

**Couple Disagreement in Reporting on Courtship Stages:
Implications for Measurement and Marital Outcomes**

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Introduction

Previous research supports the idea that those who “slide” into more serious union stages, rather than “deciding” to do so, are at greater risk of poor marital outcomes because such a courtship is tied to lower relationship commitment (Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman 2009; Stanley, Rhoades, Amato, Markman, & Johnson 2010; Stanley, Rhoades, & Markman 2006). We examine the progression of premarital courtships to test whether couple disagreement over whether and how various relationship stages took place is associated with marital outcomes. We argue that a couple’s disagreement in their retrospective reporting of the progression of their relationship is a potential indicator of that couple having "slid" into a more serious relationship, rather than having "decided" to do so, because it may be more likely to occur when a couple lacks clear symbols or turning points in the relationship (e.g., particular conversations about what was happening in the relationship and what it meant).

Previous research in this area has restricted its focus to pre-cohabitation engagement as a marker for “deciding” (Kline et al., 2004; Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman 2009; Stanley, Rhoades, Amato, Markman, & Johnson 2010; Stanley, Rhoades, & Markman 2006). Further, such studies have focused on whether or not the couple was engaged before cohabiting, without examining a potential third alternative – one member of the couple believed they had agreed to get married while the other partner did not. The present study builds on this previous research by (1) investigating the frequency of couple disagreement in retrospective reporting of relationship stages, (2) considering such intra-couple disagreement as a meaningful relationship characteristic, and (3) examining additional premarital relationship stages beyond pre-engagement cohabitation as potential areas of meaningful couple disagreement.

We use a new, nationally representative dataset, which includes responses from both members of a married couple, to ask two questions that arise from this primary issue of couple disagreement on premarital relationship stages:

- 1) How commonly do couples disagree in their retrospective reporting of their premarital relationship stages? This shows the degree to which previous studies that rely only on reports from one member of a couple may be inaccurate.
- 2) What are the implications of intra-couple disagreement on premarital courtship stages for marital quality and stability outcomes? A couple not being on the same page about how their relationship proceeded may be an indicator for “sliding”, as it may show that they lack the clear markers that would designate an explicit decision process. We test whether disagreement is therefore a risk factor for poorer marital outcomes.

Background

“Sliding” versus “Deciding”

Premarital cohabitation is now the modal pathway into marriage (Stanley, Whitton, & Markman, 2004); nonetheless, couples who cohabit before they marry face a host of economic, psychological, and relationship disadvantages (Rogers & Amato, 1997; Thomson & Colella, 1992). In particular, they are substantially more likely to divorce (Booth & Johnson, 1988; Martin & Bumpass, 1989; Waite & Lillard, 1991). Estimates of the increased risk of marital dissolution for premarital cohabitators, relative to non-cohabitators, range from 46 to 80 percent (DeMaris & Rao, 1992; Dush, Cohan, & Amato, 2003). However, it is premarital cohabitators who begin living together without plans to marry in the future that are particularly at risk of later marital disruption (Brown & Booth, 1996; Kline et al., 2004; Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2009; Teachman, 2003, 2008), and this practice of beginning to live together without explicitly

deciding to do so or concretely discussing future marriage plans is quite common (Manning & Smock 2005).

Importantly, for the purposes of the present study, it is not uncommon for couples not to be on the same page about how their relationship is progressing. For example, previous studies have found that cohabiting women are more focused on transitioning the relationship to marriage than are cohabiting men (Huang, Smock, Manning, & Bergstrom-Lynch 2011; Reneflot 2006). In turn, men who cohabited prior to engagement are less dedicated to their wives after marriage compared to those who only cohabit after getting engaged (Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman 2006). More generally, couples who cohabited without being engaged report lower dedication and marital satisfaction as well as a greater likelihood of divorce than those who entered marriage directly or who only cohabited after engagement (Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman 2009).

Stanley, Rhoades, and Markman (2006) argue that part of the risk of pre-engagement cohabitation lies in the fact that couples may be “sliding” into an increasingly serious relationship without consciously making the decision to do so. Cohabiting couples may end up following a path into marriage that is not based primarily on the quality of their relationship, but rather on the inertia that develops when they are already sharing a home and possessions and marriage is understood to be the next step in a relationship. Getting engaged or explicitly deciding on future marriage plans prior to cohabitation is therefore a marker that “deciding” rather than “sliding” led a couple down the aisle.

