Cohabitation in Latin America and Developed Countries: A Cross-National Perspective

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Abstract

This study explores the contextual framework of cohabitation in Latin America and developed countries. Integrated Public Use Micro data Series (IPUMS), European Social Survey (ESS) and the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) data are used to compare the macro-level associations of cohabitation practiced by women from different social backgrounds in up to 33 countries. Figures for cohabiting women aged 25-29 from different social classes are compared to country-level's socioeconomic indicators (i.e. human development and social inequality) and values orientations (from World Values Surveys) of women with similar profiles. Results show that cohabitation by higher educated women usually occurs in positive socioeconomic contexts, in groups with inclination to post-materialistic ethics and can be described by the Second Demographic Transition theory. Conversely, cohabitation by lower educated women comes about in environments of lower socioeconomic development and higher social inequality, with predominance of traditional values and intolerance to out groups.

Key words: Cohabitation, social class, Latin America, developed countries.

1. Introduction

As a topic, changes in family formation patterns, mainly the increasing incidence of unmarried cohabitation, has garnered attention in sociological and demographic literature during the past decades(Booth & Johnson, 1988; Jose, et al. 2010; Manting, 1996; Smock, 2000). Most studies have focused on Western developed countries and considered cohabitation as a product of modernization processes, as well asof socioeconomic development(Kiernan, 2001, 2004; Prinz, 1995; Sobotka & Toulemon, 2008).Recent evidence has shown that cohabitation in the West is also related to socioeconomic deprivation, used as an alternative to marriage by people with few economic resources or poor economic expectations (Hiekel, et al., 2012; Kalmijn, 2011; Kiernan, et al, 2011; Sassler & Miller, 2011). Meanwhile, the existence of two types of cohabitation, one driven by poverty and another by modernity, is a well-known feature of nuptiality in Latin America. The so-called 'modern' cohabitation is related to socioeconomic development and women's independence, while the other called 'traditional' is related to poverty and social exclusion (Camisa, 1978; Castro-Martin, 2002; De Vos, 2000).

The literature on cohabitation in fully developed countries and in Latin America reaches a common conclusion: Cohabitation in different social strata has different social meanings. It is even considered two types of the same arrangement. So far, however, no research has explored the socioeconomic and cultural framework of these two types of cohabitation by comparing fully developed and developing countries. This study aims to bridge this gap in two ways: (i) by documenting the spread of cohabitating unions, among the lower and the upper social classes, in Latin America and developed countries and (ii) by contextualizing the socioeconomic and cultural frameworks related to its incidence. The spread of cohabitation, as a modern form of living arrangement, is understood by the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) theory as a result of socioeconomic development and changes in the ideational domain, such as values and believes (Lesthaeghe, 2010; Surkyn & Lesthaeghe, 2004).

According to the SDT, socioeconomic and cultural development lead to the rise of non-material needs, such as the desire for self-fulfillment, equality and freedom (Lesthaeghe, 1998). In a scenario of egalitarian opportunities for men and women, the need for institutional regulation (such as marriage) diminishes and individuals are free to choose which type of family to form, as well as how long the arrangement will last.

Since the economic crisis of the 1980s, Latin America has shown significant socioeconomic development, though inequality continues to exist. While the Human Development Index (HDI) increased in all countries (ranging from 0.58 [medium] in Guatemala to 0.82 [very high] in Chile), the GINI index varies from 0.4 in Nicaragua to 0.6 in Haiti(UNDP, 2013)[1].Bearing in mind that relationships formed in contexts with positive socioeconomic outcomes require more interpersonal commitment than institutional regulation, one can expect higher incidence of modern cohabitation in this type of context. Consequently, it is enquired *to what extent modern types of cohabitation are present in Latin America? Are these modern cohabitating unions associated with socioeconomic development?*

Combined with socioeconomic development, the normative context plays an important role in family formation processes. According to the SDT framework, socioeconomic advantage is not enough to drive social change. Shifts in values and beliefs are other important conditions to it, and must be taken into consideration. Some of the ideational features of the SDT are observed in Latin American countries and the tolerance to various types of non-conformist behavior and outgroups[2], i.e. divorce, homosexuality and euthanasia, is increasing in the region(Esteve, et al., 2012a).Correspondingly, the value system in Latin American countries is evolving toward post-materialist values (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). It means lower reverence to religious authority, and consequently, lower acceptance of religious dogmas, as well as trust, tolerance and subjective well-being common in societies with high levels of social wellbeing (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). This raises the question *whether the modern cohabitation (among higher educated women)is associated withpost-materialist values in countries with different levels of development.*

The research questions are answered by means of several data sources. The figures for cohabitation for Latin America are computed based on census samples provided by IPUMS-International. The data from IPUMS are harmonized across countries and over time, which facilitates comparative research (Minnesota Population Center, 2011). Updated information from censuses micro-data provided by the national Institutes of Statistics is also used for some Latin American countries. Information about cohabitation for European countries stem from the European Social Survey (ESS) and for the United States, from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG).Socioeconomic indicators are extracted from the most recent Human Development Report (UNDP, 2013) and the World and Values Survey (WVS) provides information about post-materialist values. Pearson correlation coefficients are used to show the direction and strength of the linear relationship between cohabitation rates and each of one of the socioeconomic and post-materialist values indicators.

The study is structured as follows: In the second section the most common explanations for increasing incidence of cohabitation in Western societies are presented and the Latin American case is highlighted. Next, the socioeconomic development and social inequality settings of cohabitation in different social groups and countries are discussed. Changes in Latin American values orientation are underlined and values of young women from different educational backgrounds are compared to the incidence of cohabitation among similar groups, in several countries. Following these results is discussed.

2. Diffusion of cohabitation in the West and Latin America

Unmarried cohabitation is not a new or isolated phenomenon in the West. Until the 1970s cohabitating unions were less common, but an option for separated people who were unable to obtain a divorce due to legal constraints. It was also the preferred arrangement for some intellectuals who saw marriage as a bourgeois institution or protested against the fact that only religious marriages were acceptable (Kiernan, 2001).

[1]GINI index measures the extent to which the distribution of income among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. Thus a GINI index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 1 implies perfect inequality (World Bank, 2011). HDI is calculated by the mean of three sub-indexes: Longevity, Education and Income (UNDP, 2013).

[2] In Sociology and Social Psychology, outgroups are social groups to which an individual does not identify.

Since the 1960s, cohabitation rates have been increasing sharply in all parts of the population. In several Western countries, many marriages and remarriages now begin as cohabiting unions (Smock, 2000) andits social acceptance is on the rise everywhere.

