

**SOCIAL EXCHANGE AND THE PROGRESSION
OF SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS ***

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Abstract

While a number of studies have examined the racial resemblance of spouses and cohabiting partners, little is known about the influence of racial homogamy on the progression of sexual relationships. Filling this gap, we compare the timing to cohabitation and marriage for young adults in racially homogamous and heterogamous sexual relationships based on data from the National Survey of Family Growth and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Results from these surveys reveal that relationships involving white men and minority women move much faster to cohabitation than relationships involving other racial combinations. Results from both surveys also suggest that crossing racial lines impedes transitions into marriage, though few of the young adults in these samples transition to marriage. We discuss these results in light of contemporary perspectives on social exchange and winnowing.

The nature and process of courting has changed in important ways over the past few decades (Bailey 1988; Coontz 2005; Fass 1988). The median age at first marriage increased dramatically between 1973 and 2003, rising from 21.0 to 25.3 years for women and from 23.2 to 27.1 years for men (Simmons and Dye 2004). For the majority of contemporary young adults, sexual intimacy is no longer reserved for marriage. While only 13.2% of men and 22.9% of women ages 20-24 were married in 2002 (Fields 2003), 85.8% of men and 87.5% of women in this age group had at least one sex partner in that year (Mosher, Chandra, and Jones 2005). Furthermore, 39% of women ages 20-24 had ever lived with a man in a sexually intimate relationship outside of marriage (Kennedy and Bumpass 2006).

Despite these changes in courtship, relatively little is known about factors associated with the progression of sexual relationships. While a growing number of nationally representative surveys collect the dates of key events in sexual relationships, studies have yet to examine the pace of young adults' relationships and the factors that expedite or delay the progression from sexual involvement to cohabitation and marriage. The absence of such research is surprising given the societal and theoretical importance of such information. The duration between sexual involvement and coresidence may reflect prevailing structural factors that influence schooling and employment opportunities, such as race or social class (Edin and Kefalas 2005; Geronimus and Korenman 1992; Luker 1996). The speed of relationship progression may also serve as an indicator of relationship compatibility, bargaining power, and social distance (the degree of intimacy between different groups). The absence of basic descriptive information on relationship progression no doubt weakens programmatic efforts to

strengthen relationships (Santelli 2006; Jelinek 2006; Stanley, Rhoades, and Markman 2006).

A better understanding of the processes underlying relationship progression and how they are related to social distance is especially warranted given changes over recent decades in assortative mating by race and education (Qian and Lichter 2006; Schwartz and Mare 2005). In 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the legality of prohibiting interracial marriages (*Loving vs. the State of Virginia*), ruling that the anti-miscegenation laws adhered to by 16 states at that time were unconstitutional. Since that decision the number of marriages that cross racial lines has multiplied dramatically. Census data indicate that from 1970 to 2000 the number of marriages between African Americans and whites increased nearly sixfold, going from 65,000 to 363,000, and marriages between whites and representatives of other racial groups grew from 233,000 to 1 million (Lichter and Qian 2004). The number of interracial cohabiting relationships has also swelled. Between 1990 and 2000, the years for which census data is available on cohabiting relationships, the share of interracial cohabiting couples among U.S. born partners in their 20s increased from 9.64 to 14.02 percent, while interracial marriages among similar aged couples grew from 5.68 to 9.06 percent (Rosenfeld and Kim 2005). In contrast, the percent of marriages involving spouses of different educational groups has decreased in recent decades (Schwartz and Mare 2005).

Studies that focus on current dating, cohabiting, and married couples offer tantalizing hints that particular couple-level attributes influence progression of sexual relationships into marriage and cohabitation. Specifically, they find that marriages are more racially homogamous than cohabiting and single relationships (Blackwell and

Lichter 2004; Joyner and Kao 2005; Laumann et al. 1994; Rosenfeld and Kim 2005). At the same time, they reveal that educational homogamy is greatest not among marriages but among cohabiting unions (Blackwell and Lichter 2004; Schoen and Weinick 1993). The norm of racial and educational homogamy across all types of relationships suggests that status hierarchies impede the development of sexual relationships that do cross racial or class barriers, notwithstanding American expressions of racial tolerance and support of democratic principles (Myrdal 1944; Schuman et al. 1997). Racial and educational homogamy in turn further growing levels of family inequality (McLanahan 2004).

