

COHABITATION:
PARENTS FOLLOWING IN THEIR CHILDREN'S FOOTSTEPS?

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ABSTRACT

It has been theorized that socialization can be reciprocal; not only from parents to children but also from children to parents, however, this theory has not received much empirical support. As cohabitation has risen dramatically in the past few decades among adults of all ages, it is possible that middle and older-aged parents are "learning" cohabitation from their young adult children. Prior work has shown that parents are likely to view cohabitation more positively after their young adult child cohabits but no one has taken this a step further to determine if parents will then be more likely to cohabit themselves following the start of a young adult child's cohabitation. Utilizing all three waves of the National Survey of Families and Households to conduct an event history analysis, I test whether there is support for this argument. Results show that while cohabitation by young adult children does not influence parent's likelihood of cohabiting versus remaining single, it does negatively influence the likelihood of forming a marriage versus remaining single and positively influence the likelihood of cohabiting versus marrying. Therefore, there is partial support for the notion of reciprocal socialization of cohabitation behavior.

Cohabitation: Parents Following in their Children's Footsteps?

Cohabitation has risen rapidly in the United States over the past 30 years. Today, there are over 5 million cohabiting couples in the United States, which is over 9 times the number of couples cohabiting in 1970 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2005). Cohabitation has contributed to a delay, and some argue a decline, in first marriage (Bumpass & Lu, 2000). As cohabitation is viewed as a family formation behavior, with the increased presence of children within cohabiting unions and its tie with marriage (although that tie is weakening), cohabitation is most often studied in early adulthood. Researchers are beginning to realize, however, that cohabitation is also occurring in middle and later life. Only a handful of studies have attempted to describe older cohabitators and determine what factors are considered in their decision to cohabit rather than marry (Brown, Roebuck Bulanda, & Lee, 2006; Brown, Lee, & Roebuck Bulanda, 2005; Chevan, 1996). These studies have not considered the impact of socialization by young adult children on the decision to cohabit in middle and later life.

Socialization has in the past been considered a top down process; parents socialize their children, teachers socialize their students, and so on. Children are thus viewed as a sponge, simply absorbing all the information, lessons, and social cues that are presented to them either directly or indirectly (e.g., Freud, 1933; Erikson, 1950). Mead (1934/2002), Heinz (2002) and other early symbolic interactionists put forth the notion that individuals have agency and are therefore able to decide what socialization cues to adopt, to ignore, and to modify to better suit the self. It is this sense of agency that allows for the process of reciprocal socialization. Reciprocal socialization is simply the notion that individuals are both agents and subjects of socialization. This process continues

throughout the life course as individuals are socialized by many other institutions and in turn socialize other individuals. Socialization from child to parent has been given lip service in the theoretical world; however, empirical studies of these processes have been rather limited (Gecas & Seff, 1990).

To date, there are no studies that have examined the effect of young adult children's cohabitation experience on subsequent parental cohabitation behavior. One study did examine the influence of young adult children's cohabiting behavior on parental attitudes toward cohabitation and found that young adult's behavior positively influenced parental attitudes (Axinn & Thornton, 1993). I would like to take this a step further and examine the influence of young adult children's cohabiting behavior on parental cohabiting behavior. Cohabitation is the modal pathway to marriage among young adults (Bumpass & Lu, 2000). Cohabitation is also more likely to occur among the ever married population than the never married (Bumpass & Lu). I would argue that it is likely that those middle- and older-aged adults "learned cohabitation" from their young adult children. The proposed study will contribute to the literature on both reciprocal socialization in adulthood and cohabitation in later life. I will first outline the relevant literature on reciprocal socialization and cohabitation in later life. I will then discuss the theoretical framework, describe the data to be analyzed and tentative methods, and finally, close with a brief discussion.