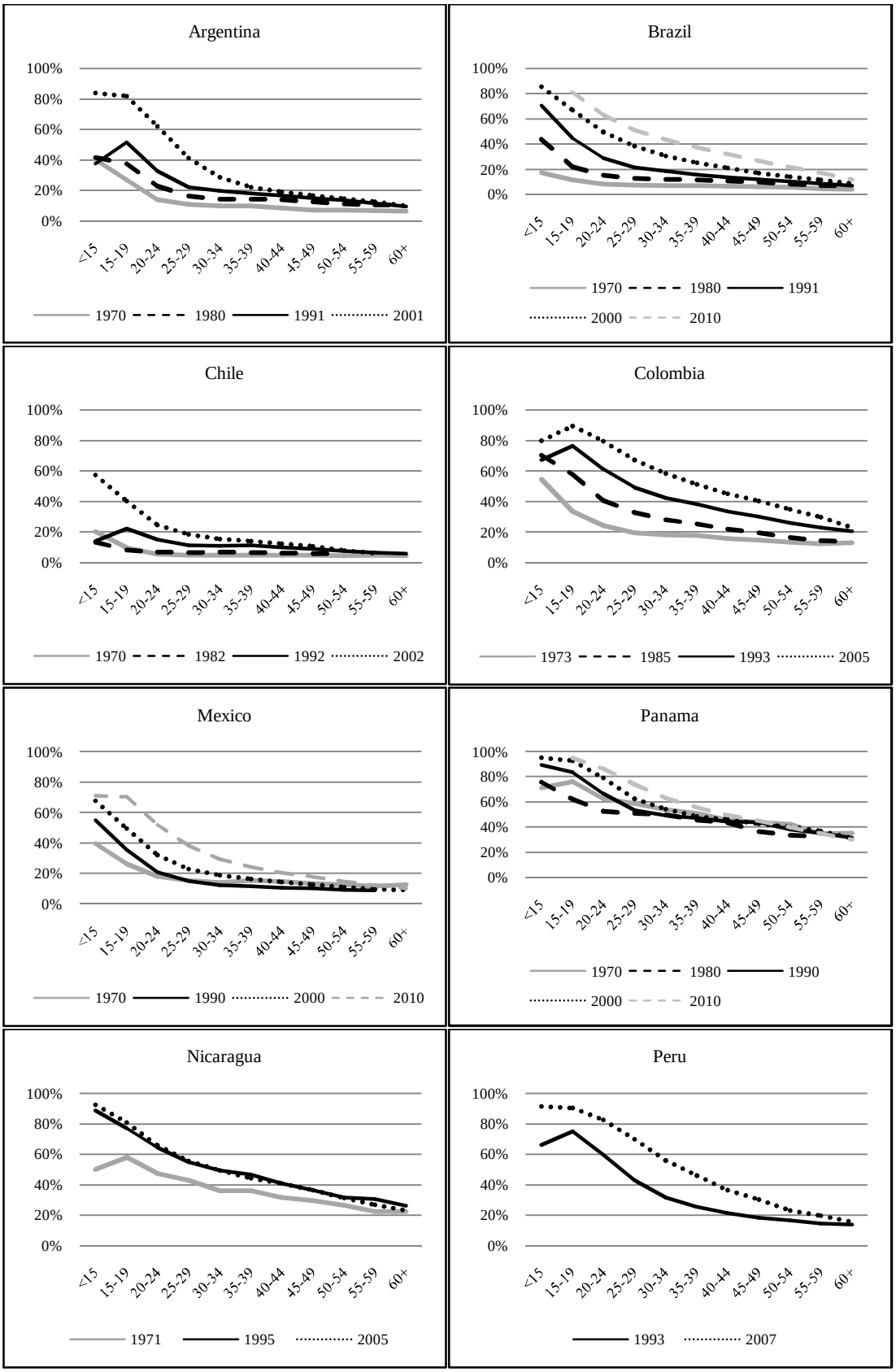
This increasing popularity of cohabitation in the West is assumed to be result of socioeconomic development and changing gender roles through greater gender symmetry. It reflects a social transition, from traditional marriage to modern partnership (Prinz, 1995, p. 101). At the end of this transition, marriage and cohabitation do not differ in form and meaning and are both based on equal rights and obligations between partners. Men and women are free to choose whether to marry or to cohabit (Kiernan, 2001; Prinz, 1995).Northern European countries, especially Sweden, are often used as examples of countries where this transition is complete, and where the social meaning of marriage and cohabitation has become indistinguishable (Heuveline & Timberlake, 2004; Kiernan, 2001; Prinz, 1995; Sobotka & Toulemon, 2008).

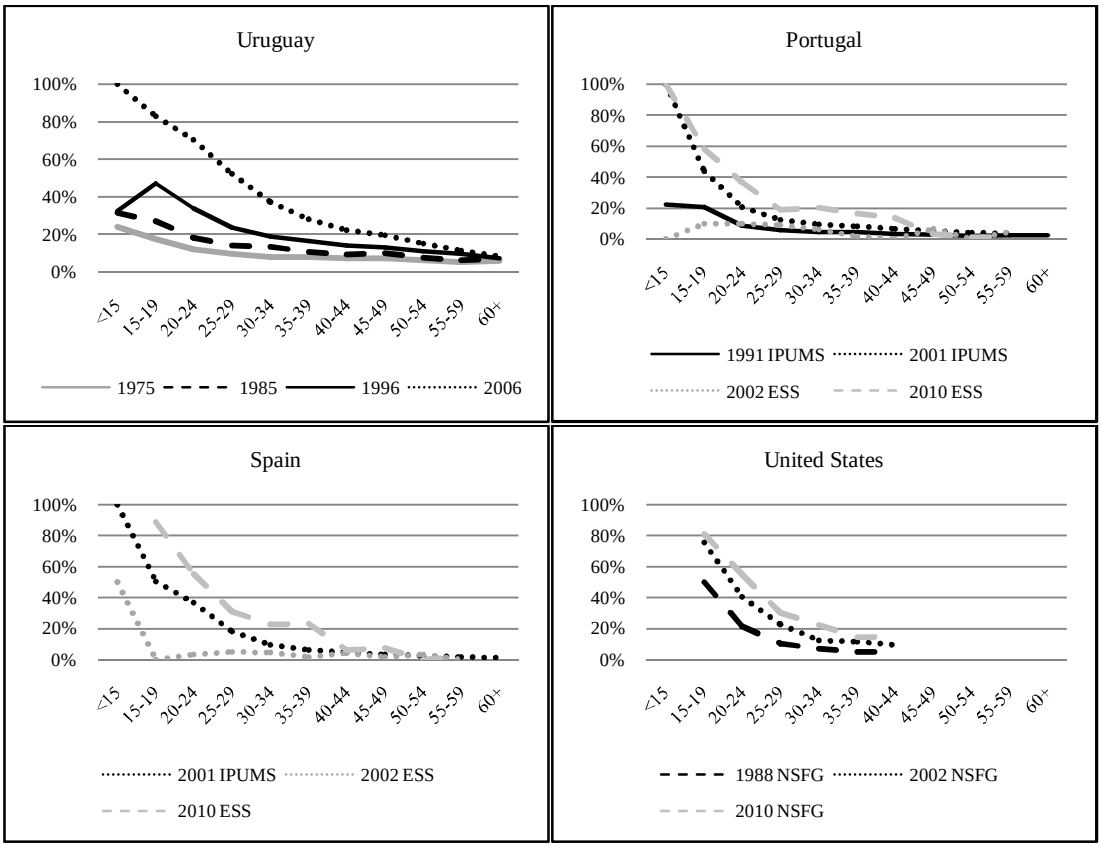
A distinguishing attribute of Latin American family formation pattern is the historical incidence of out of wedlock cohabitation as a socially accepted form of conjugal union. Nowadays, this historical and traditional form of cohabitationis still common amongthe lowers social classes. It is established as a strategy to overcome poverty and single or teenage motherhood, and they commonly end upeither separated or married(Castro-Martin, 2002; Parrado & Tienda, 1997), even when children are grown up(De Vos, 2000).

