

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF ADOLESCENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD UNION
FORMATION

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ABSTRACT

GRETCHEN ELIZABETH GOODING: Social Determinants of Adolescents' Attitudes
Toward Union Formation
(Under the direction of Lisa D. Pearce)

This thesis investigates what social characteristics are related to attitudes about the ideal age at marriage and willingness to live with a nonmarital romantic partner, and if the influence of particular social characteristics vary by the age of the respondent. These questions are addressed using data from the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR). Results indicate that the characteristics of age, gender, race/ethnicity, household income, family structure and relationship quality, religious affiliation, religious attendance, religious faith, and dating are significantly related to union formation attitudes. Additionally, the characteristics of family structure and relationship quality and religious attendance vary by the age of the adolescent.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Union formation continues to be a topic of great interest for family scholars and demographers, particularly in light of shifts in marriage patterns as well as dramatic increases in nonmarital cohabitation over time. In the past fifty years, the median age at first marriage in the United States has increased over five years for women, from 20.3 years in 1960 to 25.9 years in 2009. For men, the change has been equally dramatic--from 22.8 years in 1960 to 28.1 years in 2009 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Given that more than half of marriages start off as cohabitations, it is valuable to study emerging attitudes toward both types of union formation among those currently making the transition to adulthood (Bumpuss and Lu, 2000; Manning, Longmore, and Giordano, 2007; Raley, Crissey, and Muller, 2007, Smock, 2000).

Overall, an overwhelming majority of adolescents plan to marry in the future. This trend has been relatively consistent over time; between 71 to 83 percent of high school seniors surveyed between the late 1970s to the late 1990s expect to choose marriage in the long run (Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 2001). Over 80 percent of white males and females in grades 7-12 thought that they had at least a "50-50 chance" of marrying by age 25 (Crissey, 2005). Additionally, about three-quarters of teens probably or definitely expect to marry in another study (Manning, Longmore, and Giordano, 2007). Not only do youth intend to tie the knot, the majority of them

also value a good marriage and family life (Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 2001). These results indicate that marriage is not going out of style; it is still a desirable social institution and a coveted status marker.

The literature on adolescents' opinions toward cohabitation is not as developed. This is understandable given that cohabitation, in contrast to marriage, is a newer relationship experience, often times lacking a recognized and agreed upon start date, as well as a universally accepted meaning (Nock, 1995). For these reasons, it is plausible that teens convey more hesitation about entering this type of union. From limited research, we do know that teens are less certain about cohabitation than marriage, although endorsement of this relationship status is rising. From the late 1970s to the late 1990s, the percent of female high school seniors agreeing with the statement "It is usually a good idea for a couple to live together before getting married in order to find out whether they really get along" increased from 33 percent to 59 percent, a difference of 26 percentage points. For males, agreement increased from 47 percent to 67 percent, a difference of 20 percentage points (Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 2001). This question is important because it "is not focused on the mere acceptance of cohabitation but is concerned with the active endorsement of this living arrangement as a step in the courtship process" (Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 2001: 1025). That the majority of respondents endorsed cohabitation as a preface to marriage is particularly noteworthy given that these high school seniors will be making union formation decisions in the near future. Although a gender gap persists, it is narrowing over time, and the majority of young women and men agree with the statement. In another study of slightly younger respondents, about one third (30.5 percent) of

teenagers “probably” or “definitely” plan to cohabit, but almost a quarter (22.8 percent) do not expect to cohabit at all (Manning, Longmore, and Giordano, 2007).

Although the research above paints a broad overview, there are still holes in this literature regarding the attitudes of adolescents toward union formation. First, there is little research demonstrating which individual and social characteristics of youth relate to their attitudes toward marriage and cohabitation. Second, scholars know little about how or if these union formation attitudes evolve over time from the early teenage years to emerging adulthood. Will a 13-year-old’s willingness to live with a romantic partner change as he or she grows older? Will 22-year-olds report the same ideal age at marriage as they did in their early teens? Not only is adolescence a period of striking physical maturation, there are also “many individual, cognitive, social, and contextual transitions” that make this an eventful stage in the life course (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, and Borstein, 2000; Smetana, Campione-Barr, and Metzger, 2006: 256). Further, the importance and influence of these various contexts is likely to shift over time (Smetana, Campione-Barr, and Metzger, 2006). Given the tremendous amount of change occurring during these formative years, we should expect attitudes to evolve as adolescents age. By better understanding the attitudes of youth, and how correlates of these changes vary over time, researchers may be able to more accurately predict future trends in union formation behavior as these adolescents transition to adulthood.

The research proposed here uses the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), a nationally representative longitudinal survey data set, to examine emerging attitudes towards union formation during adolescence. I measure these attitudes when adolescents are between the ages of 13 and 24 across three waves

of data. This age span covers the three development periods of adolescence: early adolescence (generally ages 10 to 13), middle adolescence (ages 14 to 17), and late adolescence or what some have termed “emerging adulthood” (ages 18 to the early twenties) as a separate development period (Smetana, Campione-Barr, and Metzger, 2006). I also examine social factors known to influence union formation behavior, including demographic characteristics, family socioeconomic status characteristics, adolescent religious characteristics, and other individual experiences and aspirations.

Two related questions guide my research. First, I will examine what social and individual characteristics are related to attitudes about the ideal age at marriage and willingness to live with a nonmarital romantic partner. Secondly, I will explore if the influence of particular social characteristics vary by the age of the respondent. This paper will advance the study of union formation attitudes by explicating their evolving nature as well as how social and individual characteristics become more and less important to attitude formation as youth age.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

I draw from two theoretical perspectives, the life course approach and socialization theory, to help explain how the process of adolescent attitude formation unfolds over time. The life course approach studies lives over an extended period of time, and it emphasizes that “behaviors at mid-life are influenced not only by current circumstances or by anticipation of the future, but also by the experiences of childhood” (Elder, 2006: 2635). This suggests that decisions about cohabitation and marriage in adulthood do not take place in a vacuum; rather, they are greatly influenced by childhood experiences. One of the central themes in the life course paradigm, linked or independent lives, further emphasizes the concept that lives are lived interdependently (Elder, 1994). For better or worse, family members and other adults surrounding children play a vital role in shaping their future.

While the life course approach is broadly focused on the age-graded sequence of events from birth to death, socialization theory is narrower in scope and focuses on one point in time (Elder, 2006). This theory emphasizes the importance of childhood as the period when children take in the values, attitudes, and behavior from people surrounding them (Maccoby, 1992; Maccoby and Martin, 1983). Similar to the life course approach, family serves as an important means of socialization. However, as I mention later, extrafamilial relationships with peers and romantic

partners play an increasingly important role in socialization as adolescents grow older.

There are many different contexts and circumstances in which socialization occurs across the life course. Four important categories of these are demographic characteristics, or experience of a particular social status or group identification such as age, gender, or race/ethnicity; family socioeconomic status characteristics, including parents' socioeconomic status and family structure; adolescent religious characteristics, including affiliation, attendance, and importance of faith; and individual experiences and aspirations, including dating, sexual intercourse, and educational aspirations. In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of union formation, we must not only analyze this behavior as it occurs in adulthood, but also examine the development of attitudes (and potentially new norms) earlier in the life course. This has been done in other areas of social science research. For example, Barber (2001) found a link between attitudes toward childbearing during adolescence and subsequent childbearing behavior. Individuals with positive attitudes toward children and childbearing will have a first birth earlier than individuals with more negative attitudes toward children and childbearing for maritally conceived first births.

Demographic characteristics

One demographic characteristic likely to be related to variance in union formation attitudes is age. As early adolescents mature into young adults, decisions surrounding cohabitation and marriage become more salient. The majority (59

percent) of women cohabit once by age 24, and one-third of all women marry by that age (Schoen, Landale, and Daniels, 2007). Thus, I expect that adolescents will be more willing to cohabit as they grow older either because they are contemplating living with a partner themselves or they are observing peers making the same decisions. I also anticipate that the ideal age at marriage will increase as adolescents mature because they will have a more realistic sense of where marriage falls in the life course. For example, they may realize that being a student and husband/wife are incompatible roles, so they want to finish college before getting married.

Looking at gender, prior studies have found that men are more likely to expect to cohabit than women (Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 2001). As I previously mentioned, there is a difference of about 8 percentage points between females (59 percent) and males (67 percent) in their agreement about living together before marriage. Although males and females are becoming more egalitarian in their family attitudes, women are still more conservative in general than men. For example, 13.6 percent of women under 30 years said that premarital sex was always wrong, compared to 7.6 percent of males under 30 years (Thornton, 1989). Therefore, I expect that males will be more willing to cohabit than females in this study.

While males are more likely to expect to cohabit, females are generally more likely to expect to marry (Crissey, 2005; Harris and Lee, 2006; Popenoe, 2005; Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 2001). The perceived likelihood of marriage by age 25 is higher for female adolescents compared to male adolescents (Crissey, 2005).

Over time, the median age at first marriage has consistently been lower for females than males (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Given that daughters are more strongly socialized by their mothers, it is plausible that young women are following in their mothers' footsteps when it comes to the timing of marriage (Rossi and Rossi, 1990). Therefore, I expect that females will report a lower ideal age of marriage on average than males. Additionally, more female (82 percent) than male (70 percent) high school seniors said that having a good marriage and family life is extremely important (Popenoe, 2005). Consistent with the trend in delaying marriage, the percentage of high school respondents who selected over 5 years from now as the ideal time to marry increased steadily over the years. Whereas 21 percent of females and 36 percent of males in 1976-1977 agreed with this statement, the percentage increased to 42 percent and 51 percent respectively twenty years later (Thornton and Young-DeMarco, 2001). Although differences persist, it appears that the vast majority of males and females expect to marry, value a good marriage and family life, and intend to postpone marriage.