BACKGROUND

Reciprocal Socialization

The family has traditionally been viewed as the primary agent of socialization (Freud, 1933; Erikson, 1950; Heilbrun, 1965). The socialization of children by parents is

thought to be so intense, take place over so many years, and has such strong consequences for the development of the self that the effects of childhood socialization last well into adulthood (e.g., Campbell, 1969). There have been two main critiques of traditional socialization theory. The first is that perhaps parents do not specifically transmit their values and beliefs to the child but instead transmit their status (Acock, 1984). In other words, the similarity of values, beliefs, work ethic, and so on are actually transmitted through macrosocial identities such as race, class, religion, marital status, and other important social statuses that impact social attitudes.

The second critique is that traditional socialization theory does not acknowledge the influence of children on their parents and the relationship between the parent-child dyad throughout the life course (Hagestad, 1981; Featherman, 1983). This latter critique has come to be known as reciprocal socialization. There have been limited empirical studies to test this concept (Glass, Bengtson, & Dunham, 1986; Hagestad, 1984; Lewis & Rosenblum, 1974). All of these studies provide evidence of the existence of child-to-parent socialization in the domains, for example, of television behavior and attitudes toward cohabitation. The most recent study of child influences on parents was published in 1993. Clearly, this topic does not receive adequate attention in the literature. Given the positive influence of young adult child cohabitation on parental attitudes, I would argue that parents of children who cohabit are more likely to experience cohabitation themselves. This argument will be discussed in more detail below.

Cohabitation in Later Life

More than 1 million of the approximately 10 million cohabitators in the U.S. are over the age of 50, according to the 2000 Census. However, cohabitation is most often studied during the period of emerging adulthood. Emerging adulthood is a demographically dense period in one's life given the vast number of transitions and changes in trajectories in those years (Rindfuss, 1991). Cohabitation is a phenomenon occurring among young adults as either a step in the courtship process leading to marriage, a testing ground for marriage, or an alternative to marriage. The reasons for cohabitation in this stage of life and the possible implications for trajectories have been well studied in the literature (e.g., Brown, 2000a; 2000b; Brown & Booth, 1995; Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Casper & Sayer, 2000). The connection between cohabitation and marriage and family formation behavior in emerging adulthood has been the justification for the focus on that period of the life course. In actuality, however, cohabitation is more likely to occur among the ever married than among the never married (Bumpass & Lu). With high rates of divorce and a greater proportion of people never marrying (Bumpass & Lu) several scholars have projected a declining proportion of older adults will be married in the future (e.g., Allen et al., 2000; Cooney & Dunne, 2001; De Jong Gierveld, 2004). Therefore, it is more likely than ever that cohabitation is also occurring in middle and later life and will continue to increase rapidly as the Baby Boomers age into older adulthood.

Only a handful of studies have actually tried to document the prevalence of cohabitation in middle and later life. Chevan (1996) reports that more than 400,000 cohabitators were aged 60 and older in 1990, up from less than 10,000 in 1960. In 2000, more than 1.2 million persons aged 50 and older were cohabiting (Brown et. al., 2005).

Parallel results are found by both Chevan and Brown and colleagues. Older adult cohabitators are much more likely to be male rather than female, so much so that both studies run analyses separately by gender. In addition, those who are deepest in poverty are more likely to cohabit, much as in the young adult population. The young old (60-69, Chevan; 51-59, Brown et al., 2006) are more likely than the older old to cohabit. The widowed are more likely than the never married but less likely than the divorced and separated to cohabit. Black men are more likely than other men to cohabit although there is no significant racial difference for women.