Contemporary evidence has shown that this trend has been modified over the course of preceding decades. Although the cohabitating union persists as a common form of union among lower social classes, from the second half of the 20th century on, its popularity is increasing among higher educated social groups and in countries where it was never considered as traditional(i.e. Esteve, et al., 2012a; Esteve, et al., 2012b; Quilodrán-Salgado, 2011; Vignoli-Rodríguez, 2005). Figure1 illustrates the evolution of cohabitation rates for partnered women in different age-groups for some selected Latin American countries. Similar figures for Portugal, Spain and the United States are included for comparison[3].

[3] These countries were chosen due to their cultural influence and historical similarity with the region. Portugal and Spain were the main settlers in Latin America and many cultural features in the region are inherited from them. Meanwhile, the United States shares with Latin America similar history (colonization, slavery, population composed by different ethnicities), but with different socioeconomic outcomes.

Figure 1. Share of cohabitation among all unions of women by age-group and time: Latin America and selected developed countries





Source: Esteve, et al. (2012a), Esteve et al., (2013)and own computations based on IPUMS, ESS and NSFG data.

Figure 1shows an overall increase in the proportion of Latin American women from all age-groups living in cohabitation, rather than married. While in some countries, i.e. Colombia, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru, there was a prominence of already high rates of cohabitation, in others these rates rise in different rhythms from the 1970s. Brazil and Uruguay are examples of countries where cohabitation was not visible before the 1980s, but rapidly increased in the following years, for women in all age groups. These countries presented the lower cohabitation rates in the 1970s and are in the group of countries with the higher incidence of cohabitation among younger cohorts by the end of the first decade of the 21st century. In addition, Argentina, Chile and Mexico presented medium levels of cohabitation by the 1970s with a gradual increase of consensual unions over time, mainly among younger women. One can also see an overall increase for women in almost all age-groups, on the figures for cohabitation for the developed countries included in Figure 1. Portugal, Spain[4] and the United States present similar trends to some Latin American countries, such as Argentina, Chile and Mexico. Therefore, in these countries the increase in cohabitation is more visible among younger cohorts.

The evidence that the new generations in Latin America and developed countries present higher propensity of living in cohabitating unions is unambiguous. However, it is not clear from Figure 1 whether the increase in cohabitation in Latin American countries is related to an expansion of the so-called traditional type of cohabitation in the region or the rise of a modern type of consensual union, similar to the cohabitation found in developed countries. The next section focuses on this question.

[4] The question about cohabitation is only available for recent census rounds for Portugal and Spain, and it is not available for the United States. As a result the proportions of cohabitating women for developed countries are calculated on the basis of survey's data, i.e. ESS and NSFG, which are known for underestimating results if compared to censuses data. It can clearly be seen by comparing the graphs for Portugal and Spain in Figure 1, in which we include both censuses and ESS information. For Portugal, the information from the ESS of 2002 follows the distribution of the census round of 1991. This limitation must be kept in mind when comparing Latin American countries with developed ones through the text.

3. The rise of modern consensual unions in Latin America?

The literature on family formation and changes in Latin America shows that the social meaning attached to consensual unions differs between countries and social classes. While for the lower social strata cohabitation is traditionally a substitute for marriage and is related to economic constraints, ethnical and gender inequality, for the upper social classes it may be a product of modernization and improved socioeconomic status of women(Binstock & Cabella, 2011; Cabella, et al, 2004; Fussell & Palloni, 2004; Quilodrán-Salgado, 2011; Vignoli-Rodríguez, 2005).Research by Vignoli-Rodríguez finds that among the lower educated and very young cohorts, cohabitation is a strategy to cope with adolescent motherhood in Chile and Panama, while in Mexico and among college educated women in Chile and Panama, cohabitation is related to postponement of parenthood(Vignoli-Rodríguez, 2005).