Couples may disagree at the time about what relationship pathway they are on and they may proceed through premarital courtship stages without an explicit decision-making process (Manning & Smock 2005; Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman 2006, 2009); this raises the distinct possibility that couples may disagree with one another in their retrospective reporting about the

timing and nature of their courtship process. Intra-couple inconsistency in recall may therefore serve as a marker for “sliding”; therefore, on the basis of this previous research, we hypothesize that couple disagreement ought to be negatively associated with marital outcomes.

Contributions of the present study

While previous studies have focused only on pre-engagement cohabitation as a marker of marital risk, we consider couple disagreement on multiple premarital relationship stages as potential indicators of “sliding”. The stages we consider here include dating, spending the night, and cohabitation. Of these three, “spending the night” is the least standard measure in studies of premarital courtship; however, research on a sample of young adults indicates that spending the night on a regular basis before moving in together is the typical pathway into cohabitation (Pollard & Harris 2007). Therefore, distinguishing between these three stages more accurately captures couples’ actual courtship experiences.

We use measures from both members of a couple that cover the longer courtship process, allowing us to understand how each partner saw the relationship unfolding. This means we can assess how common it is for partners to disagree in their retrospective reporting of their relationship stages. Further, we extend research in the area by testing whether couples’ disagreement about their courtship process is meaningful by examining its association with marital quality and stability outcomes. The present study, therefore, contributes to our understanding of how “off” our estimates of relationships are when we rely only on measures from one member of a couple. In addition, we learn whether couple disagreement in reporting of premarital courtship stages is more than a measurement problem and can actually be leveraged as a predictor of marital outcomes.

Data and Measures

Data

The data used in this study come from a nationally representative panel study of the United States population, ages 18 to 64, who are in married or cohabiting heterosexual relationships. The data were collected between July and October 2010 as part of the larger, ongoing Knowledge Panel online research study, which began in 1999. Panel members were randomly recruited using random-digit dial (RDD) and address-based sampling methods, and they then received emails notifying them to complete an online questionnaire. Households were provided with access to the Internet and hardware if needed. Data are weighted to adjust for sample design and survey non-response.

Interviews were conducted with each partner in 1,112 cohabiting and married couples. In the present paper, we restrict our focus to the 752 married couples. We further divide the sample into two groups: married couples who cohabited before marriage (N=380) and married couples who did not cohabit before marriage (N=369). This yields 1,504 respondents in 752 marital relationships.

Measures

Relationship Stages. We designed survey questions to measure the timing and duration of several relationship stages. Due to space limitations, we did not collect complete relationship histories, but rather focused primarily on the path of the current relationship. First, we asked all respondents for the date (month/year) they started dating their current partner. We also asked respondents whether they had ever separated or gotten back together while dating.

We then asked respondents a series of questions to gauge the timing and duration of the transition into cohabitation. We asked respondents, “How long before you were officially living together did you and your partner start spending the night at one another’s homes?” Respondents could report a number of weeks or months, or they could respond that they never spent the night

at one another's homes before officially living together. If they provided a non-zero response to this question, they were asked about how many times in a typical week they spent the night at one another's homes. We also asked respondents whether they and their partner had decided to get married before they officially started living together.

We then ask respondents to report the date (month/year) they officially started living together, our measure of cohabitation. Those who reported that they had lived together before marriage were then asked whether they ever separated and got back together while cohabiting. We use the phrase “officially” living together” and do not describe “officially” to allow respondents to self-define the start of their cohabiting relationship. Providing a definition assumes a common understanding of the start of cohabitation that qualitative research indicates is not the same across all cohabitators. Previous studies, both qualitative and quantitative, have found that respondents are able to report the beginning dates of their dating relationship and cohabitation and the length of time between the start of the relationship and cohabitation (Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2006, 2009; Sassler, 2004). Also, respondents can recall the process of starting to spend nights together, before officially cohabiting (Manning & Smock, 2004; Pollard & Harris, 2007; Sassler, 2004).