It is theorized that cohabitation has a different meaning for the middle aged and older aged population than it does for young adults (Brown et al., 2006; Brown et al., 2005; Chevan, 1996). Among women who have completed their childbearing years, the need to marry or cohabit to have a child does not exist. Economic reasons to cohabit seem to operate much the same way among the younger and older populations. Those with the lowest economic status are more likely to cohabit. In addition, cohabitation may be viewed as a positive alternative to marriage to protect pensions, avoid the marriage tax, and ensure inheritance of money and property to offspring, rather than the partner. Chevan (1993) notes the possibility of children or other relatives, having either experienced cohabitation themselves or seen it among their peers, encouraging or applauding cohabitation rather than marriage among the middle and older generations, although he does not empirically test this nor say much else about it. In the next section, I will discuss the theoretical framework guiding the current study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There have been two main theories utilized to address the social psychological processes within parent-child dyads over the life course. The first is the developmental perspective. The developmental perspective, developed by Erikson (1950), posits that the attitudes of parents and children converge over the life course. During the period of adolescence, teens are developing a sense of self and identity. To accomplish this individuation, they must separate themselves from their parents. Adolescents are influenced by non-familial entities, such as friends and the media. During this period, the adolescents' attitudes are not in line with their parents. However, as adolescents become young adults, they partake in family formation behavior, such as marriage and childbearing, and thus their purpose is to socialize the next generation. The nurturance and family building behavior they engage in is much the same as their parents. In other words, parents and young adult children are now "in the same boat." They both want to take care of and nurture their children, they want their children to be valuable members of society, and they want to teach them important lessons. Not only do attitudes of the parent-child dyad converge over time, but as parents age, their individual attitudes tend to remain fairly stable. Thus this theory really suggests that it is the young adult child's attitudes that are changing to match that of their parent's.

The socialization perspective, on the other hand, suggests a divergence of parent-child attitudes over the life course. This perspective starts out the same as the developmental perspective in that there is a divergence of parent-child attitudes in adolescence, when children are mapping out their own identity independent of their parents. However, according to this perspective, as adolescents grow into young adults, they continue to diverge from their parents as they are then socialized by other

institutions, such as their workplace. In addition, young adult children move out of the parental household and set up their own household with, for example, their spouse or cohabiting partner. Geographically, they are further away from their parents, therefore not receiving daily reinforcement of parental attitudes. They are also being influenced by their partner, their partner's family, and their friends, among other groups they may be a part of. In addition, young adults may be more susceptible to rapid social change than their parents. Young adult children continue to change, but in a way that is not in line with their parents. Once again, the undertone here is that the parent's attitudes are remaining stable over time and that their young adult children are adjusting their attitudes with the influences of outside sources away from their parents.

There have been two studies that have empirically tested these two competing hypotheses. The first, utilizing cross-sectional data to compare middle-aged child/elderly parent dyads (G2/G1) with young adult child/middle-aged parent dyads (G3/G2) found no support for either the developmental perspective or the socialization perspective (Glass, Bengtson, & Dunham, 1986). Instead the authors found no difference in similarity between the two dyads, suggesting stability in attitudes over the life course. However, this finding could have been due to cohort effects. Therefore, Miller & Glass (1989) conducted a similar study using longitudinal data (a 14-year separation between two interviews; 1971 and 1985) to determine the age effects and minimize the presence of cohort effects. Changes, or lack thereof, on three scales (political, religious, and equality of gender roles) were gauged. Their analysis yielded inconsistent evidence for their hypotheses. The dynamics of these relationships are interesting, particularly for the current study. The oldest generation (G1) only changed their political attitudes (i.e., they

became more conservative); they did not change their religious attitudes or their gender role attitudes. The youngest generation (G3) significantly changed on two of the three scales; they became slightly more politically conservative and more accepting of equality of gender roles whereas their religious attitudes did not change. Here is where it gets interesting. The middle generation (G2) changed their attitudes in all three arenas; they became more politically conservative, more religiously fundamental, and more accepting of equality in gender roles. Their religious attitude difference was statistically significant but the magnitude of the change was minimal. Therefore, the similarity in attitudes among the middle-aged parents (G2) and their young adult children (G3) was due primarily to changes by the middle-aged parents and is an artifact of changes being made in the same direction by both the G2 and G3 generations. I will return to these results in a moment. The developmental hypothesis was not supported given the stability in attitude similarity within the young adult child/middle-aged parent dyads (G3/G2). Furthermore, the mean difference scores for the G2/G1 dyads increased, which contradicts the notion that attitude similarity is stable in later life. As for the socialization hypothesis, only partial support was found. The divergence between the G1 and G2 dyads supported the hypothesis; however, the stability within the G2 and G3 dyads contradicts it.