Up to this point, I have discussed union formation with regards to age and gender. While these are important measures, they are often discussed in tandem with the growing body of literature on race/ethnic differences in union formation attitudes. For adults, cohabitation is widespread in all subgroups; 45 percent of White and Black women, and 40 percent of Latino women aged 19 to 44 have cohabited (Bumpass and Lu, 1999; Smock, 2000). Applying socialization theory, one may think that cohabitation is normative among adolescents of all races and ethnicities; however, research is mixed. One study finds that race/ethnicity is not

significantly related to cohabitation expectations for White, Black, and Hispanic youth (Manning, Longmore, and Giordano, 2007). Yet another study finds that White high school seniors more frequently support cohabitation compared to their Black classmates (Manning and Brown, 2006). I expect not to find significant differences in the willingness to cohabit by race/ethnicity.

Consistent with socialization theory, adolescents' attitudes seem to mirror adults' behavior when looking at marriage. That is, Blacks normally marry at lower rates and later ages than Whites (Bennett, Bloom, and Craig, 1989; East, 1998; Goldstein and Kenney, 2001; Lichter, McLaughlin, Kephart, and Landry, 1992; Teachman, Polonko, and Leigh, 1987). The desired age at first marriage is youngest for Hispanic females and oldest for Black females, with White females in between (East, 1998). This is consistent with recent survey data showing that the median age at first marriage is in fact lowest for Hispanic females at 25.4 years and highest for Black females at 29.8 years with White females in between at 25.9 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008a).

Although differences in marriage market compositions explain part of this difference, "there is also race/ethnic variation in attitudes about marriage earlier in the life course than marriage itself" (Crissey, 2005). Black adolescents communicate the highest expectations toward postponing marriage compared with other race/ethnic groups (Crissey, 2005; Harris and Lee, 2006). They are most likely to respond "almost no chance" or "some chance" when asked about the likelihood of marriage by age 25 compared to these other groups. In addition, Black girls report "almost no chance" over 3 times more often than White girls, while Mexican-origin

girls are not significantly different from White girls (Crissey, 2005). Therefore, I expect Black adolescents to report the highest ideal age at marriage, Hispanic adolescents to report the lowest ideal age at marriage, and White adolescents to fall in between the two groups.

People living in the southern United States are more likely to marry at young ages, and less likely to be living with an unmarried partner (Bramlett and Mosher, 2002; Goldscheider and Waite, 1986; Uecker and Stokes, 2008; U.S. Census Bureau, 2008c). Almost 32 percent of women and 21 percent of men living in the South married before age 23, compared to 22 percent and 12 percent, respectively, living outside of the South (Uecker and Stokes, 2008). This is a regional difference of approximately 10 percentage points for each gender. Many Southern states, including Arkansas, Tennessee, and West Virginia, have some of the lowest median ages at first marriage in the nation for both men and women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008a; U.S. Census Bureau, 2008b).

Additionally, the South has the lowest percentage of opposite sex unmarried partner households (4.4 percent), compared to other regions (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008c). Drawing on socialization theory, youth living in the South may plan to reproduce the behavior of their parents or other adult mentors who married at an early age and did not cohabit. I expect respondents from the South in my study to report a lower ideal age at marriage and express less willingness to live with an unmarried partner.

Family socioeconomic status characteristics

Next, I will discuss family characteristics, including parents' socioeconomic status and family structure. I measure parents' socioeconomic status using two variables: highest parental education and household income. Children are generally socialized to have a more liberal view on family issues when they have parents with greater education or a higher family income (Fan and Marini, 2000; Pearce and Thornton, 2007; Wang and Buffalo, 2004). Although these youth may be more accepting of cohabitation given the attitudes of their family of origin, they may not necessarily expect to experience it themselves. Adolescents from families with higher incomes expect to cohabit less often than youth from families with lower incomes, and youth with more highly educated mothers report lower expectations to cohabit (Manning, Longmore, and Giordano, 2007). These adolescents also have greater odds of planning to follow the marriage-only pathway rather than the increasingly common cohabitation-then-marriage pathway to matrimony. Oftentimes, economic stability is a prerequisite for marriage among cohabiting couples, so it seems plausible that adolescents from better off families may feel more secure about marriage and bypass cohabitation (Smock, Manning, and Porter, 2005). I expect that adolescents with well-educated parents and/or families with higher household incomes will be less willing to cohabit than adolescents with less educated parents and/or families with lower household incomes.

Turning to marriage, adolescents whose parents are more highly educated prefer to postpone marriage (De Valk and Liefbroer, 2007; Lehrer, 2004; Raley, Crissey, and Muller, 2007). Another study found that they also have lower

aspirations to be married in young adulthood, but emphasize greater importance on being married someday compared to youth with less educated parents (Harris and Lee, 2006). It is likely that these adolescents are focusing on their education and careers during young adulthood and delaying marriage, possibly following in the path of their parents as socialization theory posits. Therefore, I expect these adolescents with well-educated parents and/or families with higher household incomes to report a higher ideal age at marriage than adolescents with less educated parents and/or families with lower household incomes.

Looking at family structure, adolescents living with two biological parents tend to have the most conventional beliefs for marriage. These youth have lower expectations to cohabit than adolescents from single, cohabiting, and married stepparent families (Manning, Longmore, and Giordano, 2007). For the majority of youth, parents are the family members who play the most influential role in shaping attitudes about union formation, among other things. As research has shown, “parents’ intimate relationships serve as templates for their children” (Sassler, Cunningham, and Lichter 2009: 757). In other words, children are likely to model their parents’ conduct when it comes to navigating their own personal relationships in adulthood. The importance of parents in the socialization of children is at the core of socialization theory (De Valk and Liefbroer, 2007; Maccoby and Martin, 1983; Younnis and Smollar, 1985).

This theory posits that living arrangements and interactions between parents and offspring during childhood have long-term and fairly permanent effects on children as they mature into adults (Hetherington, 1972; Rutter, 1971). Children

experiencing a disruptive familial event growing up, such as a parental separation, divorce, cohabitation, and/or remarriage, are socialized to have more accepting attitudes toward non-conventional family behavior. An important way that behaviors influence attitudes is through cognitive consistency (Festinger, 1957). Adults are driven to interpret their childhood experiences and parental behavior in a favorable way. Given that disruptive familial events of the past cannot be changed, attitudes toward those behaviors, such as divorce or cohabitation, are likely to become more favorable. Put in another way, socialization does not mean that children are copying their family's behavior in adulthood; rather, they may be more accepting (and therefore willing) to engage in such behavior themselves as adults. Meanwhile, children coming from intact homes with two married parents are socialized to value and more strongly expect a highly stable family life (Axinn and Thornton, 1996; Clarkberg, Stolzenberg, and Waite, 1995; McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994; Wu, 1996).

A discussion about family structure would not be complete without also discussing the influence of parental relationship quality. Children growing up in an unhappily intact family or a divorced family are predisposed to lowered psychological well-being in adulthood compared to children growing up in very happy intact families. Additionally, children from divorced families scored higher in spousal disagreement, marital problems, and marital instability as adults than children growing up with very happy intact families (Amato and Booth, 1991). While this research does not specifically address how parental relationships effect adolescents' union formation, it does shed light on the long-term consequences of family structure

and relationships for adult well-being. Incorporating the above research on family structure, I would expect adolescents from non-intact families, both happy and unhappy, to be more inclined to cohabit before marriage and consequently have a higher ideal age at marriage than adolescents from intact families. Among adolescents from intact families, I expect that those with happily married parents will be less inclined to cohabit and report a lower ideal age at marriage than those with unhappily married parents.

Adolescent religious characteristics

Next, I will discuss adolescent religious characteristics, including religious affiliation, religious service attendance, and importance of religious faith. Incorporating the life course approach, these dimensions of religiosity may change at any point in time, but they are connected to previous religious and other happenings in life (Pearce and Denton, 2010). For example, children may be encouraged or required to attend religious services regularly with their family, but their attendance may wane as they grow older and find little importance in such matters themselves. Additionally, while religion is measured as an individual-level attribute, it is often influenced by others, particularly family members. Incorporating socialization theory, mothers' religion may shape her child's religiosity into young adulthood. There is a strong and consistent relationship between mother's religious service attendance the year before her child was born and child's religious service attendance and child's importance of faith at age 18 (Pearce and Thornton, 2007).

Religion may dissuade cohabitation or prompt early marriage because nearly all religions and denominations discourage premarital sex. However, the strength of the message varies. Most research agrees that conservative Protestants and Latter Day Saints are the most likely to marry early because their doctrine most strongly emphasizes the importance of marriage, having children and avoiding premarital sex, while Catholic, Black Protestant, and Jewish respondents are the least likely to marry early. Mainline Protestants, those affiliated with non-Judeo-Christian religions, and those with no religious affiliation fall in the middle (Lehrer, 2004; Uecker and Stokes, 2008). A focus on home activities and high fertility among Latter Day Saint women, and the relatively low level of schooling among conservative Protestant females encourages early marriage. On the other hand, Jewish women delay marriage due to high educational attainment, desired low levels of fertility, and strong labor force commitment (Lehrer, 2004). I expect that conservative Protestants will have the lowest ideal age at marriage compared to all other groups.

With regards to cohabitation, this type of union formation is most likely for individuals with no religious affiliation (Lehrer, 2004). This is consistent with the more liberal attitudes with regards to premarital sex, along with desired family size and labor force participation. Compared to the reference group, Mainline Protestants, the predicted probability of entering a cohabiting union by age 20 is 0.24 for the unaffiliated, 0.19 for conservative Protestants and Jews (not significant), 0.16 for Catholics, and 0.12 for Latter Day Saints (Lehrer, 2004). Although there are discrepancies in family ideologies for different religious groups, they often have more similar beliefs with each other than with the unaffiliated, who may be more

persuaded by competing beliefs in media or other institutions (Pearce and Thornton, 2007). I predict that adolescents with no affiliation will be the most willing to cohabit compared to adolescents affiliated with other religious groups. However, religious affiliation is only one measure of religion; I also look at religious service attendance.