Finally, we asked respondents who were currently married to report on the date (month/year) that they got married. We also asked them whether they ever separated and got back together while married.

Marital Quality. The survey also includes several measures of current relationship quality. A measure of relationship satisfaction asks couples, “Taking all things together, how satisfied are you with your relationship?” A measure of listening satisfaction asks “How satisfied are you with how well your spouse/partner listens to you?” For both measures, respondents

answered on a five-point scale ranging from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5). We constructed a measure of partner supportiveness which takes the mean of the following items: My spouse/partner shows love and affection toward me; My spouse/partner encourages me to do things that are important to me; My spouse/partner will not cheat on me; My spouse/partner listens when I need someone to talk to; and the reverse code of My spouse/partner and I avoid discussing unpleasant or difficult topics. Responses were on a five-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The reliability of this scale was $\alpha = 0.76$. A measure of relationship happiness asked respondents “How would you rate your relationship with your current spouse?” with responses ranging from completely unhappy (1) to completely happy (10). Finally, respondents were asked “What are the chances you and your spouse will break up in the future?” with responses ranging from no chance (1) to almost certain chance (5).

Background Characteristics. We also include measures of respondents’ demographic and economic characteristics. We measure respondent’s age (< 30, 30-44, 45-59, or 60+), educational attainment (less than high school, high school graduate, some college, or college graduate), race (non-Hispanic black, Hispanic, non-Hispanic other, or Hispanic), whether there are children under the age of 18 in the household, household income (< \$20,000, \$20-40,000, \$40-60,000, \$60-100,000, or \$100,000+), and employment status (unemployed, employed, or retired/disabled). Finally, we measure respondent’s marital duration in years based on the length of time between their reported date of marriage and the date of the interview.

Methods

The following analysis proceeds in two steps. First, we provide descriptive data on each partner’s report of the duration of the following relationship stages: dating to first spending the night together, first spending the night together to officially living together, officially living

together to marrying. Couples who cohabited before marriage experience all three stages, while couples who entered marriage without cohabiting only experience the first two. We also provide descriptive evidence from each partner on whether they broke up and got back together during each of these relationship stages. We then provide descriptive evidence on how many couples disagreed in their retrospective reporting of their relationship stages, and run regressions to predict the likelihood of disagreement based on couples' background characteristics.

Next, we examine the implications of intra-couple disagreement for marital quality outcomes. We regress each marital quality outcome on indicators of couple disagreement over each relationship stage, controlling for various background characteristics. This tests whether disagreement is a risk factor for poorer marital outcomes.

Results

Table 1 provides the descriptive characteristics of the sample for our relationship quality outcomes and background characteristics, separately for husbands and wives. Premarital cohabitators report slightly lower quality relationships and a slightly higher chance of breaking up than couples who did not cohabit before marriage. Similarly, husbands report significantly more positive relationships on average than do wives.

The background characteristics of premarital cohabitators and non-cohabiting married couples are consistent with previous research. On average, premarital cohabitators are younger, have lower education and household income, and are more likely to be unemployed than non-cohabitators. They have also been married for fewer years than non-cohabitators. There are few gender differences in reports of background characteristics, except that wives are younger on average and are less likely to be employed than their husbands.

Table 2 presents detailed descriptive statistics for husbands' and wives' reports of their premarital relationship stages. On average, premarital cohabitators spent less time dating than non-cohabiting married couples, about 11 months compared to about 25 months, indicating that cohabitators transitioned faster from dating to spending the night together than non-cohabitators. Premarital cohabitators were also more likely than non-cohabitators to spend the night together before officially living together. Of those who spent the night together, both premarital cohabitators and non-cohabitators spent the night together for an average of three months before officially living together, but cohabitators spent more nights per week together than non-cohabitators – about 2 nights per week, compared to less than one night per week on average for non-cohabitators. For non-cohabitators, this relationship stage is followed by marriage. For cohabitators, this relationship stage is followed by cohabitation, which lasted an average of 20 to 21 months before marriage.