Drawing from perspectives on interracial relationships that highlight exchange and winnowing processes, we develop hypotheses that explicitly address how racial homogamy influences the tempo of relationship progression from sexual involvement to cohabitation and marriage. Based on samples of young adults (i.e., ages 18 to 24) from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health Add Health (Add Health), we examine how the timing to cohabitation and marriage differs for racially heterogamous and homogamous sexual relationships. The results indicate that couples with a white man and a minority woman move faster from sexual involvement to cohabitation than relationships involving other racial combinations. The results also suggest that interracial couples move slower than same-race couples to marriage, but this is a period during the life course when few individuals make such a transition.

Social Exchange and Interracial Marriage

Exchange perspectives have been invoked to explain homogamy on a variety of characteristics, including race. An assumption of these perspectives is that individuals are utility-maximizing and seek partners with the most desirable characteristics, but they end up with partners who resemble themselves, as individuals with more desirable attributes pair off with each other (Becker 1981; England and Farkas 1986). Within this competitive mating context, the persistence of a racial hierarchy reinforces patterns of racial homogamy. The consensus on the existing hierarchy in the United States among scholars of this topic is that blacks are concentrated at the bottom, Asians and Latinos occupy an interim position, and whites remain at the top (Blumer 1958; Bonilla-Silva 2004; Omi and Winant 1994).

As formulated above, the exchange perspective fails to explain why individuals would form interracial relationships in the presence of considerable barriers between racial groups. Studying interracial marriage in a time when several states prohibited it, Davis and Merton proposed that these marriages must involve some sort of exchange, such as higher SES for higher racial caste (Davis 1941; Merton 1941). More specifically, the white spouse in a mixed marriage would experience a loss of social status from marrying a minority, but this loss would be offset if the minority partner had a higher SES. Because wives have historically derived their economic status from husbands, women are thought to be less able than men to use their economic status as a resource in exchange (Schoen and Weinick 1993).

Consistent with status-caste exchange, whites in interracial relationships have lower socioeconomic status, on average, than their counterparts in homogamous unions, and this relationship is reversed for racial minorities (Crowder and Tolnay 2000; Qian

1997; Kalmijn 1993). Exemplifying status-caste exchange, black men are more likely to marry white women if they are more highly educated, and white women are more likely to marry black men if they have less education (Schoen and Wooldredge 1989; Kalmijn 1993). Furthermore, black men who are married to white wives have much higher educational levels than the black husbands of black women (Lichter and Qian 2004). Focusing on couples with different levels of schooling, Qian (1997) finds evidence of status-caste exchange, but only among certain racial combinations of intermarried couples (e.g., marriages between black men and white women).

Taken together, the findings of recent studies on intermarriage suggest that status-caste exchange may be less pervasive than originally thought. After all, marriages are more likely to be educationally homogamous than educationally heterogamous (Qian 1997; Rosenfeld 2005). Previous studies also suggest that axes of exchange vary in complicated ways by gender and race. Assuming that Asian men are better able to use their SES as a resource in status-caste exchange, we would expect Asian males to have higher rates of intermarriage than Asian females. Yet Asian men are less likely than Asian women to marry interracially (Qian and Lichter 2001; Qian 1997). Some studies attribute this partly to U.S. military involvement in Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and the Philippines (Jacobs and Labov 2002; Liang and Ito 1999). Others have speculated that conventional standards of attractiveness, masculinity, and femininity must explain sex differences in interracial marriages among Asians (e.g., Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan, 1990; Sailer, 1997).

Winnowing and Interracial Involvement

The vast majority of studies that address status-caste exchange focus on married couples and do not explicitly consider the progression of sexual relationships. Attempts to explain the selective nature of married couples have relied on filter theory. According to filter theory, as individuals contemplate relationships of greater seriousness their selection criteria becomes increasingly refined (Blackwell and Lichter 2000; 2004). Important filters include ascribed traits such as race and age, as well as achieved traits like educational attainment (Kalmijn 1993; Schwartz and Mare 2005). Not only are individuals less likely to form relationships with those who differ in terms of selection criteria, they are less likely to advance to greater levels of intimacy in heterogamous relationships. As a consequence of what has been termed a *winnowing* process, homogamous relationships have a higher likelihood of proceeding to marriage, while heterogamous unions are more likely to persist as dating relationships, or dissolve. By the same logic, relationships that are less profitable in terms of the overall exchange of characteristics are more likely to founder and dissolve (Blackwell and Lichter 2000; 2004).