The role of religious service attendance in shaping adolescents' attitudes toward cohabitation and marriage is not completely clear. Earlier research found that 18-year-olds in 1980 who attend religious services more frequently are more anticohabitation and promarriage than those teens who attend less often (Pearce and Thornton, 2007). Another study using the same dataset suggested that less religious youth, as measured by religious commitment and participation, are more likely than their more religious counterparts to cohabit than marry, delaying entry into marriage (Thornton, Axinn, and Hill, 1992). However, other data indicates that marriage timing does not significantly vary for low frequency attendants compared to high frequency attendants (Lehrer, 2004). Based on socialization theory, I predict that adolescents who attend religious services more often will be less willing to cohabit and report a lower ideal age at marriage.

While it may seem repetitious to include a measure of religious faith when I have already included measures for religious affiliation and religious service attendance, individuals differ in the importance they place on religion regardless of their affiliation or attendance (Wimberley, 1989). Respondents may say that religion is highly important to them, but they are unable to attend service on a regular basis. Conversely, respondents may attend service on a weekly basis, yet their faith may be unimportant to them. It is likely that individuals who highly value their faith will

develop family ideologies reflective of these religious values, including a position against cohabitation and for earlier and more universal marriage. Indeed, the more important youth find religion at age 18, the more anticonhabitation and promarriage they are (Pearce and Thornton, 2007). The relationship between the importance of religion and cohabitation (but not marriage) is statistically independent from the relationship between attendance and cohabitation. This means that there are distinctive features of service attendance and importance of religion cultivating these relationships; thus, it is valuable to keep both measures of religiosity. I predict that as the importance of religious faith increases, individuals will be less willing to cohabit and report a lower ideal age at marriage.

Individual experiences and aspirations

Finally, individual experiences and aspirations, including dating, sexual intercourse, and educational aspirations are likely related to their attitudes toward union formation. Although adults may dismiss young love as short-lived and fleeting, romantic relationships are typical and fairly stable during this time period. By age 18, 69 percent of boys and 76 percent of girls report having a romantic relationship in the past 18 months (Carver, Joyner, and Udry, 2003). For those 16 years and older, half of adolescent romantic relationships have been in existence for at least 21 months (Carver, Joyner, and Udry, 2003).

The life course approach helps us to better understand the relationship pathway from dating in adolescence to union formation in adulthood as latter behavior is thought to be shaped by earlier experiences. Researchers find continuity

between romantic and sexual experiences in adolescence and relationship formation in adulthood. While the foundation of these early relationships is primarily based on needs for status building, sexual experimentation, and entertainment, these relationships evolve over time and start to fulfill needs for support or care giving as adolescents learn how to interact with their partners (Connolly, Furman, and Konarksi, 2000; Feiring, 1999; Furman and Wehner, 1997). Adolescent romantic involvement has a positive association with both cohabitation and marriage in early adulthood (Raley, Crissey, and Muller, 2007). Relationships may increase anticipation for marriage by allowing “adolescents to develop relationship patterns, explore new roles, feel attractive to the opposite gender, and potentially experience intimacy and commitment” (Crissey, 2005: 698). I predict that youth who are currently dating will be more willing to cohabit and report a lower ideal age at marriage.

The literature on adolescent dating is rich enough to distinguish between romantic relationships with sex, romantic relationships without sex, and nonromantic sexual relationships to see if these groups have different union formation outcomes. Compared to teens reporting no relationships, adolescents in a sexual romantic relationship have roughly double the rates of marriage in early adulthood, while adolescents in a non-sexual romantic relationship have a lower rate of marriage in early adulthood. Sexually active adolescents also have higher rates of cohabitation compared to non-sexually active adolescents (Raley, Crissey, and Muller, 2007). Thus, teens who have experienced a sexual romantic relationship more often transition to unions in early adulthood compared to teens who have not had this

experience. Additionally, having had at least one nonromantic sexual relationship is positively associated with cohabitation, but negatively associated with direct marriage (i.e., marriage not preceded by cohabitation). This suggests that those adolescents who are open to having sexual relationships with less commitment are also open to participating in cohabitation before marriage.

Sexual experience is thought to indirectly influence marriage in various ways. For example, most sexual activity occurs within romantic relationships, and these relationships are generally the starting point for unions later in life. Moreover, as adolescent couples negotiate differing wants and opinions, romantic relationships facilitate the expansion of interpersonal skills to enable communication and manage emotions (Shulman, 2003). Sex can enhance the interpersonal bond, and these acquired skills may be useful in establishing a committed union in adulthood. Not all romantic experiences encourage marriage in young adulthood, but, on average, they do (Raley, Crissey, and Muller, 2007). The association between sexual experience and union formation attitudes may also be explained by a selection effect. It is possible that less conforming adolescents differ from more conforming adolescents in both their sexual activity and union formation attitudes or there is an unknown spurious variable causing this association. Overall, I expect adolescents who have ever had sex to report a lower ideal age at marriage and greater willingness to cohabit than adolescent who have not ever had sex.

Adolescents' educational aspirations are also a good predictor of union formation behavior. Attending college is a life course process that hinders cohabitation and marriage in early adulthood (Thornton, Axinn, and Teachman,

1995). By continuing their education, youth may delay forming unions in order to achieve their academic goals. Indeed, young adults enrolled in school have lower rates of both cohabitation and marriage compared to young adults not enrolled in school (Raley, Crissey, and Muller, 2007; Thornton, Axinn, and Teachman, 1995). Cohabitation and marriage are often viewed as adult roles with considerable time and energy commitments that may disturb the ability of students to handle the rigors of school. Qualitative data suggests that finishing school is sometimes mentioned as a component in obtaining economic stability, and respondents view this economic stability as a prerequisite for marriage (Smock, Manning, and Porter, 2005). Adolescents with higher educational aspirations have a lower likelihood of earlier marriage. Accordingly, I predict that adolescents who plan to finish college or graduate school will report a lower willingness to cohabit and higher ideal age at marriage.

How the influence of social determinants varies by age

In understanding how certain social contexts or individual experiences are related to family attitudes, taking a developmental approach is also useful. A developmental approach suggests that the strength of a relationship between X and Y will depend on the age at which X occurs. I posit that the willingness to cohabit and ideal age at marriage will vary by four key categories of social determinants: family structure and relationship quality; religious characteristics such as religious affiliation, religious service attendance, and importance of religious faith; dating and sexual activity; and educational aspirations.

Family structure and relationship quality. As described above, parents' intimate relationships serve as templates for their children's aspirations and behaviors (Sassler, Cunningham, and Lichter, 2009). However, as children grow older, there is increasing conflict between parents and adolescents, and this leads to greater independence of adolescents from parents (Smetana, Campione-Barr, and Metzger, 2006). As they get older, youth are increasingly influenced by their peer group, whose ideas and models of family formation may differ from what an individual learns from his/her family of origin. Therefore, I predict that as adolescents age, the influence of family characteristics such as family structure and parental relationship quality will be less strongly related to adolescents' willingness to cohabit and ideal age at marriage.

Religious characteristics. Overall, youth who adhere to more conservative religious affiliations, attend service regularly, and/or place high importance on their religious faith tend to be less willing to cohabit and report a lower ideal age at marriage than their more secular counterparts. However, these religious characteristics are measured early in adolescence when youth are more likely to be aligned with their parents' religious characteristics. Moving forward in time, other factors, such as the influence of peers and media, become more salient in the lives of youth (Smetana, Campione-Barr, and Metzger, 2006). Consequently, I expect that as adolescents age, the influence of religious characteristics earlier in their adolescence will be less strongly related to their union formation attitudes.

Dating and sexual activity. In general, adolescents who are dating and/or sexually active are more willing to cohabit and report a lower ideal age at marriage

(Raley, Crissey, and Muller, 2007). As adolescents grow older, they increasingly interact with and find support in romantic partners compared to family members and friends, and these early romantic experiences may provide a guideline for more long-term unions in adulthood (Smetana, Campione-Barr, and Metzger, 2006). Accordingly, I expect that as adolescents grow older, the influence of dating and sexual activity will be more strongly related to their willingness to cohabit and ideal age at marriage.

Educational aspirations. As previously mentioned, attending college hinders cohabitation and marriage in early adulthood (Thornton, Axinn, and Teachman, 1995). As youth grow older and decisions about their educational future become more salient, they may view the roles of being a student and live-in partner or spouse as incompatible. Thus, I expect that as youth age, the influence of educational aspirations will be more strongly related to their union formation attitudes.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Data

I use data from the National Study of Youth of Religion (NSYR) for this study. The first wave of the NSYR data come from a nationally representative telephone survey of 3,290 U.S. English and Spanish speaking teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17 years, and one of their co-resident parents living in households in all 50 U.S. states in the years 2002 and 2003. Wave 1 of the NSYR was conducted from July 2002 to April 2003 using a random-digit-dial (RDD) method, employing a sample of randomly generated telephone numbers representative of all household telephones in the United States. Eligible households included at least one teenager between the ages of 13 and 17 years living in the household for at least 6 months of the year. To randomize responses within households and to better represent age and gender, interviewers asked to conduct the survey with the teenager in the household who had the most recent birthday.

Parent interviews were conducted with either a mother or father, as they were available; although the survey asked to speak with mothers first, believing that they may be better qualified to answer questions about their families and teenagers. Step-parents, resident grandparents, resident partners of parents, and other resident parent-like figures were also eligible to complete the parent portion of the survey.

Wave 2 of the NSYR was conducted from June 2005 through November 2005 when respondents were between the ages of 16 and 21 years, while Wave 3 was conducted from September 2007 through April 2008 when respondents were between the ages of 18 and 24 years by telephone using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. Interviews for Waves 2 and 3 were only conducted with English-speaking respondents, and parents were not re-interviewed.

Every effort was made to contact and survey all original NSYR respondents, including those out of the country and in the military. Of the original respondents, 2,530 participated in the second wave of the survey resulting in an overall retention rate of 78.6 percent. In Wave 3, 2,458 original youth respondents participated in the survey for an overall Wave 1 to Wave 3 retention rate of 77.1 percent. There were 273 respondents who completed Wave 3, but not Wave 2. The predominant source of attrition in Wave 2 and Wave 3 was no contact for non-located respondents. Other sources of attrition include no contact due to no human contact, in the military/jobcorps, or out of the country; respondents contacted and refused to be reinterviewed; respondents successfully contacted with incomplete interviews; and ineligible respondents due to institutionalization, language barrier, death, or outlier date of birth discovered. The percentage of respondents who completed all three waves of the survey was 68.4 percent.