Couples were also asked whether they had separated and got back together during each relationship stage. Premarital cohabitators were more likely to report that they had separated and got back together while dating than non-cohabitators (15-18% vs. 13-14%). Fewer couples in both groups reported that they had separated and got back together while they were married (5% for premarital cohabitators vs. 4% for non-cohabitators).

We also examined whether husband's and wives mean reports of premarital relationship stages differed significantly. We found that the average start dates of dating, cohabitation, and marriage differed significantly across each group, but for most other measures the means were not significantly different.

The mean relationship stages presented in Table 2 mask a great deal of heterogeneity in couples' reports, however, so Table 3 directly examines the levels of couple disagreement over

each relationship stage. During the dating stage, we find that 43% of premarital cohabitators and 37% of non-cohabitators report starting dates for their relationships that differ by more than one month. Over two-thirds of cohabitators (68%) and over one-half of non-cohabitators (54%) differ by more than one month in the amount of time they spent dating before starting to spend the night together. Additionally 10% of cohabitators and 8% of non-cohabitators differ in their reports of whether they broke up and got back together while dating.

Premarital cohabitators in particular report greater disagreement over the stage of their relationship involving spending the night. Over 60% of cohabitators differed by more than one month in how long they spent doing this before officially living together, compared to 28% of non-cohabitators. Similarly, 36% of premarital cohabitators differed by more than one day in their reports of how many nights on average they spent with each other in a typical week, compared to just 4% of non-cohabitators.

Premarital cohabitators continue to display high levels of disagreement during the cohabitation stage of their relationship. Almost half differ by more than one month on the date they started officially living together, and 57% differ by more than one month in how long they cohabited before getting married. Interestingly, 22% of premarital cohabitators also disagreed over whether they had decided to get married before living together.

Couple disagreement was considerably lower concerning marriage for both premarital cohabitators and non-cohabitators. Just 14% of premarital cohabitators and 10% of non-cohabitators differed by more than one month in their reports of their marriage dates. Similarly, few couples disagreed over whether they had separated or got back together while married – just 3% of cohabitators and non-cohabitators.

Taken together, the results in Table 3 indicate a high level of couple disagreement over the timing and duration of their premarital relationship stages. Disagreement was higher among premarital cohabitators than it was among non-cohabitators, and it was highest for the relationship stages that are least institutionalized. From these results, it is clear that many couples are not on the same page about the progression of their relationships, at least based on their retrospective reports.

We next predict the likelihood of couple disagreement based on couples' demographic and economic background characteristics. Because results for premarital cohabitators and non-cohabitators were similar, we pool the results for these two groups in the same model and include a dummy variable indicator for premarital cohabitators. Table 4a reports the odds ratios of logistic regressions of couple disagreement on couple background characteristics. The results in Table 4a show that, even net of controls for age, education, race, income, employment, and marital duration, premarital cohabitators remain significantly more likely to disagree than non-cohabitators for virtually every relationship stage. Older couples were also more likely to disagree than younger couples for most relationship stages, perhaps reflecting the fact that the accuracy of recall declines as more time passes. There were few consistent differences by income, race, employment, or education, suggesting that more disadvantaged couples are no more likely to disagree than more advantaged couples.

Table 4b presents similar results for the cohabitation stage for the premarital cohabitor sample alone. We find a similar pattern of results here, with older couples being more likely to disagree on most measures, and few other consistent predictors among background characteristics. The pseudo- R^2 values for the models in Tables 4a and 4b are relatively low, however, indicating that background characteristics alone do not do a very good job of predicting

which couples will disagree. By far the biggest correlate of disagreement is premarital cohabitation.

Next, we ask whether disagreement over relationship stages has consequences for marital outcomes. Table 5 presents the results of regressions of relationship quality measures on whether a couple disagreed over each relationship stage, controlling for background characteristics. Each couple disagreement measure was regressed in a separate model, so each coefficient in Table 5 reports the results of a separate regression. We report the results separately for husbands' and wives' reports of marital quality. Because results were substantively similar for premarital cohabitators and non-cohabitators, we pooled them into a single sample.

During the dating stage of a relationship, disagreement over when a couple started dating was significantly associated with reports of lower-quality marriages for all quality measures. These associations were generally stronger for husbands' reports of marital quality than they were for wives' reports. Disagreement over the duration of the dating relationship or whether a couple separated while dating were less consistently associated with relationship quality outcomes. These associations were largest for the measures of partner supportiveness, relationship satisfaction, and happiness.