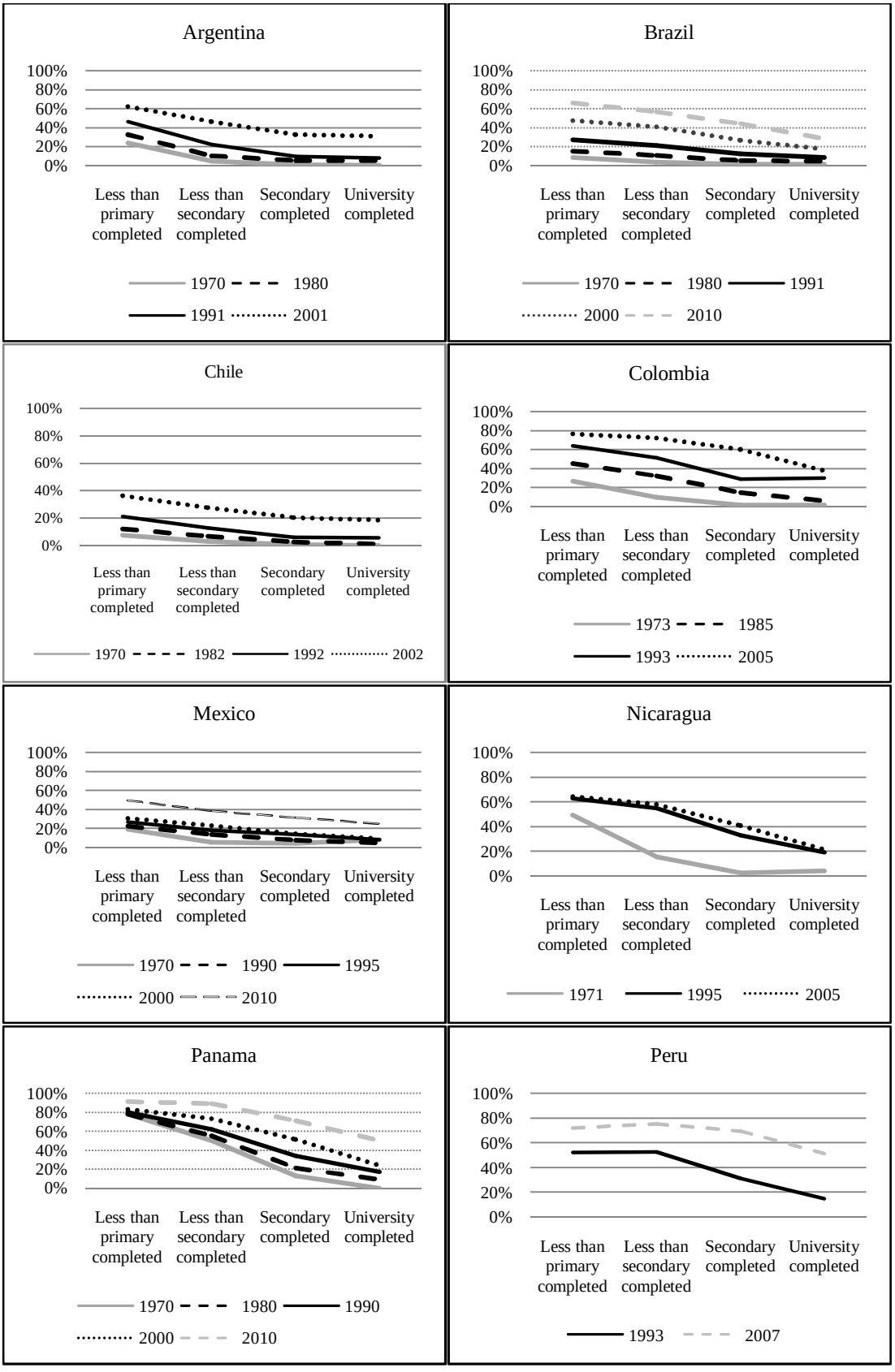
Wanda Cabella and colleagues (2004) verified the factors related to family change in Buenos Aires (Argentina) and Montevideo (Uruguay). They found that changes in family formations happened in all segments of society and are closely related to the indicators of the Second Demographic Transition(Cabella et al., 2004). Georgina Binstock (2010) verified trends in cohabitation, marriage and motherhood in urban areas of Argentina and found that for cohorts born in 1960 and before, cohabitation was an exception; for those born between 1960 and 1970 it was an option; and for the younger cohorts cohabitation has become the rule, with children being born and raised in it (Binstock, 2010). The increase of cohabitation among higher educated groups was also attested by Quilodrán-Salgado (2011). The author analyzed data from several countries and census rounds and found that, in Argentina, Chile and Colombia, the increase in cohabitation occurred sharper and faster among those with higher levels of education, while in Brazil, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Panama and Mexico, the increase in cohabitating unions is more visible among the lower educated groups (Quilodrán-Salgado, 2011). In addition, considering the whole of Argentina, cohabitation is found among the lower social classes, as well as among the higher social strata (Laplante & Street, 2009).

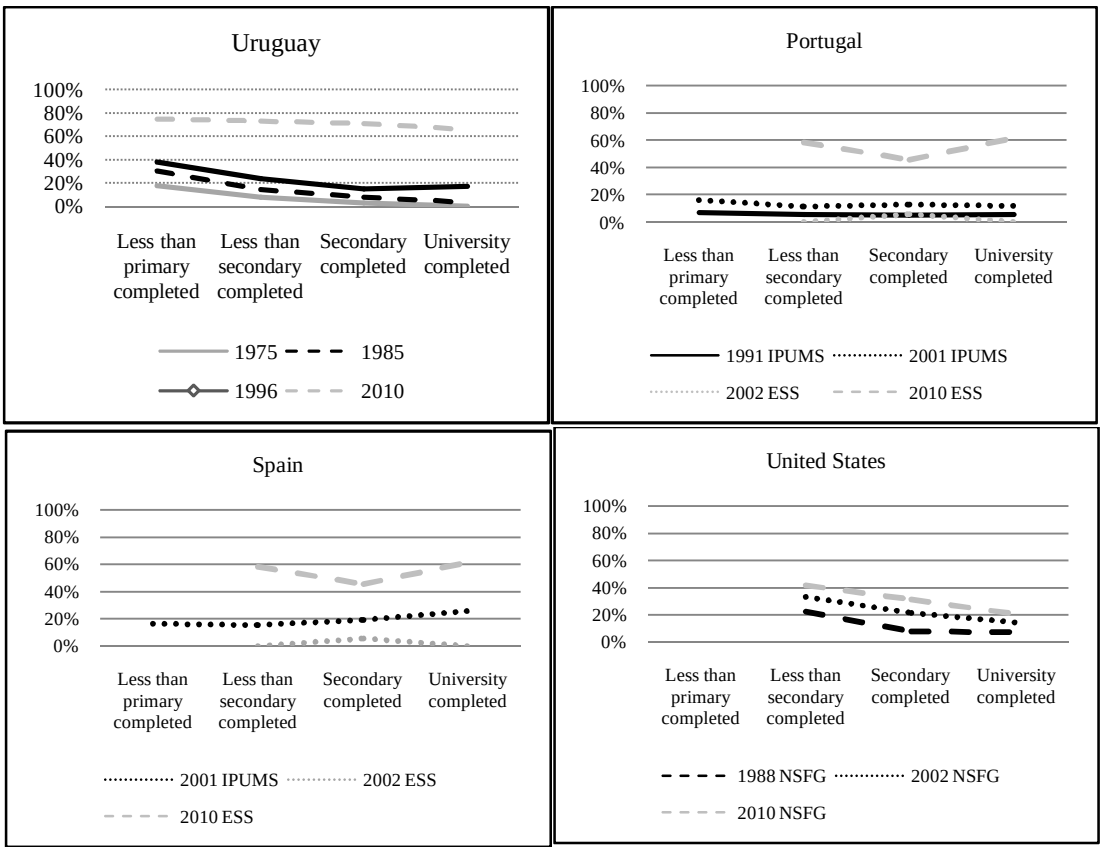
Parrado and Tienda (1997) point to the role played by women's increasing education and labor force participation on the increasing incidence of the modern type of cohabitation in Venezuela. Their results show the coexistence of both, the traditional and the modern type of cohabitation. While traditional cohabitants were common in rural areas, among unskilled or domestic workers and those with high fertility, the modern type of cohabitation was similar to the cohabitation observed in developed countries. These women had higher education, worked in skilled jobs and had fewer or no children at all.