Diagnostic analyses comparing NSYR data with U.S. Census data on comparable households and with comparable adolescent surveys—such as Monitoring the Future, the National Household Education Survey, and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health—confirm that the NSYR provides a

nationally representative sample without identifiable sampling and nonresponse biases of U.S. teenagers ages 13-17 and their parents living in households (for details, see Smith and Denton, 2003).

Missing data were handled by using listwise deletion. That is, I excluded all cases that have missing data in at least one of the selected variables.

Consequently, the models within each table have the same sample size, although the sample size is different for each dependent variable.

Additionally, I reshaped my data from a “wide” format where variables asked in each wave are in separate columns to a “long” format where the repeated variables are in separate rows. By using a “long” format, respondents contribute one to three rows, depending on the number of waves that they completed. I correct for respondents being in multiple waves of the survey by estimating a model that corrects for the bias created by the correlation of errors within person. I opted to structure my data this way because there is a mix of ages and waves in the NSYR data such that Waves 1 and 2 both include 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds, while Waves 2 and 3 both include 17- to 20- year-olds (see Table 1). Because I wanted to see if the influence of particular social characteristics varies by the age of the respondent, I needed to reshape the data so there was not an overlap of ages in the different waves.

Measures

Dependent Variables

Living with a romantic partner. One of the dependent variables is a measure of willingness to cohabit, and it is also asked in all three waves of the survey only to respondents who are not currently living with a romantic partner, not married, and never lived with a romantic partner. The question asks: “In the future, would you ever consider living with a romantic partner that you were not married to?” I created a new variable to include respondents who are currently cohabiting or ever cohabited because their present or past behavior suggests a willingness to cohabit. The responses are coded as (0) no—not willing to cohabit and never cohabited and (1) yes—willing to cohabit or ever/currently cohabiting. As illustrated in Figure 1, only 44 percent of 13-years-old would consider cohabitation, but 77 percent of 22-year-olds would consider cohabitation, ever cohabited, or are currently cohabiting. This represents an increase of 33 percentage points.

Ideal age to get married. The other dependent variable is a measure of marriage expectations asked in all three waves of the survey to never married respondents. The question asks: “What do you think is the ideal age to get married?” Respondents either gave an exact age or a range of ages. For the latter option, I found the mean of the range and use that age in my analyses. As illustrated in Figure 2, the ideal age to marry increases as respondents grow older. For example, the ideal age to get married for 13-year-olds is 24.6 years, whereas 22-year-olds report 26.1 years as the ideal age to get married. This represents an

increase of 1.5 years. The correlation between living with a romantic partner and ideal age to get married is 0.1024.

Independent Variables

Past research has identified many characteristics that are predictive of family formation behavior. I separate these characteristics into four groups: demographic, family socioeconomic status, adolescent religious characteristics, and individual experiences and aspirations. All independent variables come from the Wave 1 survey, except when noted. Descriptive statistics for all independent variables are presented in Table 2.

Demographic characteristics. Age ranges from 13 years to 24 years, and it is coded as a continuous variable. Given the small number ($n=64$) of 23 and 24-year-olds in the survey, I combined these respondents with the 22-year-olds. Henceforth, I will refer to this category as “22+ years old.” Gender is coded as (0) male and (1) female. These are incorporated into regression analysis as a dummy variable with male as the reference category. Respondents’ race and ethnicity is coded as: (1) non-Hispanic White, (2) non-Hispanic Black, (3) Hispanic, and (4) Other. There are not enough cases to examine more detailed categories of race or ethnicity. In my models, non-Hispanic White is the reference category. Adolescents’ region of residence is coded as: (1) Northeast, (2) Midwest, (3) South, and (4) West following the designation used by the U.S. Census Bureau.¹ South is the reference category in my models.

¹ For more information, visit http://www.census.gov/geo/www/us_regdiv.pdf

Family socioeconomic status characteristics. Family socioeconomic status is measured using two items: highest level of education any parent in the household achieved and household income. Parent respondents were asked about their highest level of education achieved, as well as the highest level of education achieved by any other residential parent. I combine these responses to reflect the highest level of education of any resident parent figure, and it is coded as (1) less than 12th grade, (2) completed high school, and (3) beyond high school. In my models, it was converted to a dummy variable with less than 12th grade as the reference category. Parent respondents were also asked whether their household income fell within a range, such as ten thousand to twenty thousand dollars per year. I grouped household income into five categories: (1) less than \$30,000, (2) \$30,000 to \$50,000, (3) \$50,000 to \$80,000, (4) \$80,000+, and (5) missing data. Less than \$30,000 is the reference category in my models.

Adolescents' family structure is measured by determining the relationship of the parent or parent-like respondent and his/her significant other to the teenage respondent. If the parent respondent is married or living with a partner, relationship quality is measured by asking the parent respondent, "Overall, how would you describe your (marriage/relationship) with your partner?" Responses categories are very happy, somewhat happy, neither, somewhat unhappy, and very unhappy. I recoded very happy and somewhat happy to "happy" and the other three categories as "unhappy." Therefore, I have nine family structure and relationship quality categories: (1) two-parent biological/adoptive family-happy, (2) two-parent biological/adoptive family-unhappy, (3) two-parent stepfamily-happy, (4) two-parent

stepfamily-unhappy, (5) two-parent cohabitating family-happy, (6) two-parent cohabiting family-unhappy, (7) two-parent other-happy, (8) two-parent other-unhappy, and (9) one-parent biological/adoptive. In my models, family structure and relationship quality was converted to a dummy variable with two-parent biological/adoptive family-happy as the reference category.

Adolescent religious characteristics. Religion is measured using three variables: religious affiliation, religious service attendance, and importance of religious faith. Religious affiliation was identified by first asking adolescents, “Do you attend religious services more than once or twice a year, NOT counting weddings, baptisms, and funerals.” If respondents answered “Yes,” “Don’t know,” or “Refused,” they were then asked, “What religion or denomination is the place where you go to religious services?” Answers were re-coded into five religious groups: (1) Conservative Protestant; (2) Mainline Protestant; (3) Catholic; (4) Other religion; (5) No affiliation. Other religion included Jewish and Latter Day Saints. Religious affiliation was converted to a dummy variable with Mainline Protestant as the reference category for my models.

Religious service attendance was also measured by first asking, “Do you attend religious services more than once or twice a year, NOT counting weddings, baptisms, and funerals.” If respondents answered “Yes,” “Don’t know,” or “Refused,” they were then asked, “About how often do you attend religious services there?” with the following response categories: (0) Never; (1) Few to many times a year; (2) Once to 2-3 times a month; (3) Once a week; or (4) More than once a week. In my

models, religious service attendance was converted to a dummy variable with never as the reference category.

Importance of religious faith was measured by asking “How important or unimportant is religious faith in shaping how you live your daily life?” Answers were re-coded into (1) not important at all; (2) not very important at all; (3) somewhat important; (4) very important; and (5) extremely important. These responses were re-coded so five represented the highest level of importance of faith.

Individual experiences and aspirations. Adolescents’ dating and sexual activities are measured using two items. The first item focuses on relationships. In Wave 1, respondents are asked “Are you currently in a dating or romantic relationship, or not?” The responses are coded as no and yes. For Waves 2 and 3, this question is only asked to respondents who are not currently married and have been in a romantic relationship. I created a new variable to include marriage as a type of romantic relationship. Responses are now coded as (0) not currently dating and (1) currently dating or married. I recoded this into a dummy variable with not currently dating as the reference category. The second item focuses on sexual activities. Respondents were first asked, “Have you ever willingly touched another person’s private areas or willingly been touched by another person in your private areas under your clothes, or not?” If they answered “Yes,” they were also asked “Have you ever had sexual intercourse, or not?” Responses were coded either (0) no or (1) yes. In my models, sexual activity was converted to a dummy variable with no as the reference category.

Adolescents' educational aspirations are measured using one item. Adolescents are asked "Ideally, how far in school would you like to go?" Responses include the following: (1) less than college graduate; (2) college graduate (BS, BA, or other 4-year degree); and (3) post-graduate training or professional schooling after college (MBA, MA, Ph.D., etc). I recoded these into two dummy variables with less than college graduate as the reference category.

Analyses

I am analyzing my data in such a way that privileges age of respondent over wave of data collection. There is a mix of ages and waves in the NSYR data such that Waves 1 and 2 both include 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds, while Waves 2 and 3 both include 17- to 20- year-olds (see Table 1). Respondents being in the survey more than once, forming a cluster, inflates the variances among variables within a cluster. To correct for the resulting bias, I estimate models that includes a cluster identifier. As described below, the sample size is slightly different for each research objective.

My first research objective is to recognize what social characteristics are related to union formation attitudes. I use logistic regression with clusters identified to predict willingness to live with a nonmarital romantic partner because the outcome is bivariate (Table 3). My sample for this analysis will be 7,862 respondents. I use regression with clusters identified to predict the ideal age of marriage because the outcome is continuous (Table 4). My sample for this analysis will be 7,786 respondents.

My second research objective is to examine if particular social characteristics vary by the age of the respondent. I run interactions between age and family structure and relationships, religious affiliation, religious service attendance, importance of religious faith, dating, sexual activity, and educational aspirations. Table 5 lists the interactions that I tested. To ease the interpretation of these results, I evaluated the interactions at three ages (13, 17, and 22+ years), as seen in Table 6.