Disagreement over how long couples spent the night together was also consistently associated with significantly worse reports of marital quality for both husbands and wives. However, disagreement over how many nights per week on average couples spent the night was not associated with lower marital quality.

Among premarital cohabitators, disagreement over the cohabitation relationship stage was inconsistently associated with lower marital quality. Disagreement over the date cohabitation began was associated with husband's reports of lower relationship satisfaction and happiness, but

no other measures. Couples who disagreed over whether they had separated and gotten back together while cohabiting report lower quality marriages on both husbands' and wives' reports of most relationship quality measures. In contrast, disagreement over the duration of cohabitation was not associated with lower quality marital outcomes. And interestingly, disagreement over whether the couple had agreed to marry before living together was not significantly associated with marital quality outcomes.

At the marital stage, disagreement over the date couples married was not associated with lower quality marriages. However, disagreement over whether the couple had separated and gotten back together while married was strongly and consistently associated with lower quality marriages.

Taken together, the results in Table 5 suggest that couples' disagreement over the progression of their relationships is significantly associated with lower quality marriages. This is particularly true when couples disagree over the progression of the least institutionalized relationship stages, dating and spending the night together. Disagreement over the dates of cohabitation and marriage are less consequential for marital quality; what seems to matter during these relationship stages is whether the couple disagrees about breaking up. Interestingly, cohabitators' disagreement over deciding to marry before living together does not predict lower quality marriages.

Conclusion

Couple disagreement in recounting premarital courtship stages is quite common, particularly among premarital cohabitators and for the less institutionalized courtship stages of dating and spending the night. The higher rates of couple disagreement among premarital cohabitators are not accounted for by standard demographic controls. Couple disagreement, in

turn, is associated with poorer marital outcomes, especially relationship satisfaction, partner supportiveness, and relationship happiness.

We argue that couple disagreement is an indicator that the partners “slid” into a serious relationship, as it may be more likely to occur when a couple lacks explicit markers or key turning points in the relationship (like having “the talk” about the relationship’s future). Along these lines, our findings support the contention in previous research that sliding is associated with more negative marital outcomes (Kline et al., 2004; Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman 2009; Stanley, Rhoades, Amato, Markman, & Johnson 2010; Stanley, Rhoades, & Markman 2006). Notably, our results indicate that sliding during the less institutionalized stages of a relationship – dating and spending the night – is more common and more consequential for marital outcomes. Further, it appears to be more common among those following the less traditional pathway into marriage through cohabitation.

Our findings have implications for researchers working in this area. First, premarital cohabitators are more likely than non-cohabitators to disagree in recounting their courtship stages. Therefore, studies that rely on measures from only one partner must be particularly cautious when comparing results for premarital cohabitators and those who entered marriage directly, as the divergent accounts among the cohabitators mean we may draw less reliable conclusions about them.

Second, couple disagreement about whether they had agreed to get married before beginning cohabitation is not uncommon – occurring among nearly one-quarter of the couples. Those examining the presence or absence of engagement prior to cohabitation and relying only on the reports of one partner for their measures need to be cautious as these may contain a good deal of messiness. Relatedly, couple disagreement on whether they had agreed to get married

before cohabiting was not significantly associated with marital outcomes, although the couple agreeing that they had not decided to get married before cohabiting was (results not shown). This illustrates that couple disagreement about pre-engagement cohabitation is distinct from couple agreement that cohabitation occurred prior to engagement.

The present study contributes to our understanding of the courtship process by using a unique dataset that includes couple-level data drawn from a nationally representative panel. However, the married couples in the sample have been married for a long time – 15 years on average for premarital cohabitators and 21 years for those who entered marriage directly. This means we have a sample that is slanted toward longer-lasting marriages; for example, of marriages occurring between 1980 and 1984, one-third of couples were divorced by their 15th anniversary (Kreider, 2005). Therefore, the composition of our sample likely minimizes differences between premarital cohabitators and those who entered marriage directly, as premarital cohabitators are at a higher risk of divorce; future studies should examine the courtship processes explored in the present study in the context of “younger” marriages in order to capture the characteristics of those that will later end in divorce. Future research should also focus more specifically on whether there are consistent patterns of “his” and “hers” retrospective courtship stage reporting and whether such gender differences are tied to variation in marital outcomes.