The relatively new aspect of socialization theory that was not included in the study by Miller and Glass (1989) is the notion that socialization is reciprocal. Not only do parents socialize their children but children also socialize their parents (Putney & Bengtson, 2002). Parents are receptive of cues they get from their children about learning strategies, techniques of discipline, and parenting strategies more generally and

therefore change and adjust to their children accordingly. In addition, parents may learn about technology or fashionable styles of dress from their children, for example. While it is generally accepted that individuals continue to be socialized throughout their lives, minimal attention has been given in the theoretical and empirical literature to how children continue to socialize their parents in young adulthood and later life.

I agree that it is true that young adults are socialized by their significant others, their peers, their work life, other groups they may be involved in, and social change more generally. Furthermore, I would argue that they then bring these attitudes, values, and behaviors back to their parents thus socializing their parents and allowing change in parental values and attitudes as well. Recall the results from the Miller and Glass (1989) study. Middle-aged parents changed their attitudes more than their elderly parents and their young adult children resulting in a similarity of attitudes between the middle-aged parents and their young adult children. I would argue that this could be a result of reciprocal socialization between these two generations in which the young adult child is in fact changing somewhat from outside influences and bringing those messages back to their parents. Their parents then adjust their attitudes to match their children. This possibility was neglected in Miller and Glass' conclusions. This is not to say that children are no longer learning from their parents or that tensions may not arise, however, the introduction of new ideas being brought to the table by the young adult child can then be open for discussion and have the potential to be agreed upon by both parties. Take for example the result above that middle-aged parents positively changed their attitudes toward equality of gender roles (Miller & Glass, 1989). This is something most likely learned from young adult children as young adult children, both male and female, in 1985

were likely to go to school longer, get married at later ages, cohabit before marriage, and therefore, have more egalitarian gender role attitudes.

Why does this matter for cohabitation behavior? Axinn and Thornton (1993), focusing on the intergenerational effects of attitudes and behavior, found that parents who did not view cohabitation favorably, whose young adult children subsequently cohabited, were likely to then favor cohabitation. Parental attitudes toward cohabitation had some influence on whether children would cohabit; however, rapid social change of increasing acceptance of nonmarital cohabitation led many children to cohabit regardless of parental attitudes. After young adult children began to cohabit, parents' attitudes toward cohabitation were more favorable, particularly when the cohabitation ended in marriage. This is evidence of the reciprocal socialization process. I would like to take this a step further to determine if parental attitudes are then transferred into their own behavior thus making them likely to form a cohabiting union themselves following the start of their young adult child's cohabiting union.

THE CURRENT STUDY

The notion of reciprocal socialization has been theorized, however, the empirical evidence has been minimal. It has been well established in the literature that parental cohabitation is positively associated with later cohabitation by children in young adulthood (e.g., Bumpass & Lu, 2000; Graefe & Lichter, 1999). In addition, cohabitation by a young adult child changes parental attitudes toward cohabitation to be positive, even if their attitudes were unfavorable before the cohabitation began (Axinn & Thornton, 1993). The current study would like to take this notion a step further. Are parents of young adult children more likely to cohabit (for the first time) than parents of young adult

children who do not cohabit? This is the main question the current study proposes to answer. Given that attitudes are likely to predict behavior and young adult's cohabitation behavior positively influences parental attitudes toward cohabitation, I hypothesize that parents whose young adult children cohabit will be more likely to cohabit themselves than their counterparts whose young adult children do not cohabit. This research will contribute to the literature by examining the reciprocal socialization process between parents and young adult children. It has been well recognized that the socialization process continues throughout the life course (e.g., Bush & Simmons, 1981/2002). Virtually no attention has been given the role that young adult children play in the socialization of the middle-aged and older-aged parents.