How, exactly, does cohabitation fit into this process? Schoen and Weinick (1993) have argued that cohabitation is a weaker bond than marriage, and those deciding to move in with a partner may not be in search of the same attributes as those pursuing marital partners. Specifically, they are less concerned with longer-term kinship issues, and consequently, less preoccupied with a partner's ascribed characteristics such as ethnicity and religion. However, they place a greater emphasis on a partner's achieved characteristics, which reflect the short-term ability to contribute economically to a relationship (see also Brines and Joyner 1999).

In order to better understand winnowing processes, previous studies have compared racial homogamy across ongoing single, cohabiting, and married relationships; however, patterns differ from one survey to the next, and across racial groups within a single survey (see, for example Blackwell and Lichter 2004; Laumann et al. 1994). Joyner and Kao (2005) compare the outcomes of same-race and interracial relationships following their formation in analyses that combine men and women from different racial groups. They find that interracial and same-race relationships do not differ in their chances of either breaking up or forming a co-residential relationship; nonetheless, interracial couples are less likely than same-race couples to begin a co-residential relationship with marriage (as opposed to cohabitation). Their only analyses to deal with the censoring of current relationships by the interview focus on the timing to the formation of a co-residential relationship. Like their descriptive statistics, their survival models suggest no significant differences between same-race and interracial couples in the likelihood of co-residence.

Focusing on cohabiting couples, Sassler and McNally (2003) find that interracial cohabiting couples are less likely to marry than are racially homogamous white couples, though they are no more likely to break up. Following new unwed parents over time, Goldstein and Harknett (2006) find that interracial couples do not appear to differ from same-race couples with respect to marriage and dissolution. While previous studies concerning the winnowing process are informative, they offer only a cursory understanding of how joint partner characteristics influence the progression of sexual relationships following their inception.

Theoretical Framework and Expectations

How the perspectives contrasted above might be applied to study the *tempo* of sexual relationships has yet to be explicitly addressed. As winnowing perspectives suggest, less serious relationships may be more exploratory than more committed unions like marriages. Extrapolating from winnowing perspectives, we might therefore expect slower progression from sex to marriage among interracial couples than racially homogamous unions. Such a development would signify the continued existence of racial barriers deterring interracial relationships from advancing to marriage.

The progression from sex to cohabitation, on the other hand, will depend on the meaning of cohabitation. Recent qualitative studies of cohabiting individuals suggest that for contemporary young adults, cohabitation is typically not viewed as an alternative or precursor to marriage but an alternative to singlehood. When young cohabiting individuals offer reasons for why they moved in with a sexual partner, they tend to mention factors such as convenience, finances, and housing needs, rather than testing their compatibility for marriage (Sassler 2004). Some researchers suggest that cohabiting individuals “slide” into cohabitation without very much thought (Manning and Smock 2005; Stanley, Rhoades, and Markman 2006). To the extent that cohabitation is simply an alternative to singlehood, we expect racial homogamy to have little influence on the timing to cohabitation.

Previous studies also suggest that individuals who enter into cohabiting unions are selectively different from those choosing to marry directly. Specifically, they have lower socioeconomic status (Bumpass, Sweet, and Cherlin 1991; Clarkberg 1999; Sassler and Goldscheider 2004; Sassler and McNally, 2003). Recall that socioeconomic status

influences interracial marriage, but in ways that differ by race. Rosenfeld and Kim (2005) find that individuals who have moved from one state to another, and who are presumably freer from parental influence, are more likely to be in a cohabiting relationship (as opposed to a marriage), and are more likely to be in an interracial co-residential union (as opposed to a same-race union). By a similar logic, it could be argued that individuals who are more experimental and less conventional will be more inclined to form interracial relationships *and* move quickly to cohabitation. The findings suggest that interracial couples will move *faster* than same-race couples to cohabitation, but due to factors related to selection.

Overview of Study

Focusing on most recent sexual relationships, we present survival estimates that reveal the timing from when partners begin having sex to when they dissolve a relationship, move in together (cohabit), or marry. Since previous studies have not focused on the progression of sexual relationships, we first present survival estimates indicating the timing of these transitions based on two nationally representative surveys. Next, we estimate proportional hazards models for both surveys that formally test whether racially homogamous and heterogamous sexual unions differ in their timing to dissolution, cohabitation, and marriage, before and after controlling for demographic variables. Based on a sample that includes all of the sexual relationships for Add Health respondents, we additionally estimate fixed-effects proportional hazards models that examine differences in timing between racially homogamous and heterogamous sexual unions *within* individuals. These models offer us an idea of whether racial hierarchies

impede transitions to marriage for recent cohorts of young adults, and whether transitions to cohabitation are impervious to these hierarchies. They also indicate whether the barriers that prevent interracial couples from marrying lead them to dissolve their relationships faster.