By taking advantage of the relatively rare opportunity to examine couple level data, we uncovered that couple disagreement in retrospective accounts of premarital courtship is both common and meaningful. There are important measurement issues here, particularly given the systematic variation in couple disagreement rates between premarital cohabitators and non-cohabitators. However, this is not just a measurement issues; rather, couple disagreement appears to be a substantively meaningful marker as it is associated with poorer marital outcomes. That

couple disagreement over the less institutionalized stages of the courtship process is common and more strongly associated with marital outcomes indicates that these may be the stages in the premarital relationship that couples more easily “slide” through, with negative implications for their marital experiences. Future research should aim to better understand these processes, particularly the spending the night stage, which has received little research attention to date.

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Table 1. Sample Descriptives for Premarital Cohabitors and Non-Cohabiting Married Couples

	Premarital Cohabitors			Non-Cohabiting Marrieds		
	Husband	Wife		Husband	Wife	
<u>Relationship Quality</u>						
Relationship Satisfaction	4.60	4.49	**	4.66	4.56	*
Listening Satisfaction	4.28	3.99	***	4.38	4.08	***
Partner Supportiveness	4.27	4.17	**	4.31	4.22	**
Relationship Happiness	8.66	8.32	***	8.71	8.57	+
Chance of Breaking Up	1.54	1.53		1.40	1.37	
<u>Background Characteristics</u>						
Age						
< 30	7.9	12.6	*	6.7	8.4	
30-44	45.5	42.4		30.4	33.9	
45-59	41.5	38.4		45.2	46.2	
60+	5.0	6.6		17.6	11.4	*
Education						
Less than High School	8.9	5.7		2.4	2.9	
High School Graduate	27.1	21.1	+	26.3	20.9	+
Some College	30.3	37.6	*	27.1	33.4	+
College Graduate	33.7	35.5		44.1	42.6	
Race						
Non-Hispanic White	83.2	85.0		84.5	85.3	
Non-Hispanic Black	3.4	2.1		1.6	1.3	
Hispanic	7.9	6.3		6.8	6.2	
Non-Hispanic Other	5.5	6.6		7.0	7.1	
Children < 18 in Household	51.8	52.3		47.4	47.1	
Income						
< \$20,000	7.1	7.1		2.1	2.1	
\$20-\$40,000	12.6	12.6		10.5	10.3	
\$40-\$60,000	18.9	19.2		15.4	15.4	
\$60-\$100,000	32.1	32.1		43.1	42.9	
\$100,000+	29.2	28.9		28.7	29.1	
Employment						
Employed	77.9	61.1	***	82.6	60.3	***
Unemployed	10.2	29.4	***	5.7	27.9	***
Other (Retired/Disabled)	11.8	9.5		11.6	11.7	
Marital Duration in Years	15.9	16.0		24.2	24.2	
N	380	380		369	369	

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Notes: Descriptive statistics are unweighted means and percentages.

Significance tests indicate difference between male and female means.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Relationship Stage Measures

	Premarital Cohabitors		Non-Cohabiting Marrieds	
	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife
<u>Dating</u>				
Date started dating	25-Jul-92	1-Nov-90 ***	9-Sep-85	31-Oct-83 ***
# months between dating and first spending the night together	11.07	11.20	25.26	24.35
Separate, got back together while dating	18.68	15.26 *	12.53	13.90
<u>Spending the Night</u>				
Spent the night together before officially living together				
# months between first spending the night together and officially living together	3.51	2.89	3.53	3.07
# nights per week spent the night together before officially lived together	2.39	2.31	0.11	0.06
<u>Cohabiting</u>				
Date started living together	23-Dec-93	2-Mar-92 ***	-----	-----
# months between officially living together and getting married	21.55	20.03	-----	-----
Separate, got back together while living together	6.58	6.84	-----	-----
Decided to marry before living together	44.21	46.58	-----	-----
<u>Married</u>				
Date Married	11-Dec-95	31-Jul-94 ***	4-Nov-87	5-Jun-86 ***
Separate, got back together while married	5.00	5.00	4.09	4.63

+ p <0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Notes: Descriptive statistics are unweighted means and percentages.

