table 4. Characteristics of Men age 18-39, by current union status

	All Men		Entered coresidential union			Dating			Broken Up		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		Mean	SD		Mean	SD	
Share of Population (weighted)	100.0%		29.9%			43.3%			26.8%		
Duration of relationship(from first sex to interview, or break-up)	4.44	3.90	5.47	4.44	a,b	4.79	3.64	b	2.73	3.01	a
Background Characteristics											
Family Structure at age 14											
Lived with both parents (reference)	64.8%	0.48	62.0%	0.49		66.1%	0.47		65.9%	0.47	
Lived with single parent	14.5%	0.35	12.3%	0.33	b	14.2%	0.35		17.6%	0.38	
Lived with step- & biological parent	16.4%	0.37	20.4%	0.40	a,b	15.0%	0.36		14.0%	0.35	
Lived with no biological parents	7.0%	0.26	11.0%	0.31	a,b	6.4%	0.24	b	3.6%	0.19	a
Mother was a teenager at first birth	28.1%	0.45	33.4%	0.47	a,b	25.8%	0.44		25.8%	0.44	
Mother's Education											
Less than HS Degree	17.8%	0.38	26.2%	0.44	a,b	13.7%	0.34		15.2%	0.36	
HS Degree (reference)	32.7%	36.99	31.9%	16.66		33.9%	0.40		31.7%	0.41	
Some College	21.3%	0.41	18.3%	0.39	a	25.3%	0.44	b	18.1%	0.39	a
College Degree	28.2%	0.45	23.6%	0.43	b	27.1%	0.45	b	35.0%	0.48	a
Race											
White (reference)	59.3%	0.49	62.3%	0.49		58.7%	0.49		56.8%	0.50	
Black	13.8%	0.35	8.3%	0.28	a,b	18.0%	0.38	b	13.3%	0.34	a
Hispanic	21.0%	0.41	23.3%	0.42	a	17.9%	0.38	b	23.4%	0.42	a
Other	5.9%	0.24	6.1%	0.24		5.4%	0.23		6.5%	0.25	
Birth Year	1982.3	5.83	1979.2	5.95	a,b	1983.3	5.44	b	1984.3	4.89	a
Age at interview	25.20	5.75	28.18	6.02	a,b	24.25	5.32	b	23.40	4.83	a
18-24	52.6%	0.50	31.9%	0.47	a,b	57.2%	0.50	b	68.3%	0.47	a
25-29	24.4%	0.43	27.0%	0.44		25.7%	0.44	b	19.3%	0.39	a
30-39	23.0%	0.42	41.1%	0.49	a,b	17.1%	0.38	b	12.4%	0.33	a
Education											
Less than HS	22.4%	0.42	31.0%	0.46	a,b	16.7%	0.37	b	22.0%	0.41	a
HS Degree (reference)	26.9%	0.44	21.8%	0.41	a	29.9%	0.46		27.7%	0.45	
Some College	33.4%	0.47	26.1%	0.44	a,b	34.6%	0.48		39.6%	0.49	
College Degree	17.4%	0.38	21.2%	0.41	b	18.8%	0.39	b	10.8%	0.31	a
Age at first (overall) sex											
<15	20.5%	0.40	20.3%	0.40		20.9%	0.41		20.3%	0.40	
15-17	47.2%	37.36	38.8%	17.02		53.8%	0.40	b	45.8%	0.41	a
18+	32.3%	0.47	40.9%	0.49	a	25.3%	0.44	b	33.9%	0.47	a
Relationship Characteristics											
Number of Other Sexual Partners	4.86	2.37	4.37	2.65	a,b	5.18	2.21	b	4.87	2.19	a
Respondent previously cohabited	37.6%	0.48	63.1%	0.48	a,b	29.5%	0.46	b	22.1%	0.42	a
Respondent previously married	3.9%	0.19	12.9%	0.34	a,b	0.0%	0.00		0.0%	0.00	
Number of previous cohabiting partners	1.28	23.66	2.72	36.67		0.47	1.01		0.99	24.25	
Observations	1462		321			720			421		

Source: 2006-10 NSFG Male respondent file.

Note: "a" indicates significant difference from dating ($p < .05$), "b" indicates significant difference broke up ($p < .05$).