Data and Samples

Data for our analyses of young adults come from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (or Add Health). The 2002 National Survey of Family Growth is a nationally representative cross-sectional sample of 7,643 women and 4,928 men ages 15 to 45; it excludes the military and incarcerated population (Lepkowski et al. 2006). Add Health is a school-based study of adolescents who were in grades seven through twelve when they were selected to participate in the survey (Harris et al. 2003). Based on school rosters, Add Health selected a nationally representative sample of 20,745 students in these schools to participate in an in-home interview in 1994 and 1995. In 2001 and 2002, Add Health re-interviewed 15,197 of the wave one in-home respondents. The wave three interview of Add Health and the 2002 NSFG are some of the first nationally representative surveys to collect information on respondents' recent opposite-sex sexual partners, regardless of whether or not they extended into the last year. Both the NSFG and Add Health additionally ask whether these relationships eventuated in cohabitation and marriage, and if so, the dates of these events. Utilizing both data sets allows us to corroborate our findings, as these outcomes have not been examined before. It is also important to compare the results from the two surveys since the sampling frames are different.

We limit our samples to respondents with recent partners of the opposite sex, as the NSFG does not collect information analogous information on same-sex partners. Since most of the Add Health respondents were between the ages 18 to 24 at the time of the recent interview, we limit the samples from both surveys to respondents in this age range. Because the NSFG Male Questionnaire did not collect information on the race of partners other than the most recent one, we restrict the scope of most of analyses to most recent sexual partners. However, in some of our analyses we include all of the sexual relationships that Add Health respondents report having since the wave one interview to estimate our fixed-effects survival models. We also limit our samples of NSFG respondents to men, as the 2002 NSFG Female Questionnaire collected information on most recent sexual relationships only if the relationship extended into the last year, and it asked about the race of partners only for current relationships.

We do not include respondents with missing data on their own race or the race of their partner. We do not include respondents who report they are Native Americans, or who report having a Native American partner, because of the ambiguity in defining this racial category and also its small size. Also excluded from our samples are respondents with missing data on the start of their relationship or key events (if applicable).

Dependent Variables

Dissolution, Cohabitation, and Marriage. Our survival analyses treat dissolution, cohabitation, and marriage as competing risks and estimate a separate model for each of these outcomes (Allison 1995). For respondents who dissolve their relationships, cohabit, or marry, we measure the number of months between the formation of the relationship and the first of these three events. For respondents who fail to experience

one of these events, we measure the number of months between the formation of the relationship and the date of the interview. Our models censor respondents when they experience an alternative event to the one in question. Respondents who fail to experience an event are censored at the date of the interview.

Independent Variables

Racial Homogamy. On the basis of the race that best describes them, as well as their Hispanic status, we divide respondents and partners into four mutually exclusive groups: white, black, Hispanic, and Asian. Those who identify themselves as Hispanic are defined as Hispanic, regardless of their race. These categories are consistent with those of previous studies focusing on interracial marriage (Harris and Ono 2004; Qian 1997).

For white respondents, we distinguish those who have a minority partner with a single indicator available. For minorities respondents (i.e., blacks, Hispanics, and Asians), we use one indicator variable to distinguish respondents who have a white partner, and another indicator variable to distinguish respondents who have a different-race minority partner, using respondents with same-race minority partner as the reference group. While previous studies addressing winnowing perspectives simply distinguish between same-race and interracial relationships for minorities, we distinguish white partners from other different-race partners because whites are said to occupy the dominant position in the racial hierarchy. Small cell sizes preclude us from being able to distinguish the race of minority partners.

Control Variables. We include as controls variables that are available in both surveys and refer to the period before the sexual relationship was formed. The set of control variables consists of age, race (for minorities), maternal education, nativity, adolescent family structure, church attendance, virginity status, age at first sex, the number of previous sexual partners, and any cohabitation experience prior to the most recent relationship. (We use the natural logarithm of the number of sexual partners in these models to normalize its distribution.) These variables are intended to take into account factors that have effects on both the likelihood of forming an interracial relationship and the timing to union formation in relationships.