In all models, I first test the relationship between demographic characteristics and each outcome. Next, I assess the relationship between demographic characteristics and family socioeconomic status characteristics and the outcomes. Then, I test the relationship between demographic characteristics, family socioeconomic status characteristics, and adolescent religion characteristics and the outcomes. Finally, I assess the relationship between all measures in the same model, including individual experiences and aspirations, for each outcome. This analysis structure is shown in Tables 3 and 4.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Willingness to Cohabit

Table 3 presents odds ratios and standard errors from logistic regression models of adolescents' willingness to cohabit. The first model in this table provides evidence for how demographic characteristics, including age, gender, race/ethnicity, and region are related to one's willingness to cohabit with an unmarried romantic partner. Of these demographic characteristics, the coefficients for age, gender, the dummy variable indicating Non-Hispanic Black, and the dummy variables indicating Northeast, Midwest, and West are all statistically significant.

Looking at age, one additional year of age is associated with an 18.4 percent increase in the odds of being willing to cohabit. This increase is consistent with what I predicted. For gender, the odds of being willing to cohabit for females are 33.4 percent lower than the odds for males. This matches my expectation based on prior research that males would be more willing to cohabit than females. Looking at race, the odds of being willing to cohabit for non-Hispanic Blacks are 16.6 percent lower than the odds of non-Hispanic Whites. In analyses not shown here, when non-Hispanic Blacks are used as the reference group, all other race/ethnicity groups have significantly higher odds of being willing to cohabit than non-Hispanic Blacks. This is inconsistent with what I expected to find as I predicted that there would not be difference by race/ethnicity. Finally, the odds of being willing to cohabit vary by

the region of the country in which an adolescent lives. Adolescent respondents from the Northeast, Midwest, and West have (respectively) 1.612, 1.291, and 1.168 times higher odds of being willing to cohabit than adolescents from the South,. In analyses not shown here, I find that adolescents from the Northeast have higher odds than those from all other regions of being willing to cohabit. These results are consistent with what I expected; that is, respondents from the South are less willing to cohabit.

Model 2 of Table 3 contains demographic characteristics, plus family socioeconomic status characteristics, including highest parent education, household income, and family structure and relationship quality. The results for the demographic characteristics discussed above remain highly similar. For family socioeconomic status characteristics, results indicate statistically significant relationships between the willingness to cohabit and aspects of both household income and family structure and relationship quality.

In the results, there is evidence to suggest that higher household income is related to adolescents being more willing to cohabit. The odds of being willing to cohabit for respondents with household incomes between \$30,000 to \$50,000 (1.190) and \$80,000+ (1.485) is higher than for the omitted group, respondents with household incomes under \$30,000.² These results are the opposite of what I

² In analysis not shown here, when respondents with household income between \$30,000 to \$50,000 is used as the reference group, respondents with household incomes under \$30,000 have significantly lower odds of being willing to cohabit, while respondents with household incomes of \$80,000+ have significantly higher odds of being willing to cohabit. When respondents with household incomes of \$80,000+ are used as the reference group, all other income groups have statistically lower odds of being willing to cohabit.

predicted; as household income increases, the odds of being willing to cohabit are greater.

The odds of being willing to cohabit vary by family structure and relationship quality. Adolescent respondents with 2 parent biological/adoptive-unhappy families (1.433), 2 parent stepfamilies-happy (1.563), 2 parent cohabiting-happy families (3.281), 2 parent other-happy families (1.807), and 1 parent biological/adoptive families (1.864) have higher odds of being willing to cohabit than adolescents with 2 parent biological/adoptive-happy families. In analyses not shown here, when I rotate the reference group to test differences between all of the family structure and relationship quality categories, respondents from 2 parent biological/adoptive-happy families have statistically lower odds of being willing to cohabit, while respondents from 2 parent cohabiting-happy families have statistically higher odds of being willing to cohabit. It is also interesting to note that when 2 parent cohabiting family-happy is the reference group, all other family structure and relationship quality variables have statistically lower odds of being willing to cohabit. These results mostly support my hypothesis that respondents from non-intact families are most likely to cohabit, especially those who live with two cohabiting parent figures who are very happy with their relationship, while respondents with happily married parents are least likely to be willing to cohabit.

Model 3 of Table 3 includes the two previously mentioned groups of characteristics, demographic and family socioeconomic status, as well as a third group of variables measuring adolescent religious characteristics. This includes religious affiliation, religious attendance, and the importance of religious faith, all of which have statistically significant relationships with the willingness to cohabit.

Moving from Model 2 to Model 3, variables representing race/ethnicity, region of residence, and family structure and relationship quality lose statistical significance.

Looking at religious affiliation, evidence does not support my prediction. For conservative Protestants, the odds of being willing to cohabit are 37.4 percent lower than the odds for Mainline Protestants.³ For respondents affiliating with another religion, the odds of being willing to cohabit are 33.5 percent lower than the odds for Mainline Protestants. However, other religion is a difficult category to interpret given it mixes various minority group affiliations such as Jews, Latter Day Saints, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. While I predicted that adolescents with no affiliation would be the most willing to cohabit, I discovered that the coefficient is not significantly different from Mainline Protestants.

Those who attend religious services more often are less willing to cohabit, and this is consistent with what I predicted. For example, the odds of being willing to cohabit for those attending more than once a week are 76.0 percent lower than the odds for those never attending religious services. The importance of religious faith to adolescents is also related to their willingness to cohabit, even controlling for the relationships of religious affiliation and attendance. The evidence suggests that higher levels of faith are related to adolescents being less willing to cohabit. Each additional unit increase in the importance of religious faith is associated with a 53.5 percent decrease in the odds of being willing to cohabit. This is also consistent with what I predicted.

³ In analyses not shown here, when conservative Protestant adolescents are the reference group, Mainline Protestants, Catholics, and those with no affiliation all have higher odds of being willing to cohabit.

Although the dummy variable indicating Non-Hispanic Black, and the dummy variables indicating Northeast, Midwest, and West are all statistically significant in Models 1 and 2 of Table 3, these effects disappear when the measures of religious affiliation, attendance, and importance of faith are included in the model. This suggests that part of the reason there are racial and regional differences in the willingness to cohabit is that religious beliefs and practices vary by race/ethnicity and region.

Model 4 of Table 3 is the full model, and it includes the variables for individual experiences and aspirations (currently dating, sex ever, and educational aspirations) in addition to the characteristics described in the previous models.

Being in a current dating relationship is statistically significantly related to one's willingness to cohabit. The odds of being willing to cohabit for those currently dating are 1.665 times the odds for those not currently dating. This is consistent with my prediction that youth who are currently dating will be more willing to cohabit than youth not currently dating. Ever having sex is also significantly related to one's willingness to cohabit. The odds of being willing to cohabit for those who ever had sex are 1.706 times the odds for those who never had sex. This is also in line with my hypothesis that sexually active adolescents are more willing to cohabit than non-sexually active adolescents.

Ideal Age at Marriage

Table 4 presents coefficients and standard errors from linear regression models of the ideal age at marriage. Like in Table 3, the first model in this table contains demographic characteristics, including age, gender, race/ethnicity, and

region, all of which have statistically significant relationships with one's ideal age at marriage.

For every one year increase in age, an increase of 0.189 years in the ideal age at marriage is predicted, holding all other variables constant. This is consistent with my prediction that the ideal age at marriage will increase as adolescents grow older. For gender, the predicted ideal age at marriage is 0.647 years lower for females than for males. This matches my expectation based on prior research that females will report a lower ideal age at marriage than males. Looking at race/ethnicity, results provide mixed support for my prediction. Both non-Hispanic Blacks (0.895) and other race/ethnicity (1.301) have a higher ideal age at marriage than non-Hispanic Whites.⁴ Although non-Hispanic Blacks have a higher ideal age at marriage than non-Hispanic Whites, Hispanics also have a higher ideal age at marriage than non-Hispanic Whites, not lower as I predicted. Finally, the ideal age at marriage varies by the region of the country in which an adolescent lives. Adolescent respondents from the Northeast (0.744), Midwest (0.327), and West (0.378) all have an ideal age at marriage that is higher than adolescents from the South. In analyses not shown here, I find that adolescents from the Northeast have a higher ideal age at marriage than those from all other regions. These results are consistent with what I expected; that is, respondents from the South have the lowest ideal age at marriage.

⁴ In analyses not shown here, when non-Hispanic Blacks are used as the reference group, non-Hispanic Whites and Hispanics have a significantly lower ideal age at marriage, while other race/ethnicity has a significantly higher ideal age at marriage. When other race/ethnicity is used as the reference group, all other race/ethnicity groups have a significantly lower ideal age at marriage.

Model 2 of Table 4 contains demographic characteristics, plus family socioeconomic status characteristics, including highest parent education, household income, and family structure and relationship quality. The results for the demographic characteristics discussed above remain highly similar. The one exception is the dummy variable indicating Hispanic; it was not significant in Model 1, but it is significant in Model 2. Hispanics have an ideal age at marriage that is 0.385 years higher than non-Hispanic Whites. For family socioeconomic status characteristics, results indicate statistically significant relationships between the ideal age at marriage and household income, as well as aspects of family structure and relationship quality.

In the results, there is evidence to suggest that higher household income is related to adolescents reporting a higher ideal age at marriage. Respondents with a household income between \$30,000 to \$50,000 (0.434), \$50,000 to \$80,000 (0.633), \$80,000+ (0.940), and missing data (0.505) all have an ideal age at marriage that is higher than the omitted group, respondents with a household income under \$30,000. In analyses not shown here, two patterns stand out when these other groups are rotated as the reference group. First, adolescents with a household income under \$30,000 consistently have an ideal age at marriage that is significantly lower than the reference group. Secondly, adolescents with a household income of \$80,000+ consistently have an ideal age at marriage that is statistically higher than the reference group. This is consistent with my prediction that adolescents from higher household income families will report a higher ideal age at marriage.

Certain groups of family structure and relationship quality are related to ideal age at marriage. Adolescent respondents with 2 parent stepfamilies-happy (0.303),

2 parent cohabiting-unhappy families (4.428), and 1 parent biological/adoptive families (0.845) all have an ideal age at marriage that is higher than 2 parent biological/adoptive-happy families, the omitted group. When these three significant groups are used as the reference group in analyses not shown here, 2 parent other-happy families, 2 parent-other unhappy families, and 2 parent biological/adoptive-happy families consistently have a lower ideal age at marriage. These results are generally consistent with what I predicted; that is, adolescents from non-intact families will have a higher ideal age at marriage than adolescents from intact families.