The studies presented above demonstrate that the relationship between social class (often measured by attained education) and different types of cohabitation is straightforward. While the traditional cohabitation is practiced by lower educated Latin Americans, the modern one is common among those who attained higher levels of schooling. Actually, it is possible that this last type of cohabitation is driven by the educational expansion in the region. Steve and colleagues (2013) explored this assumption by comparing the most recent Latin American census rounds which showed a clear increase in the proportion of higher educated 25-29[5]years old partnered women living in cohabitation (Esteve, at al., 2013; Esteve, et al., 2012a).Their results are included in Figure 2, which shows the share of cohabitation among all unions of women aged 25-29by education, country and census round for Latin American countries. For comparison, we included similar information for Portugal, Spain and the United States.

[5] The focus on the age group 25-29 is commonly used in demographic studies because in this age group education is completed for most of women, as well as the important choices referent to type of partnership and progression to parenthood are made. When data from different points in time are used, such as here, the selection of a specific age group allows for the verification of changes in demographic behavior of successive incoming cohorts (Esteve, et al., 2012a; Rosero-Bixby, at al., 2009).

Figure 2. Share of cohabitation among all unions of women 25-29 by education, country and time.





Source: Esteve, et al. (2012a), Esteve, et al (2013) and own computations based on IPUMS, ESS and NSFG data.

Figure 2 clearly shows that the increase in cohabitation by young women is evident in all countries and educational groups, meaning that the traditional consensual unions are increasing along with the modern one. However, as noticed by Esteve and colleagues (2013), there are different types of evolution. In the most recent censuses in most of the countries, i.e. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Nicaragua, the traditional cohabitation started to increase first, then modern cohabitation caught up to the level of traditional. Panama and Peru show opposite trends. In these countries the traditional cohabitation represented more than 50 percent of unions formed by lower educated women already in the 1970s. There is an increase in this type of cohabitation, but the substantial growth is observed among higher educated women. The last form of evolution is presented by Mexico and Uruguay. These countries presented very low cohabitation rates in the 1970s, and these proportions are increasing similarly for all educational groups. Uruguay is really an extreme case in this group, showing that "a major jump occurred during the last 10 years and this affected absolutely everybody, to the point that the current education profile is almost flat at an astonishing 70 percent level"(Esteve, at al., 2013).

Trends for Portugal, Spain and the United States are similar to the last group of Latin American countries, with very low levels of cohabitation at the beginning of the observation period followed by an overall increase in cohabitating unions for women from all levels of education.Different from Portugal and Spain, the incidence of cohabitation among lower educated women in the United States is higher than among higher educated ones. Comparing the graphs shown in Figures 1 and 2, the United States trends in cohabitation are closer to those of some Latin American countries (i.e. Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico) than to these European ones. Higher levels of cohabitating unions practiced by different social groups confirm prior evidence that two types of cohabitation coexist in Latin America, depending on the social group under analysis (Castro-Martin, 2002). Previous results indicating that cohabitation is also used as a strategy to cope with socioeconomic difficulties for the lower social strata in developed countries are also confirmed (Kalmijn, 2011; Kiernan et al., 2011; Sassler & Miller, 2011). This scenario suggests that the comparison of the contextual framework for the two types of cohabitation in Latin America and in fully developed nations is meaningful. We can expect that higher socioeconomic development in terms of education, health and income, as well as egalitarian opportunities for most of the population, would favor the partnership transition, from traditional marriage to modern partnership.

Nations with positive socioeconomic development are expected to show greater proportions of higher educated couples living in cohabitation instead of in marriage. An opposite social context, marked by lower levels of education, lack of health care and high social inequality would favor the existence of cohabitations among the lower social strata, such as the traditional cohabitating union in Latin America. These assumptions are verified in the next section.

4. Socioeconomic contexts for cohabitation in distinct social groups

Latin America went through important structural transformations in the second half of the 20th century. After the debt crisis that affected the region in the 1980s, the 1990s were characterized by economic restructuring in most countries of the region. Rapid urbanization, internal rural to urban migration, the transition to democratic governments in the political domain, as well as the expansion of mass education has transformed the organization of Latin American society profoundly. At the same time, economic development has not yet reached the majority of the population and social inequality is another important feature of the region(to illustrate, Cavenaghi, 2009). Recent data shows that while the proportion of people classified as poor or indigent decreased from 44 percent in 2002 to 29.4 percent in 2012 (ECLAC, 2012), the region is still one of the most unequal in the world (Cavenaghi, 2009). Although socioeconomic development increased during the last decades, significant differences can be observed between and within countries, as illustrated in Table 1. Differences in terms of social inequality are illustrated by the GINI index, while the figures for Human Development Index (HDI) demonstrate countries' socioeconomic development. Again, the figures for Portugal, Spain and the United States are included for comparison.

Table 1. Increase in HDI and GINI – Latin American and selected developed countries