Descriptive Results

Table 1 displays weighted descriptive statistics for the variables included in our models. Since exchange processes differ by race, our analyses separate non-Hispanic whites from minorities. Because the numbers of some minority groups are small, especially in the NSFG, we pool respondents who are non-Hispanic black, Hispanic, and Asian together. These statistics are also broken down by survey; statistics for Add Health are additionally stratified by biological sex.

The first panel of this table displays the proportion of each group that experiences each of the competing risk outcomes. Interesting, it does not reveal large differences between whites and minorities *within* surveys. Rather, it displays sizeable differences *across* surveys. For instance, roughly 9% of NSFG men marry their partner without living with them first, while about 5% of Add Health men and 8% of Add Health women fall into this category. While the sex gap within Add Health seems plausible given sex

differences in the median age at marriage, the differences between NSFG men and Add Health men are not expected given the fact that Add Health draws from a school-based population that excludes high school drop-outs. Additional analyses (not shown) suggest that these differences are not a consequence of excluding respondents with missing data on key dates. We offer explanations for these differences in our discussion of the survival estimates below. **Look at confidence intervals for these estimates.**

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Considering our key variables that measure racial homogamy, a smaller proportion of white men from Add Health than from the NSFG report having a white partner (.098 vs .114). A much higher proportion of minority men from Add Health than the NSFG report having a white partner (.230 vs .161), while minority men from the NSFG are slightly more likely than their counterparts from Add Health to report having a different-race minority partner (.087 vs .077). These differences between men across the two surveys are consistent with fact that Add Health relied on a school-based sampling frame which may under-represent more disadvantaged youth (both white and minority) who have dropped out of high school. Focusing on Add Health, a higher proportion of white women than white men report having a minority partner (.114 vs .098). While minority men are much more likely than minority women to report having a white partner (.223 vs .117), minority women are more likely than minority men to report having a different-race minority partner (.103 vs .077)

Due to subtle differences in the coding of variables, it is difficult to make comparisons across many of the variables. Still, it is worth noting that minority men in the NSFG have mothers with less education than minority men and women in Add

Health. For instance, roughly 35% of NSFG minority men report that their mothers did not have a high school diploma or GED, while 28% of the mothers of Add Health men reported that they did not have a high school degree. (These estimates exclude missing reports.) Counter to our expectations, there do not appear to be substantial differences in maternal educational education across NSFG and Add Health white respondents.

Focusing on young adult men from the NSFG, Figure 1 displays weighted survivor estimates for the three routes by which individuals may exit a “single” relationship: dissolution, cohabitation, and marriage. As can be seen, the most common routes by which young men leave singlehood are dissolution and cohabitation. In fact, men are about as likely to cohabit with a partner as they are to dissolve a single relationship. By the end of the first year, roughly two out of every five men (i.e., $2 \times [1 - .80]$) have either dissolved a sexual union or they have formed a cohabiting union. Within two years, almost two out of three men have exited singlehood via ones of these two routes. The proportion of young adult men who have married, on the other hand, is small. By the end of two years, about one out of ten men have married. Figure 2 reveals strikingly similar patterns in Add Health; however, Add Health respondents transition more quickly into cohabitation and more slowly into marriage. These differences in timing are consistent with differences in the likelihood of experiencing each of the competing risk outcomes. **Pace in qualitative studies.**

[FIGURES 1 AND 2 ABOUT HERE]

Figure 3 displays these survivor estimates for Add Health women. As we would expect given sex differences in the timing of marriage, Add Health women transition somewhat faster into marriage than Add Health men. While their speed to a cohabiting

relationship is comparable to that of their male counterparts, their pace of dissolving a relationship is much slower. By the end of two years, about one out of ten women has entered directly into marriage, about two out of every five women has entered a cohabiting relationship, and almost one out of every four has exited a single relationships.

[FIGURES 3 ABOUT HERE]

Given the ambiguity in defining the start times of cohabitation (Manning and Smock 2005), it is not surprising that we obtain different estimates for the timing to cohabitation in Add Health and the NSFG. However, these differences are not only a reflection of timing, but also the fact that Add Health respondents are more likely than NSFG respondents to have cohabited with their recent sexual partner. Yet, Add Health and NSFG had questions addressing cohabitation that were not strikingly different in wording. The NSFG Male Questionnaire asked male respondents if they had ever lived with a female sexual partner, stating that living together means having a sexual relationship while sharing the same usual residence. In a later section, it asked respondents whether they ever lived with the most recent sexual partner. Add Health simply asked respondents if they had ever lived with each of the sexual and romantic partners they enumerated.