METHOD

The main respondent questionnaire of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH1), as well as the union history files (which were constructed using NSFH2 and NSFH3 data) for the main respondents and the focal children will be employed to conduct the analyses of the current study. The NSFH1 was collected in 1987-88 and included a nationally representative probability sample of 13,007 respondents aged 19 and older. A randomly selected main respondent was selected from each household with which a face-to-face interview was conducted. The main respondent was also given a self-administered questionnaire to complete (Sweet, Bumpass, & Call, 1988). Within the questionnaire, if applicable, a focal child between the ages of 5 and 18 was selected. NSFH2 was then conducted between 1992 and 1994. Main respondents were reinterviewed (N = 10,007) in person. A telephone interview was conducted with the focal child aged 5 to 18 at NSFH1 who was 12-17 or 18 to 23 at

NSFH2 (Sweet & Bumpass, 1996). Finally, NSFH3 was collected between 2001 and 2002 and consisted of both an interview with the main respondent and a focal child between the ages of 18 and 33, irrespective of whether they were interviewed at wave 2 (Sweet & Bumpass, 2002).

After NSFH3 was collected, union history files were created for both the main respondent and the focal child. For the main respondent, these files were created using union information from all three waves. For the focal child, the files were created using union information from the third wave only.

This data set is arguably the richest source with which to examine these questions due to the longitudinal, prospective design, the inclusion of complete union histories from both the main respondent (the parent) and the young adult focal child, the measurement of parental attitudes toward cohabitation, as well as a plethora of demographic background variables. The analytic sample is first limited to those respondents who have a focal child and have union history files for both parent and young adult child (n=1579). Main respondents who cohabited at any time before the child was 18 years old are not included to avoid endogeneity (n=1039). In addition, respondents and focal children who are married at the child's eighteenth birthday are not included. Therefore, my final analytic sample includes main respondent/focal child pairs for which the main respondent and the focal child were not married or cohabiting at the child's 18th birthday and the main respondent had never cohabited before the child's 18th birthday (n=172). The child's 18th birthday is the starting point so that, along with the constraints of the sample, both the parent and young adult child are at risk to form a cohabiting or marital union.

A discrete-time event history analysis is conducted to analyze the data. This is the appropriate method because the dates of union formations of both the parents and the young adult children will be necessary to determine the ordering of events, therefore making the dependent variable and at least one independent variable time-dependent. This also allows for a greater time span to be covered and more relationships to be captured. In other words, if dummy variables simply indicating whether the 18-23 year focal child was cohabiting at NSFH2 and another dummy variable indicating whether the parent was cohabiting at NSFH3, given the short-term nature of cohabiting unions, any cohabiting union that occurred between NSFH2 and NSFH3 would be missed.

MEASURES

Dependent Variable

The outcome variable of interest in this analysis is whether or not the parent formed a cohabiting union. Using event history analysis, there are three outcomes by which the main respondent could reach which end the hazard time: the date he/she begins cohabiting (1), the date he/she gets married (2), or the NSFH3 interview date (3) if he/she does not form a union after the child's 18th birthday. The union history file will be used to determine these dates.

Independent Variables

The focal variable is whether the young adult child cohabited. This is established utilizing a time-varying cohabitation variable which records a 0 for every month they do not cohabit and 1 for each month after the young adult child begins a cohabiting union.¹

¹ Note that the variable does not simply record the months they are in a cohabiting relationship because I am interested in whether the parent cohabits *any time* after a young adult cohabits.

Parental attitudes toward cohabitation measured at NSFH1 are controlled for in the analyses. At NSFH1, parents are asked their level of agreement with the following two statements: “It is all right for an unmarried couple to live together even if they have no interest in considering marriage;” “It is all right for an unmarried couple to live together as long as they have plans to marry.” The responses range from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). These responses are summed to create a *cohabitation attitudes* scale (Cronbach’s alpha = .62), with higher scores indicating more favorable attitudes toward cohabitation.

The *gender of the parent* and the *gender of the young adult child* are controlled for in the analysis. Research has shown that the mother-daughter relationship is more influential than the mother-son (Axinn & Thornton, 1993), father-daughter, or father-son relationship in socialization processes (Corsaro & Eder, 1995). In addition, cohabitation trends among the middle and elderly population vary considerably by gender (Chevan, 1996), with men being more likely to form marital and cohabiting unions than women. *Age of the parent at the child’s 18th birthday* is included. Cohabitation varies considerably by race therefore race of the parent is included as a dummy variable, *non-White* (1). Due to small ns in the non-White categories (Black, Hispanic) they had to be collapsed. A prior union history dummy variable is included to indicate whether the parent was ever *divorced or separated* (0) or *never-married or widowed* (1) before the young adult child’s 18th birthday. *Education* and *income* of the parent at NSFH1 are also measured. *Education* is measured in years completed. *Income* is measured in dollars in the last year (logged for analyses to correct for skewness). Typically, cohabitation is more likely to occur among those of lower socioeconomic status.