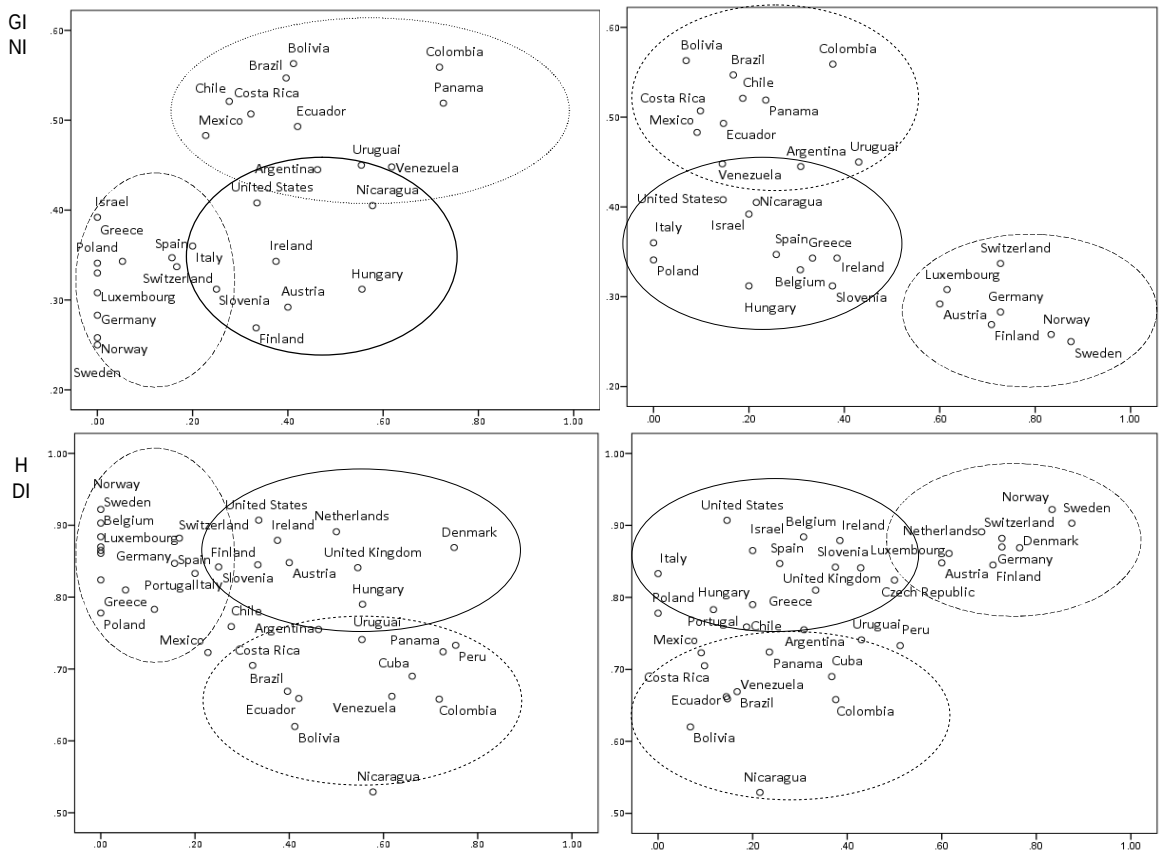
Country	HDI 1980	HDI 2012	% Increase (1980-2012)	GINI (2000-2010)
Argentina	0.675	0.811	83.23	44.5
Bolivia	0.489	0.675	72.44	56.3
Brazil	0.522	0.73	71.51	54.7
Chile	0.638	0.819	77.90	52.1
Colombia	0.556	0.719	77.33	55.9
Costa Rica	0.621	0.773	80.34	50.7
Cuba	0.626	0.78	80.26	
Dominican Republic	0.525	0.702	74.79	47.2
Ecuador	0.596	0.724	82.32	49.3
Guatemala	0.432	0.581	74.35	48.3
Guyana	0.513	0.636	80.66	55.9
Haiti	0.335	0.456	73.46	59.2
Honduras	0.456	0.632	72.15	57.0
Mexico	0.598	0.775	77.16	48.3
Nicaragua	0.461	0.599	76.96	40.5
Panama	0.634	0.78	81.28	51.9
Paraguay	0.549	0.669	82.06	52.4
Peru	0.58	0.741	78.27	48.1
Uruguay	0.664	0.792	83.84	45.3
Venezuela	0.629	0.748	84.09	44.8
Portugal	0.644	0.816	78.92	
Spain	0.698	0.885	78.87	34.7
United States	0.843	0.937	89.97	40.8

Note: Data for GINI refer to the most recent year available during the period specified. Source: UNDP (2013) and own computations.

Table 1shows that the HDI increased in all countries between 1980 and 2012. In Latin America this development happened at different paces ranging from 71.5 percent of increase in Brazil to 84 percent in Venezuela and Uruguay. At the same time, inequality is still one of the main features of the region where the GINI coefficients range from a minimum of 40 in Nicaragua to a maximum of 59 in Haiti. As expected, the figures for developed countries illustrate higher HDI and lower social inequality(UNDP, 2013).

One of the goals of this study is to demonstrate socioeconomic contexts, in terms of human development and social inequality, of different types of cohabitation. To this end, we compute the proportion of cohabitation among all unions for women in the age group of 25-29,by level of education for several countries. We label this indicator as country-education rate of cohabitation. As stated before, we use data from IPUMS for Latin American countries, from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) for the United States, and from the European Social Survey (ESS) for the remaining countries under analysis. The socioeconomic indicators, HDI and GINI stem from the most recent Human Development Report (UNDP, 2013). In order to include as many countries as possible, data from around 2000 was selected. As the information about consensual unions is available in the census rounds of 2000 for Portugal and Spain, we use censuses data instead of ESS information for these countries[6]. Following, we select the results for the lower (less than secondary) and the higher (University completed) educational groups and compare to the socioeconomic (HDI) and social inequality (GINI) indexes for their countries, at the time of data collection. These correlations are illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Correlation between country-education levels of cohabitation and socioeconomic (HDI) and social inequality (GINI) indexes



Pearson correlations of 0.55 for the HDI and -0.64 for the GINI are significant at 0.001 level. It means that our hypotheses that cohabitation among higher educated women is common in places with advanced human development (HDI) and lower socio-inequality (GINI) are confirmed. Similarly, lower socioeconomic development and higher socio-inequality is related to the incidence of cohabitating unions among lower educated women. Three groups of countries can be easily identified in Figure 3. The first group contains countries with lower social inequality (GINI), higher socioeconomic development (HDI), lower incidence of cohabitation among lower educated women and higher incidence of cohabitation among higher educated women. In Figure 3 this group is separated by the dashed ellipse and always includes Germany, Luxembourg, Norway, Switzerland and Sweden.

[6]Detailed information about the data used in this study is included in the appendix.

These countries are known for their advanced stage of development and secularization, so we label this group as developed-secular. A second group of countries present lower social inequality, high socioeconomic development, medium to high levels of cohabitation among the lower educated and lower to medium levels of cohabitation among higher educated women. This group is highlighted with the continuous ellipse and always includes Ireland, Italy, Hungary, Slovenia and the United States. These countries are known for their traditional and religious values and are called here developed-religious. Most Latin American countries are located in the third group, which is highlighted with the dotted ellipse. These countries present higher social inequality, lower socioeconomic development, medium to high incidence of cohabitation among the lower educated and low to medium incidence of cohabitation among higher educated women. Countries always in this group are Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Panama and Venezuela.

The higher incidence of cohabitation among lower educated women associated with lower to medium levels of this type of union among the higher educated ones is another illustration of the coexistence of the traditional and modern types of cohabitation in Latin America. Interestingly, the incidence of the modern types of cohabitation for Latin American countries is comparable to the figures for this type of cohabitation for the developed-religious group. The effect of socioeconomic differences within Latin American countries on the incidence of different types of cohabitation in the region can also be observed in the graph. Countries from the South Cone, i.e. Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, known for their higher levels of socioeconomic development are only found in the group of Latin American countries in the graphs for social inequality. When human development (HDI) is under consideration, they are closer to the developed-religious group than to the Latin American group. The associations showed above confirm the SDT statement that socioeconomic development is one of the driving forces of demographic behavior. Yet, the existence of two patterns of nuptiality in countries with similar socioeconomic indicators confirms the assumption that socioeconomic development is not an enough condition to influence people's life. The normative context, i.e. values and beliefs, plays a crucial role and must be considered in order to understand the incidence and acceptability of cohabitation in a given society. This topic is discussed in the next section.