One major difference, however, is that NSFG asked respondents about cohabitation in a face-to-face interview. In contrast, Add Health using a computer-assisted self-interview (ACASI) when collecting information about each sex partner. ACASI enables respondents to enter responses to questions that appear on screen and are heard on tape with earphones, allowing respondents greater privacy. Our results are consistent with the possibility that NSFG respondents may have underreported

cohabitation. Greater underreporting on the part of NSFG respondents would not only depress the proportion of men cohabiting, but it would also inflate the numbers of respondents entering marriage directly. The disparity in the proportions marrying and cohabiting across these studies underscores the need to corroborate our results.

Multivariate Results

Table 2 displays the hazard ratios (i.e., the exponentiated estimates) for the racial homogamy indicators across the three different competing risks based on conventional and fixed-effects proportional hazards models. Importantly, these models give us an idea of whether the timing of dissolution, cohabitation, and marriage differs markedly in the NSFG and Add Health.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Models 1 and 2, respectively, show hazards of dissolution, cohabitation, and marriage before and after the set of control variables is added. To take into account both studies' complex designs, these conventional models weight these analyses and calculate robust standard errors (taking into account the clustering of individuals within their primary sampling units). Model 3 shows these hazards for the fixed-effects proportional hazards models. Each panel pertains to a different set of men: white men from the NSFG; minority men from the NSFG; white men from Add Health; minority men from Add Health; white women from Add Health, and minority women from Add Health.

In the conventional models estimated for whites, hazard ratios greater than one indicate that the timing to a given outcome is faster for white respondents with minority partners than for white respondents with white partners, while hazards less than one

indicate slower timing with minority partners than with white partners. In the models estimated for minorities, the hazard ratios have a similar interpretation but the emphasis is on how much faster or slower respondents move with white partners and different-race minority partners relative to same-race minority partners.

Based on winnowing perspectives, we predicted that interracial relationships would move slower than same-race relationships to marriage. Assuming cohabitation is an alternative to marriage, we predicted that racial homogamy would have no bearing on the timing to cohabitation. Based on a competing argument that highlights selection, we predicted that omitted variables associated with interracial involvement and the pace of cohabitation would create the illusion that interracial relationships move more quickly than same-race relationships. According to this competing argument, we would expect the hazard ratio to decline in magnitude across Models 1 and 2 to the extent that we are able to adequately measure selection characteristics, and to decline across Models 1 and 3 as we purge the influence of stable unmeasured characteristics of respondents.

Although we did not make explicit predictions about how racial homogamy influences the timing of dissolution, we present models of dissolution for comparative purposes. Results for the first set of these models (Model 1) suggest that in most instances interracial relationships dissolve somewhat more quickly than same-race relationships, as indicated by hazards that exceed one. Still, none of these differences is significant at a $p < .05$ level.

Turning to the models of cohabitation, we see that white men from the NSFG move significantly *faster* to cohabitation if they have a minority partner than if they have a white partner. Specifically, the hazard of cohabitation for white men based on Model 1

is 58.7% (i.e., $[1.587 - 1] * 100$) higher if they have a minority partner than if they have a white partner. Similarly, white men from Add Health move significantly faster to cohabitation if they have a minority partner, but the hazard ratio is smaller in magnitude. There is also evidence that minority men significantly move faster to cohabitation with white partners than with same-race partners, but only among NSFG respondents. The results for Add Health women parallel the results for Add Health men. The pace to cohabitation for white women does not differ significantly by the race of their partner; however, minority women cohabit significantly faster with white men than with same-race partners.

The models of cohabitation just discussed do not include control variables, so the faster pace of relationships involving white and minorities may be spurious. After the set of control variables is added to the model, we witness a significantly faster pace between white men and minority women only among the sample of white men from Add Health. The hazard rate for white men from Add Health is 39.4% higher if they have a minority partner than if they have a white partner. In additional models estimated for Add Health men (results not shown), we were able to include several supplementary variables to further rule out selection arguments. Specifically, we estimated models that took into account differences in the educational attainment of partners; conventionality (based on a scale comprised of items “your behavior often depends on how you think other people want you to behave”); attitudes towards cohabitation and interracial relationships; interstate mobility; and region of country and metropolitan status in adolescence. None of these variables substantially explains the faster progression to cohabitation among Add Health couples involving white men and minority women. As evidence of this, the effect

of having a minority partner for white men barely changes in magnitude with the inclusion of each of these variables.