Model 3 of Table 4 includes the two previously mentioned groups of characteristics, demographic and family socioeconomic status, as well as a third group of variables measuring adolescent religious characteristics. This includes religious affiliation, religious attendance, and the importance of religious faith, all of which have statistically significant relationships with the ideal age at marriage. Moving from Model 2 to Model 3, variables representing region of residence and family structure and relationship quality lose statistical significance, while one variable representing family structure and relationship quality gains statistical significance.

Looking at religious affiliation, evidence does support my prediction. Conservative Protestants have an ideal age at marriage that is 0.334 years lower than Mainline Protestants, the omitted group. On the other hand, Catholics (0.274) and those with no affiliation (0.652) have an ideal age at marriage that is higher than Mainline Protestants. When conservative Protestants are used as the reference group, Mainline Protestants, Catholics, and those with no affiliation have a

statistically higher ideal age at marriage. This is consistent with my prediction that conservative Protestants will have the lowest ideal age at marriage.⁵

Those who attend religious services more often will report a lower ideal age at marriage, consistent with my prediction. The dummy variable indicating more than once a week for religious attendance has an ideal age at marriage that is 0.528 years lower than the omitted group, never attending religious services. When more than once a week is used as the reference group, all other groups have a statistically higher ideal age at marriage. The importance of religious faith is also related to the ideal age at marriage, even controlling for the relationships of religious affiliation and attendance. The evidence suggests that as the importance of religious faith increases, individuals will report a lower ideal age at marriage. For every one unit increase in importance of religious faith, a decrease of 0.199 years in the ideal age at marriage is predicted, holding all other variables constant. This is consistent with my prediction.

Model 4 of Table 4 is the full model, and it includes the variables for individual experiences and aspirations (currently dating, sex ever, and educational aspirations) in addition to the characteristics described in the previous models. Being in a currently dating relationship is statistically significantly related to one's ideal age at marriage. Those currently dating have an ideal age at marriage that is 0.819 years lower than those not currently dating, and this is consistent with my prediction. Educational aspirations are also significantly related to one's ideal age at marriage.

⁵ When Catholics and those with no affiliation are used as the reference group, all other groups have a statistically lower ideal age at marriage with one exception. When Catholics are used as the reference group, those with no affiliation have a statistically higher ideal age at marriage.

Respondents aspiring to be college graduates (0.563) and attend post-graduate or professional schooling (0.901) have an ideal age at marriage that is higher than less than college graduates. This is also consistent with my prediction that adolescents who plan to attend college or graduate school will report a higher ideal age at marriage.

How Relationships between Social Characteristics and Family Attitudes Vary by Age

As adolescents age, the influence of various social factors on their attitudes toward cohabitation and marriage are likely to change. Table 5 presents coefficients from analyses testing for interactions between selected social determinants and age for both willingness to cohabit and ideal age at marriage. These social determinants include: family structure and relationship quality, religious affiliation, religious attendance, importance of religious faith, currently dating, sex ever, and educational aspirations. First, I ran the full models from Tables 3 and 4 with each of the seven interaction terms separately for both dependent variables to assess which interactions were statistically significant. Next, I ran the full model with all of the statistically significant interactions together in one model. Looking at this output, I only kept the interactions that remained significant. Finally, I ran the full model with the significant interactions, and these coefficients are what I present in Table 5. To better explain the interactions, I interpret the change in log odds associated with selected social determinants at three specific ages (13, 17, and 22+ years) as presented in Table 6. These are representative of the variation in the age variable

where 13 years is the minimum age in the sample, 22 years is the maximum age, and 17 years is the mean age of the sample.

The influence of many social characteristics varies by the age of the respondents for willingness to cohabit. Looking at the first column in Table 5, the interaction for Catholic x age (0.110) is significant. The positive magnitude increases as respondents grow older (-0.495, -0.055, and 0.495 respectively). In other words, Catholic adolescents become more likely to want to cohabit as they grow older compared to conservative Protestants.

Looking at religious attendance, the interactions for once to 2-3 times per month x age (-0.116), once a week x age (-0.214), and more than once a week x age (-0.219) are all significant. For respondents attending religious services once to 2-3 times per month, the negative magnitude increases as adolescent respondents grow older (0.281, -0.183, and -0.763 respectively) compared to never attending, the omitted group. The same pattern is seen for respondents attending once a week (0.167, -0.689, -1.759 respectively) and more than once a week (-0.532, -1.408, -2.503). In other words, adolescents attending religious services at all become less likely to want to cohabit compared to adolescents who never attend religious services. While I predicted that the influence of religious characteristics earlier in adolescence would be less strongly related to union formation attitudes, this does not appear to be true in the results. Religious attendance may have more meaning as respondents grow older because they are attending for their own reasons, as opposed to being encouraged or required to attend services by family members. Also, respondents may contemplate their willingness to cohabit differently in their early twenties, when it is more of a realistic choice, than in their early teens.

Ever having sex (-0.084) is significantly related to willingness to cohabit. The negative magnitude increases as adolescents grow older (0.942, 0.606, and 0.186 respectively) compared to adolescents who never had sex. This is inconsistent with my prediction that sexual activity will be more strongly related to willingness to cohabit as adolescents grow older. The decline of the effects with increasing age is explainable because sexual activity becomes more normative as adolescents age. While sexually active 13-year-olds may be a distinct group, having had sex by age 22+ is normative.

Lastly, educational aspirations are related to one's willingness to cohabit. Much like the previous variables, the negative magnitude for adolescents who aspire to attend post-graduate or professional schooling increases as adolescents grow older (0.327, -0.089, and -0.609 respectively) compared to adolescents aspiring to be less than college graduates. These results are consistent with my prediction and expected as well because respondents are finally old enough to be implementing decisions about their future education. They may be realizing that the roles of student and cohabiting partner are incompatible given the demands of advanced schooling.

The influence of many social characteristics also varies by the age of the respondents for ideal age at marriage. Looking at column two of Table 5, the interactions for 2 parent cohabiting-unhappy x age (1.150) and 1 parent biological/adoptive x age (-0.081) are both significant. For respondents with 2 parent cohabiting-unhappy families, the positive magnitude increases as adolescent respondents grow older (-0.193, 4.407, and 10.157 respectively) compared to adolescents with 2 parent biological/adoptive-happy families. Meanwhile, the

magnitude runs in the opposite direction for adolescents from 1 parent biological/adoptive families. For these adolescents, the negative magnitude increases as adolescents grow older (0.998, 0.674, and 0.269 respectively) compared to adolescents with 2 parent biological/adoptive-happy families. Adolescents living with a cohabiting parent or single parent may have also experienced the divorce of their own parents or other disruptive family events. Because of this possible turbulent upbringing, these young adults are more hesitant to marry than peers growing up in intact families. Overall, it is noteworthy to observe that there are few statistically significant interactions between family structure and relationship quality and age. It is possible, as I predicted, that the influence of one's family of origin decreases as adolescents grow older and are more influenced by their peers and significant others.

Next, the interaction of importance of religious faith x age (-0.069) is related to one's ideal age at marriage. The negative magnitude increases as adolescent respondents grow older. The ideal age at marriage is 0.102 years higher at age 13, 0.174 years lower at age 17, and 0.519 years lower at age 22 per increase in importance of religious faith. Young adults whose religious faith is important to them may adhere more to religious doctrine, which emphasizes the importance of marriage, and consequently aspire to marry at an earlier age. This is contrary to my prediction that the influence of religious characteristics will be less strongly related to union formation attitudes as adolescents age.

Finally, the interaction for currently dating x age (-0.067) is significantly related to ideal age at marriage. For these adolescents, the negative magnitude increases as adolescents grow older (-0.51, -0.778, and -1.113 respectively)

compared to adolescents not currently dating. Marriage may seem like a more realistic step in a relationship for those who are currently dating, so these respondents report a lower ideal age at marriage, consistent with my prediction.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research detailed in this paper has revealed several noteworthy findings about how social and individual characteristics are related to attitudes about union formation. The demographic characteristics of age and gender are significantly related to both types of union formation as previous research showed, and I predicted. As adolescents grow older, they are both more willing to cohabit and report a higher ideal age at marriage. Perhaps adolescents can more realistically assess decisions about cohabiting and marriage as these events become more of a possibility in their own lives. Females are less willing to cohabit than males and report a lower ideal age at marriage. Looking at race/ethnicity, adolescents identifying as non-Hispanic Blacks, Hispanics, and other race/ethnicity all report a higher ideal age at marriage than non-Hispanic Whites. Although I predicted non-Hispanic Blacks to have a higher ideal age at marriage than non-Hispanic Whites, I did not predict that Hispanics would too.

The family socioeconomic status characteristics of household income and family structure and relationship quality are also significantly related to union formation. Contrary to what I expected to find, adolescents with household incomes of \$80,000+ are more willing to cohabit than adolescents with household incomes under \$30,000. Household income is also significant for ideal age at marriage.

Consistent with my prediction and previous research, adolescents from more affluent families will report a higher ideal age at marriage. It is likely that they are pursuing advanced education and careers, delaying their entry into marriage. For family structure and relationship quality, it is noteworthy to point out that the odds of being willing to cohabit for respondents with 2 parent cohabiting-happy families are 2.568 times the odds of being willing to cohabit for respondents with 2 parent biological/adoptive-happy families. This result provides support for socialization theory in that parents' relationships provide a template for their own children to follow.

Adolescent religious characteristics, including affiliation, attendance, and importance of faith, are significantly related to attitudes about both the willingness to live with a nonmarital romantic partner and the ideal age at marriage. Overall, adolescents identifying as conservative Protestants, attending religious service regularly, and/or placing greater importance on their religious faith have lower odds of being willing to cohabit and report a lower ideal age at marriage than their more secular counterparts. This is consistent with my predictions and previous research. It appears that religious characteristics from childhood affect attitudes and behavior later in life, as suggested by the life course approach.