Significance tests indicate difference between male and female means.

Table 3. Couple Disagreement on Relationship Stage Measures

	Premarital Cohabitors		Non-Cohabiting Marrieds	
	% Disagree	Correlation	% Disagree	Correlation
<u>Dating</u>				
Date started dating ^a	42.97%	0.749	37.39%	0.825
# months between dating and first spending the night together ^a	67.96%	0.193	54.29%	0.239
Separate, got back together while dating	9.74%	-----	8.44%	-----
<u>Spending the Night</u>				
# months between first spending the night together and officially living together ^a	60.90%	0.302	27.95%	0.574
# nights per week spent the night together before officially lived together ^b	36.34%	0.469	3.90%	0.625
<u>Cohabiting</u>				
Date started living together ^a	49.32%	0.766	-----	-----
# months between officially living together and getting married ^a	57.18%	0.382	-----	-----
Separate, got back together while living together	5.00%	-----	-----	-----
Decided to marry before living together	22.37%	-----	-----	-----
<u>Married</u>				
Date married ^a	13.98%	0.792	9.56%	0.807
Separate, got back together while married	2.64%	-----	3.27%	-----

Notes: Intra-couple (dis)agreement measured by correlations (r) for continuous and ordinal measures and by % disagreement for all measures.

a. Disagreement measured by > 1 month (31 day) difference

b. Disagreement measured by > 1 day difference

Table 4a. Regression of Couple Disagreement on Background Characteristics - All Respondents

	Date started dating ^a	# months between dating and spending the night ^a	Separate while dating	# months between spending the night and officially living together ^a	# nights per week spent the night before officially lived together ^b	Date married ^a	Separate while married
Premarital Cohabitor	1.42 *	2.06 ***	1.47	4.34 ***	2.56 ***	1.41	0.93
Age							
30-44	1.87 +	2.13 *	0.95	1.03	1.63	1.48	0.37
45-59	2.85 **	2.16 *	1.08	1.77	1.94 +	2.58	0.12 +
60+	4.63 **	2.85 *	2.09	2.50 +	3.01 *	3.14	0.03 *
Education							
Less than High School	1.32	1.21	2.25	0.53	0.50	2.76 *	----
Some College	1.06	1.07	0.82	0.81	0.95	1.16	0.53
College Graduate	1.08	1.43 +	0.89	1.94 **	1.79 **	1.42	0.09 **
Race							
Non-Hispanic Black	1.44	0.82	0.58	1.40	1.44	2.65	----
Hispanic	1.50	0.95	1.80	0.91	0.68	2.18 *	1.52
Non-Hispanic Other	3.22 ***	1.03	0.47	0.65	0.68	1.75	3.32
Children < 18 in Household	0.91	1.12	0.79	0.91	1.00	1.12	0.67
Income							
\$20-\$40,000	2.15	1.78	0.87	1.15	1.02	1.89	0.27
\$40-\$60,000	2.31 +	1.56	0.82	0.99	0.90	1.31	0.06 *
\$60-\$100,000	2.75 *	1.61	1.18	1.41	1.30	2.36	0.34
\$100,000+	2.15	1.55	0.72	1.63	1.59	2.34	0.49
Employment							
Unemployed	1.28	0.65	0.32	1.39	1.25	1.70	1.38
Other (Retired/Disabled)	1.05	0.96	1.14	0.96	0.99	0.86	3.28 +
Marital Duration in Months	0.99	1.00	1.01	0.99 **	0.98 **	1.00	1.01
Pseudo R2	0.04	0.03	0.05	0.13	0.08	0.04	0.19

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Notes: Odds ratios. Omitted reference categories are age < 30, high school graduate, non-Hispanic White, no children, income < \$20,000, and employed.

a. Disagreement measured by > month (31 day) difference. b. Disagreement measured by > 1 day difference.