RESULTS

The sample means are shown in Table 1 (N=172). Not many parents form unions after their young adult child turns 18 years old. Only about 12 percent (n=21) form a cohabiting union and only another 12 percent (n=21) form a marital union. Almost 76 percent (n=130) of parents do not transition into a cohabiting or marital union by NSFH3. As expected, almost half (47.7%) of the young adult children form at least one cohabiting union during the observation period.

Parents' attitudes toward cohabitation at NSFH1 are slightly disagreeable, with the average score being just under five. A score of six would indicate that they 'neither agree nor disagree' with both statements.

Eighty nine percent of the sample is female, which is expected given that these are middle-aged parents with children and men are more likely to be partnered in middle-age. The gender distribution of young adult children is evenly split. About 26 percent of the sample is non-White. Twenty five percent have never been married or were widowed before the young adult child's 18th birthday, leaving 75 percent who were divorced or separated. Average age of the parents is 45.7 years with a range from 34 to 61 years. At NSFH1, average education is just over a high school degree and average yearly income is 17,886 dollars, with a range from 0 to 74,340 dollars.

Table 2² shows the event history analysis estimates of the relative risk of cohabiting versus remaining single, marrying versus remaining single, and cohabiting versus marrying. Model 1 shows the zero-order effects of the young adult child cohabiting. Young adult children's cohabitation does not significantly change the odds

² These same analyses were run with a similar (to the cohabitation variable) young adult child marriage variable, both by itself and along with the cohabitation variable. In both sets of analyses, a young adult child's marriage does not significantly affect parental union formation behavior at all.

of cohabiting versus remaining single. It does, however, significantly decrease the likelihood of a parent getting married (about 91% lower odds) versus remaining single and significantly increases the likelihood of cohabiting versus marrying. The magnitude of this effect is very large; parents are 8.6 times more likely to cohabit than to marry if they have a young adult child who cohabits.

Model 2 includes all of the other covariates. I initially added them in separately in blocks, however, there were no differences in the effects between those models and the final model and therefore I am only including the full model here. As the table shows, these covariates do not have much bearing on the outcomes. The inclusion of these variables does not change the effect of a young adult child's cohabitation on the odds of marrying versus remaining single. Finally, while the magnitude of the young adult child's cohabitation effect is reduced slightly, it remains significant and large as well. Having a young adult child who cohabits is associated with a 706 percent increase in the odds of cohabiting versus marrying, which shows support for the hypothesis.

Being female reduces the odds of forming a cohabiting union as compared to remaining single by about 75 percent, which is expected. Being older at the young adult child's 18th birthday reduces the odds by about 12 percent, which is also expected. In sum, having a young adult child who cohabits does not contribute to forming a cohabiting union instead of remaining single although it does reduce the odds of getting married versus remaining single. In partial support of my hypothesis, these results show that if a parent forms a union, it is much more likely to be a cohabiting union rather than a marital union if the parent has a young adult child who cohabits.³

DISCUSSION

³ Various interactions were tested, however, none were significant.

This study examined the reciprocal socialization processes in the young adult child/middle aged parent dyad in the context of cohabitation behavior. Research on reciprocal socialization processes has been rather limited; however, the available studies do support the presence of child-to-parent socialization. Cohabitation among middle-aged and older adults is on the rise. Perhaps middle-aged and older adults are learning cohabitation from their young adult children. Using data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH1 and parent and focal child union history files), this study has tested the influence of having a young adult child who cohabits on parents' own union formation behavior.