In conventional proportion hazards models with controls, we find weak evidence that relationships between white men and minority women move faster among white men from the NSFG and minority women from Add Health. We suspect that the minority partner effect for NSFG white men fails to reach statistical significance because of the small number of men in this sample with minority partners. After all, hazard rate for cohabitation is more elevated when NSFG white men have minority partners than when Add Health white men have minority partners. We suspect that the weak effect of having a white partner for minority women in Add Health reflects the fact they come from more advantaged families than the general population of minority women.

Additional results (not shown) suggest that the relatively faster pace of relationships between minority women and white men differs according to socioeconomic status. Among white men in both the NSFG and Add Health, the hazard ratio for having a minority partner in comparison to a white partner *increases* as maternal education increases. Among minority women in Add Health, the hazard ratio for having a white partner *decreases* with maternal education. This leads us to suspect that that our results for white men and minority women would be more congruent were the minorities in Add Health a less select (i.e., advantaged) population.

Consistent with our expectations, the results from the first sets of models examining the timing of marriage reveal that relationships between minorities and whites, as well as relationships between different-race minorities, move slower to marriage than same-race relationships; however, many of the effects fail to reach statistics significance

because so few young adults transition directly to marriage. In fact, we could not estimate these models using the NSFG because of the small number of marriages. The consistently low hazard ratios suggest that the lack of significance is due to the small degree of precision. The fact that the significance levels are highest for the group with that is most likely to marry (i.e., white women) is also evidence of this.

These results are not inconsistent with an earlier study that focused on the timing from sex to co-residence based on Add Health. Joyner and Kao (2005) found that interracial couples did not form co-residential relationships any slower than same-race relationships. The results above suggest that racial homogamy has opposite influences on marriage and cohabitation. These influences offset each other in models that do not distinguish between cohabitation and marriage.

We additionally estimate fixed effects proportional hazards models that pool all sexual relationship relationships for Add Health respondents. Estimating a separate baseline hazard for each respondent, these models take into account all unmeasured stable characteristics of respondents (Allison 2005). While the previous models estimate changes in the hazard as a function of differences across individuals, these models estimate these changes as a function of differences within individuals. Specifically, they reveal the change in hazards as whites move from white partners to minority partners, and as minorities change from minority partners to white or different-race minority partners. Because fixed-effects models are less powerful than conventional models, these models are more difficult to estimate when the number of events is small. For this reason, we do not estimate these models for marriage.

The results of the fixed-effects models are generally consistent with the conventional models that include controls. One notable exception is that minority women from Add Health move significantly faster to cohabitation in their relationships with white men than with minority men. The fixed-effects results for white men from Add Health parallel these; they continue to move significantly faster with minority women than with white women. For minority women and white men alike, the hazard ratios are greater in magnitude in the fixed-effects specifications of the proportional hazards models than in the conventional specifications. Furthermore, simple descriptive statistics which display the proportions of Add Health couples cohabiting by race of respondent and partner suggest that these findings are quite robust (see Appendix A).

Conclusion

Scholars have long viewed marriage across ethnic or racial lines as an indicator of social distance between groups (Blau 1994; Blau, Blum, Schwartz 1982; Gordon 1964; Lieberman and Waters 1988). More recently they have asserted that similarities and differences in mate selection patterns across marriage and cohabitation offer us an idea of the meaning of cohabitation in contemporary society (Smock 2000). They also suggest that transitions to cohabitation and marriage give us an idea of men's and women's bargaining power in different types of relationships. Specifically, they have argued that cohabitation is an arrangement that favors men because they receive the benefits of marriage (i.e., domestic services and sexual access) without necessarily having to provide economic support (Cherlin 2000; Schoen and Weinick 1993; Qian, Lichter, and Mellott. 2005).

Given the persistence of racial hierarchies, we expected that interracial sexual relationships, particularly those involving whites and minorities, would move slower to marriage than same-race relationships. Assuming that cohabitation is an alternative to singlehood, we predicted that racial homogamy would be inconsequential to the speed with which sexual partners move towards cohabitation. Noting the selectivity of those who cohabit and form interracial relationships, we also expected to find a faster pace to cohabitation among interracial couples than among same-race couples.