Figure 1


Relationship Transitions following Sexual Involvement within Previous 12 Months, Women 19-39, 2006-2010 NSFG
Entered Coresidential Union 23.2%
Broke Up 31.3%
Still Dating 45.5%

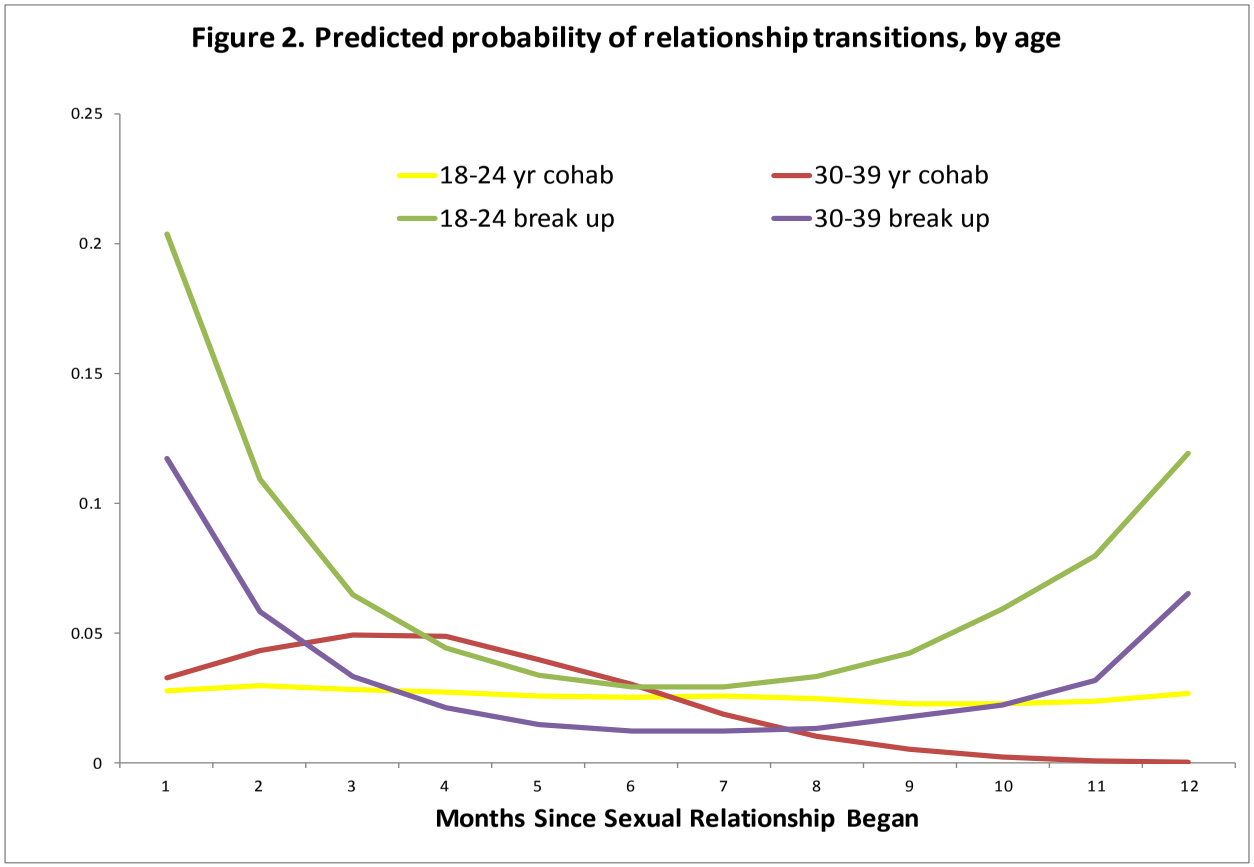


Figure 2. Predicted probability of relationship transitions, by age
0.25
0.2
0.15
0.1
0.05
0
18-24 yr cohab
30-39 yr cohab
18-24 break up
30-39 break up
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
Months Since Sexual Relationship Began

