

Introduction

The divorce rate has risen dramatically since the 1960s. It reached a plateau of approximately 50% of first marriages ending in divorce in the 1980s (Bumpass and Lu, 2000). Cohabitation has also risen since the 1960s and has continued to emerge as a normative step in the path to marriage (Smock, 2000). Evidence suggests that the proportion of serial cohabitation among ever-married individuals, those living with two or more partners prior to their first marriage, has risen throughout the past several decades (Cohen and Manning, 2008).

Divorced persons are more likely to cohabit than their never-married counterparts. Furthermore, evidence suggests that divorced persons are more likely to cohabit as an alternative to marriage, rather than a step on the road to marriage. However, in light of these differences in the meaning and level of cohabitation among never-married vs. divorced persons, post-marital serial cohabitation (serial cohabitation after first divorce), has received little attention in the family demography literature. Indeed, the majority of the work on serial cohabitation has examined the co-residential living arrangements prior to first marriage (Cohen and Manning, 2008; Lichter and Qian, forthcoming; Teachman, 2003; Teachman and Polonko, 1990; DeMaris and Macdonald, 1993). Thus, this current investigation examines the levels of serial cohabitation after the termination of a first marriage, and compares these estimates to proportions of pre-marital cohabitation found in prior research (Cohen and Manning, 2008). This work also examines the predictors of post-marital serial cohabitation, contrasting them against the significant predictors of serial cohabitation found in previous work (Cohen and Manning, 2008)

Current Investigation

This current investigation adds to past literature in three ways. First, I examine patterns of serial cohabitation among recently divorced women. Second, the paper aims to evaluate the sociodemographic characteristics associated with women's post-marital serial cohabitation. Third, by analyzing the 2002 cycle of the National Survey of Family Growth, I examine recent national data available on women's post-marriage cohabitation histories.

Data and methods

I use cycle 6 (2002) of the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG). The NSFG is based on a national probability sample, representing the household population of the United States, ages 15-44 years. These data are appropriate because they contain detailed cohabitation, marriage and sexual histories for women. The analytic sample for this paper consists of 979 women, whose first marriages ended in divorce. The analysis is further limited to women, who provide valid information regarding the date of their divorce from their first husband and valid and start and end dates of cohabitations prior to their divorce from their first husband (N= 943).

I examine the number of cohabiting relationships entered into before first marriage. This variable is recoded into three categories: zero (no cohabitation experience), one (single-instance cohabitation), and two or more (serial cohabitation). I further distinguish this variable by considering the outcome of premarital cohabitations. Four categories are established: Never cohabited before first marriage; only cohabited once, and co-residential union did result in marriage; only cohabited once, but co-residential union did not result in marriage; and cohabited more than once and co-residential unions ended with both outcomes. This variable may only be used for descriptive purposes.

I include a series of sociodemographic variables. Age at first marriage is included in the analysis instead of age at interview, to capture greater variation or range of ages within the sample. Age at first marriage is a continuous variable, measured in years and squared to test for a non-linear relationship with the dependent variable. Respondent's education is collapsed into four categories: below a high school degree, earned high school degree, college experience but no degree earned, and college degree or higher. Income is kept as a fourteen category continuous response variable, ranging from "under \$5,000" to "\$75,000 or more" per year (with inconsistent measurement intervals between categories). Women's race/ethnicity was recoded into five response categories: White, Black, native-born Hispanic, foreign-born Hispanic, and other. Family type during childhood is measured as a binary response variable, with respondents falling into one of two categories: intact, two-parent household during childhood or non-intact, two-parent household. Religious service attendance, serving as a proxy for religiosity, has five response categories and is treated as a continuous variable. The response categories are as

follows: never attends religious services; attends less than once a month; attends 1-3 times per month; attends once a week; attends more than once a week. Women's marriage cohort is included in this investigation as well.

The indicators of the relationship context of cohabitation include mean duration of cohabitation and plans for marriage at the start of a cohabiting union. These are included for descriptive purposes. Durations are calculated by subtracting the century month end date of a respondent's cohabitation from the century month start date. I distinguish durations for cohabitations that ended in marriage and the mean duration of relationships that did not end in marriage. The marital plans of a woman at the start of her cohabitation is measured by a binary response yes/no question: "At the time you began living together, were you and your partner engaged to be married or have definite plans to get married?" I calculate whether a respondent had marriage plans for each of their cohabiting relationships.

Analytic approach

Multinomial logistic regressions are used to examine the likelihood of women entering zero (no cohabitation experience), one (single-instance cohabitation), or two or more cohabiting relationship (serial cohabitation) prior to this first marriage. This method is appropriate for a categorical dependent variable with more than two response categories (DeMaris, 1992). I am most interested in the comparison of those who cohabited more than once (serial cohabitators) with those who cohabited only one time after their first divorce (single-instance cohabitators). Thus, the reference category is single-instance cohabitation after divorce. I first estimate zero-order models for each independent variable. Next, all the covariates are included in multivariate multinomial logistic models. The odds ratios presented are exponentiated coefficients. Therefore, an odds ratio of less than one can be interpreted as a negative relationship between the independent variables with the dependent variable and an odds ratio greater than one suggests a positive relationship.

Expected Results

Prior research suggests that cohabitation serves as an alternative to marriage among divorced persons. Thus, I expect to find a lower proportion of serial cohabitation among women after their first marriage than among women who serially cohabited prior

to their first marriage. Furthermore, I argue that among those women who serially cohabit after their first marriage, a lower percentage of them will have cohabited with their future spouse, when compared to those who serially cohabited before their first marriage.