Table 4b. Regression of Couple Disagreement on Background Characteristics - Cohabitators Only

Premarital Cohabitor	Date started living together ^a	# months between officially living together and getting married ^a	Separate while living together	Decided to marry before living together
Age	---	---	---	---
30-44	1.21	1.23	1.99	2.50 *
45-59	1.89	1.85	3.04	2.94 *
60+	4.18 +	3.81 +	---	2.12 *
Education				
Less than High School	1.17	1.32	3.21 +	2.13
Some College	1.21	1.20	0.51	0.74
College Graduate	1.37	1.19	0.72	0.73
Race				
Non-Hispanic Black	0.80	1.54	1.10	1.26
Hispanic	2.48 *	1.35	3.03	1.03
Non-Hispanic Other	2.31 +	2.06	1.42	1.97
Children < 18 in Household	0.90	0.66 +	0.78	0.87
Income				
\$20-\$40,000	2.50 +	2.42 +	0.82	0.68
\$40-\$60,000	2.53 +	1.93	1.08	0.95
\$60-\$100,000	2.89 +	2.99 *	0.23	1.68
\$100,000+	3.33 *	3.28 *	0.88	1.34
Employment				
Unemployed	1.09	1.44	0.36	0.91
Other (Retired/Disabled)	0.77	0.78	0.90	1.14
Marital Duration	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.99
Pseudo R2	0.05	0.04	0.11	0.06

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Notes: Odds ratios. Omitted categories are age < 30, HS graduate, non-Hispanic White, no children, income < \$20,000, and employed.

a. Disagreement measured by > 1 month (31 day) difference

Table 5. Regressions of Relationship Quality Outcomes on Couple Disagreement about Relationship Stages

Disagreement on	Relationship Satisfaction		Listening Satisfaction		Partner Supportiveness		Relationship Happiness		Break Up Chance	
	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife	Husband	Wife
<u>Dating</u>										
Date started dating ^a	-0.179 **	-0.039	-0.119 +	0.013	-0.150 ***	-0.103 *	-0.271 *	-0.248 +	0.064	0.044
# months between dating and first spending the night ^a	-0.162 **	-0.058	-0.062	-0.033	-0.099 *	-0.080	-0.270 *	-0.112	0.031	0.123 *
Separate, got back together while dating	-0.159 +	-0.017	-0.164	-0.191	-0.154 *	-0.138 +	-0.350 +	-0.198	0.004	0.090
<u>Spending the Night</u>										
# months between first spending the night and officially living together ^a	-0.122 *	-0.145 *	-0.112 +	-0.203 *	-0.149 **	-0.203 ***	-0.352 **	-0.435 **	0.069	0.014
# nights per week spent the night together before officially lived together ^b	-0.103	-0.032	-0.169 *	-0.064	-0.167 **	-0.062	-0.161	-0.092	0.113 +	-0.023
<u>Cohabiting</u>										
Date started living together ^a	-0.187 *	0.056	-0.152 +	0.145	-0.086	-0.004	-0.348 *	0.084	-0.049	-0.043
# months between officially living together and getting married ^a	-0.119	0.124	-0.069	-0.214 *	-0.043	0.037	-0.204	0.120	-0.032	-0.009
Separate, got back together while living together	-0.288 +	-0.428 *	-0.436 *	-0.637 **	-0.675 **	-0.617 ***	-0.169	-1.094 *	0.054	0.143
Decided to marry before living together	0.026	-0.062	-0.003	-0.067	0.009	-0.055	-0.032	-0.164	-0.125	0.018
<u>Marriage</u>										
Date married ^a	-0.076	0.153	0.067	0.041	-0.098	-0.065	-0.044	-0.024	-0.057	-0.172 *
Separate, got back together while married	-0.577 ***	-0.559 **	-0.847 ***	-0.902 ***	-0.529 ***	-0.355 *	-1.243 ***	-0.969 *	0.423 **	0.345 *

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001. Cohabiting results are for the premarital cohabitators sample only.

Notes: Regressions control for premarital cohabitation, age, education, race, children in household, household income, employment status, and marital duration.

a. Disagreement measured by > 1 month (31 day) difference

b. Disagreement measured by > 1 day difference