There are two main findings that expand our understanding of the reciprocal socialization process between parents and their young adult children throughout the life course and our understanding of cohabitation in middle- and later-life. First, while having a child who cohabits does not affect the likelihood of forming a cohabiting union versus remaining single, it does decrease the likelihood of forming a marital union. Perhaps parents with young adult children who cohabit do not feel the need to be in a formal union. It would be interesting to include dating patterns of parents as well to test this theory, however, that is not possible with this data.

Second, and more importantly for the current investigation, among those who form unions, having a young adult child who cohabits strongly increases the likelihood of forming a cohabiting union versus a marital union. These findings show support for the hypothesis and thus authenticate the notion of reciprocal socialization. It does seem that parents are learning cohabitation behavior from their children.

There are a few limitations to the current study. First, the sample size is rather small. While a sample of 172 is statistically large enough, it is probably not representative of all parents with young adult children. There are only 21 parents who form a cohabiting union and only 21 who form a marital union. These low numbers in the categories of interest suggest that the findings should be interpreted with caution. However, yielding significant results with a small sample size means that it is likely these same effects would be detected in a larger sample.

Second, variables such as the relationship quality between the parent and the young adult child could not be included. Measuring these types of variables at NSFH1 is not appropriate since the children are 10-19 years old. Relationship quality measured at the younger ages is likely not to effect whether parents follow in their children's footsteps when they are young adults.

Last, while there are advantages of using the NSFH, most of the young adult children turned 18 in the mid- to late-90s, when the observation period began. Therefore, some of the unions I observed may have occurred up to 13 years ago. Updating this study with more recent data is required to see if these patterns would still exist today.

My next step is to add a variable indicating how the young adult child's cohabitation ended, if one took place. Axinn & Thornton (1993) found that parents attitudes toward cohabitation became most favorable if the cohabitation ended in marriage. Additionally, I would like to replicate this study with the Intergenerational Study of Parents and Children so that a larger sample size can be obtained and inclusion of other variables will be possible. In conjunction with the current study, it will further

our understanding of reciprocal socialization between young adult children and their parents.

This study has uniquely contributed to our understanding of the process of reciprocal socialization by showcasing that parents “learn” cohabitation from their young adult children when they are in middle- and later-life. Parents with young adult children who cohabit are less likely to marry versus remaining single and are much more likely to cohabit than marry. Thus, it appears that when it comes to cohabitation, parents are likely to follow in their children’s footsteps.

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Table 1: Sample Means (N=172)				
Variables	Mean	Std Dev	Min.	Max.
<i>Outcome:</i>				
Cohabit	0.122	0.328	0	1
Marry	0.122	0.328	0	1
No Union	0.756	0.431	0	1
<i>Predictors:</i>				
Young Adult Child (YAC) Cohabits	0.477	0.501	0	1
Cohabitation Attitudes	4.977	1.885	2	10
Female	0.890	0.314	0	1
YAC Female	0.500	0.501	0	1
Non-White	0.262	0.441	0	1
Never Married/Widowed	0.250	0.434	0	1
Age at YAC 18th Birthday	45.672	5.781	34	61
Education	12.733	1.544	8	16
Income	17886	12712	0	74340

Table 2: Event History Analysis Estimates of the Relative Risk of Transitioning VS. Remaining Single and of Cohabiting VS. Marrying (N=172; Person-Months = 16,390)

Independent Variables	Model 1		Model 2	
	Cohabit v. Remain Single Odds Ratio	Marry v. Remain Single Odds Ratio	Cohabit v. Remain Single Odds Ratio	Marry v. Remain Single Odds Ratio
Young Adult Child (YAC)	0.938	0.109 **	8.637 *	
Cohabits [^]			0.883	0.110 **
Cohabitation Attitudes			1.123	0.852
Female			0.249 *	0.413
YAC Female			1.339	0.876
Non-White			0.586	0.244
Never Married/Widowed			0.364	0.552
Age at YAC 18th Birthday			0.946	0.885 *
Education			0.831	0.820
Income (Logged)			1.096	1.171
† p<.10 * p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001 for two-tailed test				
[^] Time-varying covariate				