5. Ideational contexts of cohabitation by different social groups

The Second Demographic Transition (SDT) theory states that changes in demographic behavior are related to ideational changes toward greater individual autonomy in ethical, religious and political domains. These trends lead to the prevalence of non-conformist behavior driven by individuals' critical view and evaluation of current rules, in the direction of secularization and egalitarian gender roles (Lesthaeghe, 1998).The ideational gradient of the SDT is very similar to the idea of post-materialism developed by Ronald Inglehart in political sciences. Summarizing, for the two theories socioeconomic development guarantees people's basic and material needs, such as education, income, working conditions and health;it opens space for the rise of non-material needs, such as equality, freedom and self-expression. This changes people's values toward the so-called post-materialist values (e.g. Ron Lesthaeghe, 2010b; Inglehart & Baker, 2000).

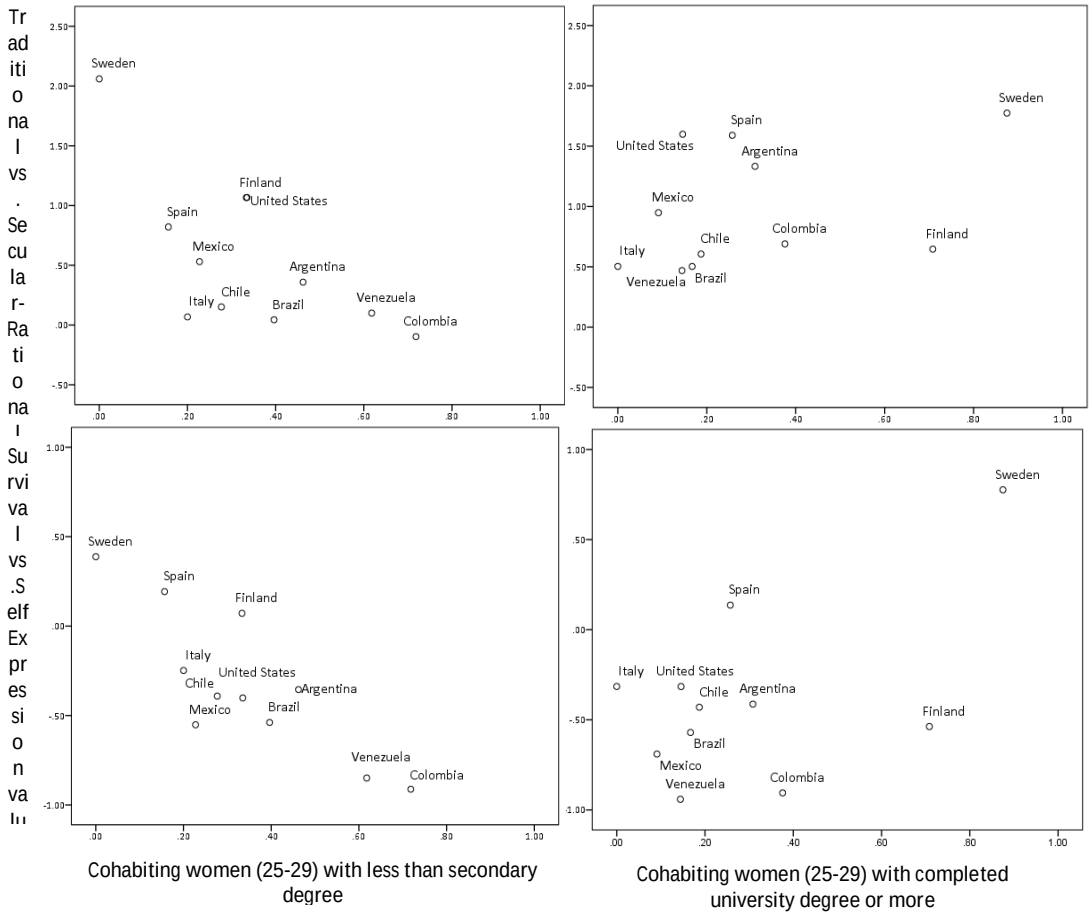
Esteve and colleagues (2012a) use World and Values Survey (WVS) data to show the evolution of ethic and family issues in Latin American countries with increasing proportions of cohabitation after the second half of the 20th century (i.e. Argentina, Brazil and Chile). In lesser or greater degrees, all countries presented increasing secularization and tolerance to non-conformist forms of family arrangements. Specifically, the proportion of people who agrees that euthanasia, homosexuality and divorce are never justifiable decreased in all countries, as well as the amount of people who think that a child needs both a mother and a father (Esteve, et al., 2012a, p. 71–76). The World and Values Survey (WVS) uses several questions to compute two individual- and country-level dimensions of post-materialist values. These dimensions reflect the polarization between traditional versus secular-rational values toward authority and survival versus self-expression orientations. Individuals or societies with high scores on the traditional dimension reflect strong influence of religion in people's life, deference to authority, parents and traditional forms of family.

Social conformity instead of individual freedom is emphasized, along with rejection of divorce, abortion, euthanasia and suicide. Elevated secular-rational scores show the opposite trend. The self-expression dimension reflects trust, tolerance, subjective well-being and political activism. Contrasting, the survival dimension reflects insecurity, low levels of well-being and intolerance to outgroups, such as to homosexuality and egalitarian gender roles (Inglehart & Baker, 2000, pp. 23–28).

As stated before, cohabitation among higher educated women is considered an outcome of the prevalence of post-materialist values in this educational group. Consequently we expect to find a positive correlation between rates of cohabitation by higher educated women and the two dimensions of post-materialist values (secular-rational and survival-self-expression) for this educational group. Opposing, considering the socioeconomic constraints imposed to lower educated groups, cohabitation among them is expected to occur along withthe prevalence of traditional and survival ethics in this group. In order to empirically verify these assumptions, we compare the values of women in the age-group 25-29, from distinct educational groups, to the incidence of cohabitation by women in the same age- and educational groups in different countries.

To this end, we use the individual-level dimensions of traditional/secular-rational and survival/self-expression values provided by WVS to compute the country-education scores of these values. In other words, we select 25-29 years old women from different educational groups and compute the mean scores of the two dimensions of post-modernity for these women. Next, we correlate these scores to the proportion of cohabitation practiced by women from the same country, age and educational group. Results are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Correlation between country-education levels of cohabitation and country-education values orientation



Our hypotheses are mostly confirmed. The prevalence of survival values, meaning lower tolerance and subjective well-being, as well as emphasis in economic security above other goals, in the lower educated group is positively related to cohabitation in this group (Pearson correlation of 0.53, significant at 0.01 level). Similarly, the predominance of self-expression values in higher educated groups is related to the incidence of cohabitation by women from this group (Pearson correlation of -0.84, significant at 0.001 level). At the same time, traditional values among lower educated people are associated with higher levels of cohabitation by lower educated women (Pearson correlation of -0.67, significant at 0.05 level). The relationship between traditional/secular-rational values of higher educated people and cohabitation practiced by this group is not statistically significant. Looking at Figure 4, one can easily see that in Venezuela and Colombia survival and traditional values are predominant in both educational groups.