In order to corroborate our results, we included young adults from two different nationally representative surveys. Focusing on the most recent opposite-sex relationships of men between the ages of 18 and 24, our results reveal that couples move faster to cohabitation if they include a white man and minority women. Furthermore, they demonstrate that the faster pace of these couples is not due to the characteristics of white men and minority women who pair with each other. Since Add Health collected information on the race of partners that preceded the last one, we were able to estimate fixed-effects proportional hazards models that took into account stable unmeasured characteristics of respondents.

That couples involving a white man and a minority woman move faster to cohabitation, and that this more rapid relationship tempo is not due to selection, suggests the need to rethink extant perspectives on the progression of sexual relationships. It could be the case that couples involving a white man and a minority woman slide into cohabitation faster due to the same social forces thought to impede them from marrying. Focusing on data from the first wave of Add Health, Vaquera and Kao (2005) find that adolescent respondents in interracial relationships report fewer public displays of

affection than their counterparts in same-race relationships. For instance, they are less likely to hold hands, tell others they are a couple, go out together in a group, and meet their partners' parents. Young adult couples involving a white man and minority woman may feel more awkward in public, and consequently, may spend more time alone together. This in itself could speed up the relationship tempo, as qualitative studies of the process of entering into shared living finds that many couples justify cohabiting *because* they spend so much time together (Sassler 2004).

If the above explanation were plausible, then we would also expect to find minority men moving faster to cohabitation with white partners than with same-race partners. Our analyses suggest that minority men move at the same speed to cohabitation regardless of the race of their partner. This asymmetry between white and minority men suggests that exchange perspectives may better explain the faster pace of couples involving white men and minority women.

As mentioned earlier, cohabitation is said to be an arrangement more beneficial to men than to women. Perhaps white men have more bargaining power in their relationships with minority women than in their relationships with white females. Some scholars have suggested that men's advantaged gender position makes them more willing to experiment in their romantic pursuits by dating across racial lines (e.g., Yancey 2000). Our findings suggest that the combination of white men's race and gender privilege results in a more rapid relationship progression with minority partners than in racially homogamous unions. Additional research is needed to tease out how other indicators of relationship power shape the progression of intimate relationships.

Our results also suggest that racial homogamy influences the timing to marriage. One caveat is that our age range is too limited to detect significant differences, given increases in marital delay. As stated earlier, only 13.2% of men ages 20-24 were married in 2002 (Fields 2003). Future studies can gain more statistical power in models of the timing of marriage by focusing on young adult women from Add Health, or examining an older group of men in the NSFG. The expanding age range of subsequent data releases from Add Health will also enable additional explorations of relationship progression into marriage.

In sum, our findings shed important light on one aspect of the contemporary partner market in the United States. We find the greatest support for the exchange perspective as a means of explaining the more rapid tempo of relationship progression among white men and minority women who become romantically involved with each other. That white men who are sexually involved with minority women enter into cohabiting relationships more rapidly than white men involved with white partners is not a spurious reflection of characteristics that select young men into cohabiting unions and interracial relationships. Rather, it appears to be the exercise of gender and race privilege to expedite an arrangement generally perceived to favor men, though that cannot be determined definitively without ascertaining which partner initiated the idea of living together.

Clearly, further attention to various aspects of romantic relationships, such as how rapidly they progress, the level of couple agreement on important issues (such as desires for children or marriage), as well as how gender is negotiated is warranted if we are to better understand the influence of cohabitation on the formation and stability of marriages.

Our results provide hints about why mixed-race relationships may be less likely to progress from cohabitation to marriage, and more likely to break up if they do marry. With less time to gather information on a prospective partner, and ascertain whether goals and values are compatible, mixed-race couples may be less able to weather the challenges that face all relationships. But mixed-race relationships are not like all relationships, in that couples generally perceive less acceptance and support from family and friends (Vaquera and Kao 2005). Furthermore, the rapid entrance into shared living might impede the pursuit of schooling and employment opportunities. Finally, more rapid entrance into shared living increases exposure to conception. Rates of unintended pregnancy are particularly high among cohabiting women, who have higher rates of contraceptive failure than do married and single women (Finer and Henshaw 2006; Fu, Darroch, Haas, and Ranjit 1999). Clearly, more information about the factors facilitating as well as impeding the progression of interracial intimate relationships is necessary if we are to better understand the nature of exchange, and the reconfiguration or maintenance of existing racial hierarchies.

Add your paper to the reference section and discuss how men are the instigators of cohabitation.

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