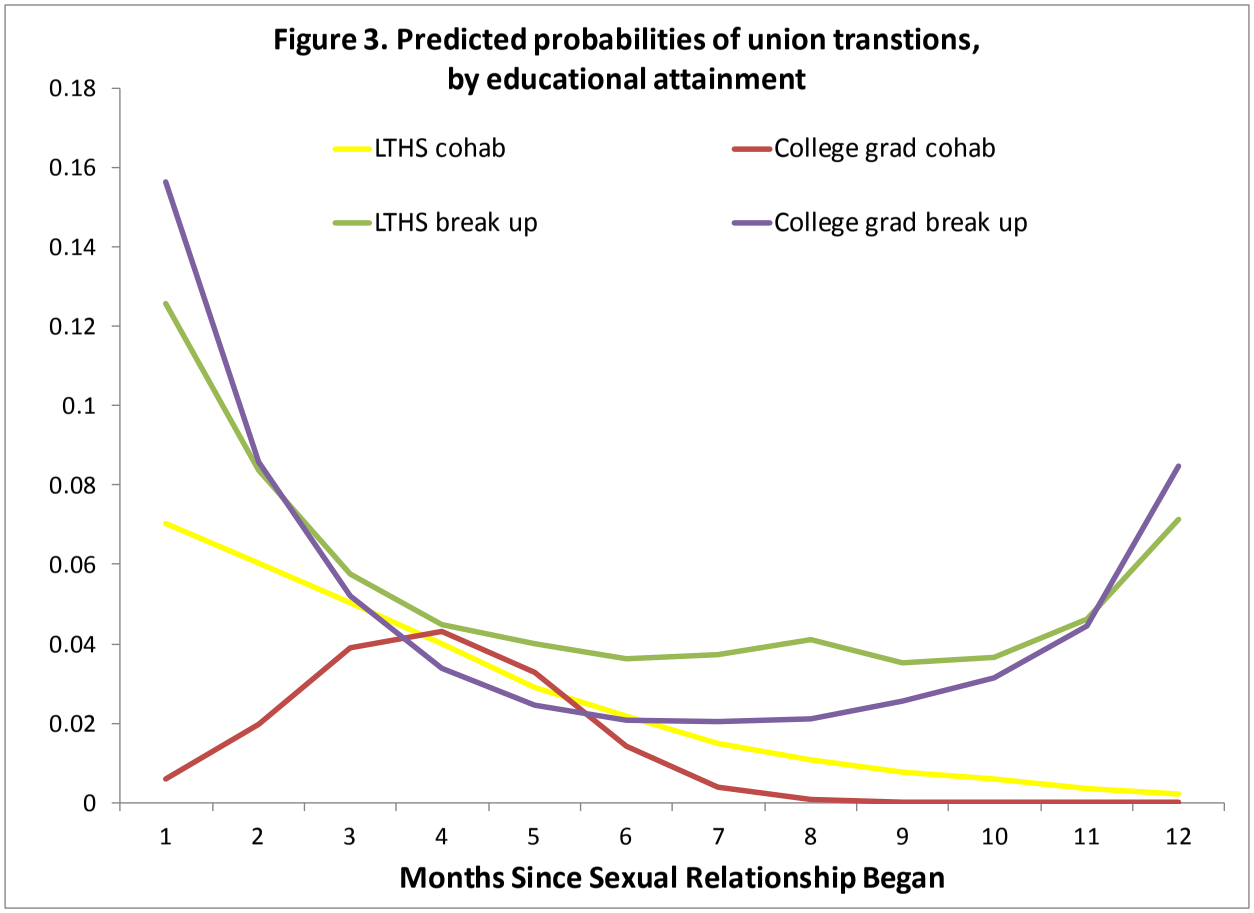


Figure 3. Predicted probabilities of union transtions, by educational attainment
0.18
0.16
0.14
0.12
0.1
0.08
0.06
0.04
0.02
0
LTHS cohab
College grad cohab
LTHS break up
College grad break up
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
Months Since Sexual Relationship Began

[1] Only 19 women who entered into a sexual relationship within the 12 months prior to their interview married directly. We therefore group them with those who entered cohabiting unions. An additional 12 respondents cohabited and then married within 12 months of becoming sexually involved, while another 37 entered cohabiting unions and subsequently broke up. We assign these individuals to the cohabiting group and stop their clock at the month they enter into shared living, as that was their first union transition. Small sample size precludes us from exploring transitions following entrance into cohabiting unions.