Finally, dating is significantly related to willingness to cohabit and ideal age at marriage when looking at individual experiences and aspirations. Adolescents who are currently dating have higher odds of being willing to cohabit and report a lower ideal age at marriage. Drawing from the life course approach, there appears to be continuity between romantic experiences in adolescence and relationship formation in adulthood.

The research detailed here has also revealed several important findings about the influence of particular social characteristics varying by the age of the respondent. The most striking result involves family structure and relationship quality. Adolescents from 2 parent cohabiting-unhappy families have an ideal age at marriage that is 10.157 years higher at age 22+ than respondents from 2 parent biological/adoptive-happy families. These adolescents are delaying marriage, perhaps because of their own experience growing up in a non-intact family. It is also interesting to note that adolescents attending religious services at all become less likely to want to cohabit compared to adolescents who never attend religious services.

It is important to keep in mind some limitations when interpreting this research. First, the question for ideal age at marriage asks “What do you think is the ideal age to get married?” Respondents may have interpreted this question as their own personal ideal age to marry or what they believe to be a more general ideal age to marry. Unfortunately, researchers do not know which way respondents understood this question. Additionally, parents were only interviewed at one point in time, during Wave 1 of data collection. They were not re-interviewed in Wave 2 or Wave 3. Therefore, changes in the family socioeconomic status characteristics of highest parent education, household income, and family structure and relationship quality were not captured in subsequent waves of data collection.

In answering the research questions posed in this paper, this research has raised several additional questions for future research. Primarily, a fourth wave of data collection would greatly broaden our understanding of not only what adolescents think about cohabitation and marriage at an earlier point in time, but also what decisions they

make later in life. Only a small minority of respondents cohabited (about 10 percent) or married (about 5 percent) by the third wave of data collection. By Wave 4, however, the youngest respondents would be in their twenties, when these types of decisions become more salient. It would be useful to link attitudes in adolescence with behavior in young adulthood.

Overall, this research begins to fill a void in the literature regarding the attitudes of adolescents toward union formation. Specifically, scholars now have a greater understanding of which individual and social characteristics relate to adolescents' attitudes toward cohabitation and marriage. Additionally, researchers have a better understanding about how these union formation attitudes evolve from early to late adolescence. All in all, access to these findings will help scholars more accurately predict future trends in union formation behavior.

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Table 1: Number of NSYR Respondents by Age and Wave

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	TOTAL
Age				
13	629	0	0	629
14	643	0	0	643
15	699	0	0	699
16	661	663	0	1,324
17	657	533	11	1,201
18	0	524	456	980
19	0	512	497	1,009
20	0	298	529	827
21	0	0	497	497
22+	0	0	468	468
N	3,289*	2,530	2,458	8,277

* There are 3,290 respondents in Wave 1; however, the age variable is missing for 1 re

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for All Variables Used in Analyses (National Study of Youth and Religion, Waves 1-3, 2002-2008; N=7862, 7786)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Willingness to Cohabit</i>		<i>Ideal Age at Marriage</i>	
		<i>Percent*</i>	<i>Std Deviation</i>	<i>Percent*</i>	<i>Std Deviation</i>
Age	13 to 22	17.34	2.48	17.31	2.48
Gender	0 to 1	50.42	0.50	50.57	0.50
Race/Ethnicity					
Non-hispanic White	0 to 1	68.06	0.47	67.89	0.47
Non-hispanic Black	0 to 1	16.48	0.37	16.54	0.37
Hispanic	0 to 1	10.39	0.31	10.51	0.31
Other race/ethnicity	0 to 1	5.06	0.22	5.06	0.22
Region					
Northeast	0 to 1	13.90	0.35	13.76	0.34
Midwest	0 to 1	24.36	0.43	24.53	0.43
South	0 to 1	41.94	0.49	42.05	0.49
West	0 to 1	19.80	0.40	19.66	0.40
Highest Parent Education					
Less than 12th grade	0 to 1	4.74	0.21	4.71	0.21
Completed high school	0 to 1	18.10	0.39	18.26	0.39
Beyond high school	0 to 1	77.16	0.42	77.02	0.42
Household Income					
Less than \$30,000	0 to 1	20.35	0.40	20.32	0.40
\$30,000 to \$50,000	0 to 1	26.16	0.44	26.32	0.44
\$50,000 to \$80,000	0 to 1	26.04	0.44	26.05	0.44
\$80,000+	0 to 1	21.67	0.41	21.62	0.41
Missing data	0 to 1	5.77	0.23	5.70	0.23
Family Structure & Relationship Quality					
2 parent biological/adoptive-happy	0 to 1	51.06	0.50	51.09	0.50
2 parent biological/adoptive-unhappy	0 to 1	2.81	0.17	2.80	0.16
2 parent stepfamilies-happy	0 to 1	13.25	0.34	13.22	0.34
2 parent stepfamilies-unhappy	0 to 1	0.71	0.08	0.72	0.08
2 parent cohabiting-happy	0 to 1	3.03	0.17	3.02	0.17
2 parent cohabiting-unhappy	0 to 1	0.19	0.04	0.19	0.04
2 parent other-happy	0 to 1	2.59	0.16	2.62	0.16
2 parent other-unhappy	0 to 1	0.15	0.04	0.17	0.04
1 parent biological/adoptive	0 to 1	26.20	0.44	26.18	0.44
Religious Affiliation					
Mainline Protestant	0 to 1	38.17	0.49	38.27	0.49
Conservative Protestant	0 to 1	10.58	0.31	10.53	0.31
Catholic	0 to 1	21.29	0.41	21.45	0.41
Other religion	0 to 1	12.72	0.33	12.75	0.33
No affiliation	0 to 1	17.23	0.38	16.99	0.38
Religious Attendance					
Never	0 to 1	26.37	0.44	26.10	0.44
Few to many times per year	0 to 1	23.91	0.43	23.93	0.43
Once to 2-3 times per month	0 to 1	19.37	0.40	19.45	0.40
Once a week	0 to 1	18.24	0.39	18.35	0.39
More than once a week	0 to 1	12.11	0.33	12.18	0.33
Religious Faith	1 to 5	3.34	1.21	3.35	1.20
Currently Dating	0 to 1	45.08	0.50	44.94	0.50
Sex Ever	0 to 1	27.37	0.45	27.19	0.44
Educational Aspirations					
Less than college graduate	0 to 1	12.27	0.33	12.29	0.33
College graduate	0 to 1	65.70	0.47	65.91	0.47
Post-graduate or professional schooling	0 to 1	22.03	0.41	21.80	0.41

*I display the percent for dummy variables, and the mean for the two continuous variables, age and religious faith.

Table 3: Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression Models of Willingness to Cohabit (National Study of Youth and Religion, Waves 1, 2, & 3)				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	1.184***(0.0123)	1.191***(0.0124)	1.165***(0.0137)	1.125***(0.0134)
Gender	0.666***(0.0421)	0.645***(0.0411)	0.735***(0.0474)	0.688***(0.0450)
Race/Ethnicity^a				
Non-hispanic Black	0.834**(0.0685)	0.716***(0.0625)	1.101(0.105)	1.057(0.100)
Hispanic	0.984(0.0989)	0.945(0.101)	0.891(0.101)	0.871(0.0989)
Other race/ethnicity	1.111(0.166)	1.089(0.164)	1.040(0.160)	1.075(0.164)
Region^b				
Northeast	1.612***(0.154)	1.606***(0.158)	0.948(0.100)	0.977(0.103)
Midwest	1.291***(0.103)	1.285***(0.102)	0.932(0.0768)	0.951(0.0786)
West	1.168*(0.101)	1.161*(0.100)	0.888(0.0782)	0.903(0.0794)
Highest Parent Education^c				
Completed high school		1.002(0.147)	1.026(0.162)	1.047(0.167)
Beyond high school		0.882(0.126)	0.937(0.141)	1.004(0.154)
Household Income^d				
\$30,000 to \$50,000		1.190*(0.113)	1.184*(0.118)	1.178(0.118)
\$50,000 to \$80,000		1.135(0.118)	1.130(0.126)	1.118(0.124)
\$80,000+		1.485***(0.172)	1.247*(0.151)	1.245*(0.151)
Missing data		1.119(0.169)	1.120(0.176)	1.114(0.172)
Family Structure & Relationship Quality^e				
2 parent biological/adoptive-unhappy		1.433**(0.255)	1.048(0.184)	1.066(0.185)
2 parent stepfamilies-happy		1.563***(0.152)	1.390***(0.146)	1.319***(0.137)
2 parent stepfamilies-unhappy		1.437(0.518)	1.450(0.608)	1.336(0.540)
2 parent cohabiting-happy		3.281***(0.595)	2.708***(0.528)	2.568***(0.508)
2 parent cohabiting-unhappy		1.242(0.973)	1.113(0.887)	1.032(0.771)
2 parent other-happy		1.807***(0.356)	1.930***(0.395)	1.802***(0.364)
2 parent other-unhappy		0.731(0.627)	0.471(0.397)	0.434(0.340)
1 parent biological/adoptive		1.864***(0.160)	1.515***(0.138)	1.497***(0.137)
Religious Affiliation^f				
Conservative Protestant			0.626***(0.0667)	0.602***(0.0638)
Catholic			0.914(0.112)	0.930(0.114)
Other religion			0.665***(0.0833)	0.644***(0.0807)
No affiliation			0.802(0.128)	0.801(0.127)
Religious Attendance^g				
Few to many times per year			0.977(0.109)	0.986(0.110)
Once to 2-3 times per month			0.806*(0.0940)	0.800*(0.0935)
Once a week			0.491***(0.0585)	0.497***(0.0595)
More than once a week			0.240***(0.0322)	0.249***(0.0336)
Importance of Religious Faith			0.535***(0.0180)	0.541***(0.0183)
Currently Dating				1.665***(0.103)
Sex Ever				1.706***(0.110)
Educational Aspirations^h				
College graduate				0.847(0.0862)
Post-graduate or professional schooling				0.891(0.105)