The relationship between these values and the prevalence of the traditional and low incidence of the modern types of cohabitation in these countries is also evident. Lower educated women in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Italy, Mexico and the United States demonstrate the inclination to the survival values with medium to low incidence of cohabitation in this educational group. University educated women in these countries, and also in Venezuela and Colombia, tend to be even less tolerant than their less educated counterparts. The share of cohabitation among them is also lower. Latin American and Italian lower educated women demonstrate higher deference to the traditional type of authority. However, the incidence of cohabitation in this group ranges from 20 percent in Italy to 72 in Colombia. Lower educated women from the other developed countries shown in Figure 4 demonstrate inclination to secular-rational values and medium to lower propensity to cohabit instead of be married.

7. Conclusion

The present study was designed to add to the international debate about the diffusion of unmarried cohabitation in different social classes by demonstrating its contextual framework in Latin America and in fully developed countries. Cohabitation practiced by higher educated women is described by the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) theory as an outcome of socioeconomic development as well as post-modernity. A second type of cohabitation, in Latin America referred as traditional, is found among the lower social classes in all countries under observation. In order demonstrate the contextual framework of these two types of cohabitation we compare data derived from IPUMS, Censuses, the European Social Survey (ESS) and the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) to the socioeconomic indicators of the Human Development Report and to the dimensions of post-modern values provided by the World and Values Survey (WVS).

We attest a general increase of cohabitation over time in different age and educational groups. Comparing cohabitation in Latin America with developed countries we demonstratethat in the latter, cohabitation is more visible in the higher educated social strata, although it also exists among the lower social classes. In order to demonstrate the contextual framework of these two types of cohabitation we explore the levels of socioeconomic development and social inequality, as well as the ideational environment where these cohabitations take place. Results confirm the SDT statement that socioeconomic development is a necessary, but not an enough condition to shape demographic behavior. Positive socioeconomic contexts, in terms of development and social inequality, all relate to the incidence of cohabitation among higher educated women; and the opposite to the incidence of this type of union among lower educated ones. However, some countries with high socioeconomic development and low social inequality present similar levels of cohabitation to countries with opposite socioeconomic outcomes. This is the case for the countries labeled as developed-religious, such as Ireland, Italy and the United States, that have similar incidence of the two types of cohabitation compared to some Latin Americans, such as Chile, Costa Rica, Brazil and Mexico. This is undeniably due to the similarity of these countries in terms of values orientation.

As expected, values orientation toward post-materialism is related to the incidence of cohabitating unions. Cohabitation by lower educated women occurs among less tolerant and secular-rational groups, while contexts of higher tolerance are related to the occurrence of cohabitation among higher educated women. However, it is not possible to say that cohabitation in the higher educated groups in Latin American countries as well as in the United States and Italy occur among more tolerant and self-expressive groups. Actually, in these countries, higher educated 25-29 years old women are even less tolerant than lower educated ones and thus cohabit less. Taken together, these findings suggest that the existence of different types of cohabitation is not unique to Latin America. Added to the modern type of cohabitation, related to post-modernity and socioeconomic advantage, developed countries also have a type of cohabitation related to poverty.

However, while in Latin America the so-called traditional cohabitation, driven by socioeconomic deprivation, is the most noticeable, in developed countries the modern type of cohabitation among higher educated groups is more evident. This is easily explained by the different levels of development found in Latin America and the remaining countries under observation. Yet, the background for the cohabitation among the poor is evident: lower socioeconomic development, higher social inequality, and, probably as a consequence, traditional and intolerant ethics. Our findings are limited by the use of a cross sectional design, hence the current study was not intended to estimate causal relations to the occurrence of one type of cohabitation or another. Contrary, the aim was to illustrate the settings where these cohabitations occur and the similarities and divergences among them. In this sense, further research based on individual level and longitudinal data is needed before the causes and motivations of cohabitation for diverse social classes is clearly understood.

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Appendix: Data description

Data used to compute the correlation between country-education levels of cohabitation and socioeconomic (HDI) and social inequality (GINI) indexes (Figure 3)

Country	Cohabitation		HDI Year	GINI Year
	Source	Year		
Argentina	IPUMS	2001	2000	1998
Bolivia	IPUMS	2001	2000	1999
Brazil	IPUMS	2000	2000	1999
Chile	IPUMS	2002	2000	2000
Colombia	IPUMS	2005	2000	2000
Costa Rica	IPUMS	2000	2000	2000
Cuba	IPUMS	2002	2000	
Ecuador	IPUMS	2001	2000	1998
Mexico	IPUMS	2000	2000	2000
Nicaragua	IPUMS	2005	2000	1998
Panama	IPUMS	2000	2000	2000
Portugal	IPUMS	2001	2000	
Spain	IPUMS	2001	2000	2000
Venezuela	IPUMS	2001	2000	1998
United States	NSFG	2002	2000	2000
Austria	ESS	2002	2000	2000
Belgium	ESS	2002	2000	2000
Switzerland	ESS	2002	2000	2000
Czech Republic	ESS	2002	2000	
Germany	ESS	2002	2000	2000
Denmark	ESS	2002	2000	
Finland	ESS	2002	2000	2000
United Kingdom	ESS	2002	2000	1999
Greece	ESS	2002	2000	2000
Hungary	ESS	2002	2000	2000
Ireland	ESS	2002	2000	2000
Israel	ESS	2002	2000	2001
Italy	ESS	2002	2000	2000
Luxembourg	ESS	2002	2000	2000
Netherlands	ESS	2002	2000	1999
Norway	ESS	2002	2000	2000
Sweden	ESS	2002	2000	2000
Slovenia	ESS	2002	2000	2002

Data used to compute the correlation between country-education levels of cohabitation and country-education values orientation (Figure 4)

Country	Cohabitation		WVS Year
	Source	Year	
Argentina	IPUMS	2001	1999
Brazil	IPUMS	2000	1997
Chile	IPUMS	2002	2000
Colombia	IPUMS	2005	2005
Mexico	IPUMS	2000	2000
Spain	IPUMS	2001	2000
Venezuela	IPUMS	2001	2000
United States	NSFG	2002	1999
Finland	ESS	2002	2005
Italy	ESS	2002	2005
Sweden	ESS	2002	1999