Table 3 cont: Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression Models of Willingness to Cohabit (National Study of Youth and Religion, Waves 1, 2, & 3)				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	0.105***(0.0192)	0.0697***(0.0163)	2.087**(0.640)	2.917***(0.927)
Observations	7862	7862	7862	7862
^a Reference category is "Non-hispanic White"				
^b Reference category is "South"				
^c Reference category is "Less than high school"				
^d Reference category is "Less than \$30,000"				
^e Reference category is "2 parent biological/adoptive-happy"				
^f Reference category is "Mainline Protestant"				
^g Reference category is "Never"				
^h Reference category is "Less than college graduate"				
Standard errors in parentheses; *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001				

Table 4: Coefficients from Linear Regression Models of Ideal Age at Marriage (National Study of Youth and Religion, Waves 1, 2, & 3)				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	0.189***(0.0162)	0.188***(0.0162)	0.156***(0.0164)	0.191***(0.0173)
Gender	-0.647***(0.101)	-0.654***(0.0989)	-0.533***(0.0973)	-0.476***(0.0976)
Race/Ethnicity^a				
Non-hispanic Black	0.895***(0.153)	0.893***(0.156)	1.203***(0.160)	1.225***(0.158)
Hispanic	0.196(0.153)	0.385***(0.166)	0.283*(0.169)	0.299*(0.165)
Other race/ethnicity	1.301***(0.286)	1.282***(0.264)	1.242***(0.264)	1.208***(0.258)
Region^b				
Northeast	0.744***(0.152)	0.678***(0.152)	0.291*(0.154)	0.260*(0.153)
Midwest	0.327***(0.123)	0.290***(0.121)	0.0715(0.119)	0.0712(0.117)
West	0.378***(0.137)	0.292***(0.136)	0.0605(0.136)	0.0434(0.133)
Highest Parent Education^c				
Completed high school		-0.0180(0.344)	-0.00312(0.339)	-0.0597(0.340)
Beyond high school		0.434(0.345)	0.480(0.339)	0.317(0.342)
Household Income^d				
\$30,000 to \$50,000		0.434***(0.183)	0.431***(0.181)	0.436***(0.179)
\$50,000 to \$80,000		0.633****(0.177)	0.618****(0.174)	0.579****(0.170)
\$80,000+		0.940****(0.187)	0.820****(0.185)	0.740****(0.181)
Missing data		0.505***(0.235)	0.488***(0.227)	0.491***(0.223)
Family Structure & Relationship Quality^e				
2 parent biological/adoptive-unhappy		-0.0711(0.265)	-0.223(0.246)	-0.295(0.244)
2 parent stepfamilies-happy		0.303***(0.146)	0.218(0.143)	0.262*(0.141)
2 parent stepfamilies-unhappy		-0.0881(0.709)	-0.0954(0.724)	-0.0568(0.721)
2 parent cohabiting-happy		0.309(0.314)	0.128(0.310)	0.216(0.305)
2 parent cohabiting-unhappy		4.428*(2.534)	4.203*(2.422)	4.076*(2.360)
2 parent other-happy		-0.299(0.257)	-0.318(0.253)	-0.239(0.238)
2 parent other-unhappy		-1.553(1.120)	-1.735*(1.025)	-1.889*(1.073)
1 parent biological/adoptive		0.845****(0.143)	0.679****(0.142)	0.653****(0.140)
Religious Affiliation^f				
Conservative Protestant			-0.334***(0.138)	-0.290***(0.136)
Catholic			0.274*(0.148)	0.277*(0.146)
Other religion			-0.0963(0.180)	-0.0667(0.179)
No affiliation			0.652****(0.212)	0.671****(0.211)
Religious Attendance^g				
Few to many times per year			-0.0553(0.150)	-0.0668(0.149)
Once to 2-3 times per month			-0.0192(0.163)	-0.0517(0.161)
Once a week			-0.0871(0.184)	-0.143(0.182)
More than once a week			-0.528****(0.203)	-0.599****(0.201)
Importance of Religious Faith			-0.199****(0.0529)	-0.198****(0.0520)
Currently Dating				-0.819****(0.0945)
Sex Ever				0.137(0.0987)
Educational Aspirations^h				
College graduate				0.563****(0.159)
Post-graduate or professional schooling				0.901****(0.184)

Table 4 cont: Coefficients from Linear Regression Models of Ideal Age at Marriage (National Study of Youth and Religion, Waves 1, 2, & 3)				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	21.83***(0.301)	20.78***(0.392)	22.17***(0.476)	21.47***(0.482)
Observations	7786	7786	7786	7786
R-squared	0.037	0.053	0.076	0.091
^a Reference category is "Non-hispanic White"				
^b Reference category is "South"				
^c Reference category is "Less than high school"				
^d Reference category is "Less than \$30,000"				
^e Reference category is "2 parent biological/adoptive-happy"				
^f Reference category is "Mainline Protestant"				
^g Reference category is "Never"				
^h Reference category is "Less than college graduate"				
Standard errors in parentheses; *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001				

Table 5: Interactions Between Selected Social Determinants and Age (Odds Reported) (National Study of Youth and Religion, Waves 1, 2, & 3)		
	Willingness to Cohabit	Ideal Age at Marriage
Family Structure & Relationship Quality^e		
2 parent biological/adoptive-unhappy x Age	ns	0.047(0.077)
2 parent stepfamilies-happy x Age	ns	-0.061(0.048)
2 parent stepfamilies-unhappy x Age	ns	-0.287(0.161)
2 parent cohabiting-happy x Age	ns	0.038(0.112)
2 parent cohabiting-unhappy x Age	ns	1.150**(0.433)
2 parent other-happy x Age	ns	-0.109(0.079)
2 parent other-unhappy x Age	ns	0.193(0.356)
1 parent biological/adoptive x Age	ns	-0.081*(0.041)
Religious Affiliation^f		
Conservative Protestant x Age	0.073(0.038)	ns
Catholic x Age	0.110**(0.042)	ns
Other religion x Age	0.05(0.047)	ns
No affiliation x Age	0.066(0.059)	ns
Religious Attendance^g		
Few to many times per year x Age	-0.038(0.045)	ns
Once to 2-3 times per month x Age	-0.116*(0.046)	ns
Once a week x Age	-0.214***(0.046)	ns
More than once a week x Age	-0.219***(0.052)	ns
Importance of Religious Faith x Age	ns	-0.069***(0.015)
Currently Dating x Age	ns	-0.067*(0.033)
Sex Ever x Age	-0.084*(0.035)	ns
Educational Aspirations^h		
College graduate x Age	-0.053(0.039)	ns
Post-graduate or professional schooling x Age	-0.104*(0.044)	ns
^e Reference category is "2 parent biological/adoptive-happy"		
^f Reference category is "Mainline Protestant"		
^g Reference category is "Never"		
^h Reference category is "Less than college graduate"		
Standard errors in parentheses; *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001		
ns=not significant		

Table 6: Change in Log Odds Associated with Selected Social Determinants at Ages 13, 17, and 22+
(National Study of Youth and Religion, Waves 1, 2, & 3)

	Willingness to Cohabit			Ideal Age at Marriage		
	Age 13	Age 17	Age 22+	Age 13	Age 17	Age 22+
Family Structure & Relationship Quality^e						
2 parent cohabiting-unhappy	ns	ns	ns	-0.193	4.407	10.157
1 parent biological/adoptive	ns	ns	ns	0.998	0.674	0.269
Religious Affiliation^f						
Catholic	-0.495	-0.055	0.495	ns	ns	ns
Religious Attendance^g						
Once to 2-3 times per month	0.281	-0.183	-0.763	ns	ns	ns
Once a week	0.167	-0.689	-1.759	ns	ns	ns
More than once a week	-0.532	-1.408	-2.503	ns	ns	ns
Importance of Religious Faith	ns	ns	ns	0.102	-0.174	-0.519
Currently Dating	ns	ns	ns	-0.51	-0.778	-1.113
Sex Ever	0.942	0.606	0.186	ns	ns	ns
Educational Aspirations^h						
Post-graduate or professional schooling	0.327	-0.089	-0.609	ns	ns	ns
^e Reference category is "2 parent biological/adoptive-happy"						
^f Reference category is "Mainline Protestant"						
^g Reference category is "Never"						
^h Reference category is "Less than college graduate"						
ns=not significant						

Figure 1: Willingness to Cohabit

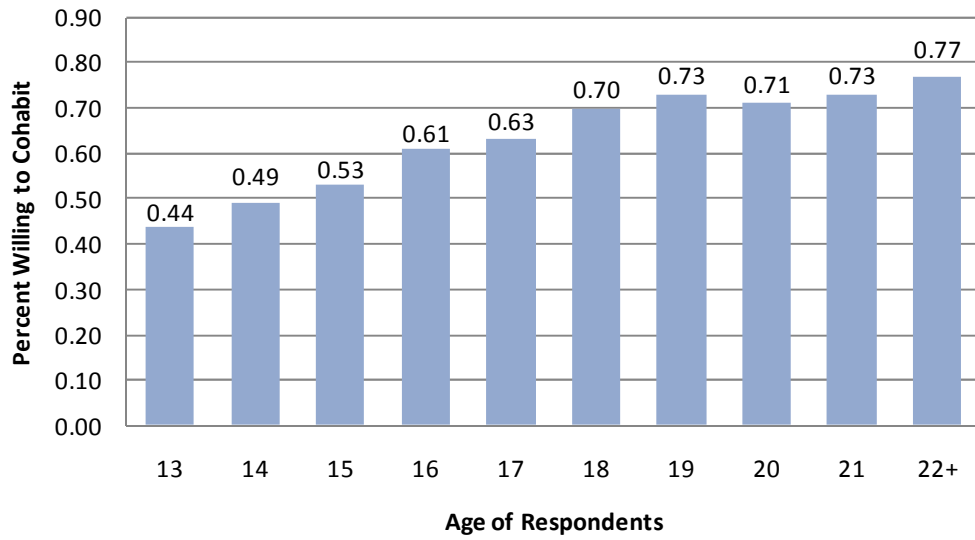


Figure 2: Ideal Age at Marriage

