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Latinas' Transition to First Marriage: An Examination of Four Theoretical Perspectives

National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and census data are used to examine the effect of both individual- and contextual-level determinants on Latinas' transition to first marriage (n = 745). Hypotheses derived from 4 leading theories of marriage timing are evaluated. Discrete-time event-history models that control for clustering within labor market areas suggest that foreign-born Latina and Anglo women have virtually identical marriage trajectories. Analyses further demonstrate that Latinas' individual human capital, and residence in areas characterized by a relatively large supply of single foreign-born Latino men, are associated with higher probabilities of marriage, whereas women's aggregate economic opportunities are correlated with the predicted postponement of first marriage.

Latinos represent a numerically growing and socially significant segment of the U.S. population. Data from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) indicates that Latinos recently became our nation's largest minority group (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2002). Nevertheless, relatively little is known about Latino marital behavior at a national level. The overwhelming majority of quantitative examinations of this and other life course transitions exclude Latinos, limiting analyses to Black-White comparisons. As a result, there is a surprising lack

of empirical information regarding the determinants of marriage among people of Spanish origin who reside in the United States.

The present analysis begins to fill this gap by examining the transition to first marriage among a nationally representative cohort of Latinas using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) census and Statistical Abstracts of the United States. The NLSY provides individual-level data representing a sample of 1,002 Latinas, aged 14 – 22 years at the time of their initial interview. Latinas' marital transitions are examined over a 16-year period from 1979 through 1994. Data from the census and Statistical Abstracts provide contextual-level data. By doing so, the analysis strives to answer three questions. First, to what extent can the marital timing of Latinas be explained by the predictors indicative of the four leading theories of women's marriage timing: familism, assimilation, women's economic independence, and the marriage market? Second, what are the similarities and differences in the determinants of Latinas' transition to first marriage when compared with Anglo and African American women? And finally, to what extent can ethnoracial *differences* in marital timing be explained by the predictors indicative of these leading theories?

By incorporating both conventional individual-level predictors as well as aggregate contextual measures, the analysis makes numerous contributions to existing literatures on race/ethnicity and marriage timing. First, by examining the determinants of marriage among a nationally representative sample of Latinas, the analysis provides a needed balance to previous studies that emphasize a Black-White dichotomy in marital

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behavior. Second, the analysis represents one of the first examinations of the effect of aggregate contextual characteristics on Latinas' marital transitions. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the analysis provides an examination of several leading theories of Latino marriage in a way that previous research has not. These strengths lead to a fuller understanding of how cultural, generational, socioeconomic, and structural characteristics work in tandem to shape U.S. Latino families.

Following a brief summary of the literature on familism, I turn to additional theoretical discussions of assimilation, women's economic independence, and the marriage market, focusing on each theory's tenets regarding women's marital timing. Testable hypotheses are derived from each theory. Table 1 summarizes these hypotheses by separating them into those concerned with individual versus contextual influences on Latinas' transition to first marriage. Of course, the four perspectives presented in Table 1 and examined in subsequent analyses are not completely separable. Many may be weaved together conceptually. For instance, marriage market theory can be, and often is, interlaced conceptually with the theory of women's economic independence. They are also not intended to represent an exhaus-

tive account of all possible factors that could potentially be considered under the rubric of each theory. Rather, the examination of their differential effect on Latinas' transition to first marriage is intended to represent an initial but important first step toward including Latinas in the central theoretical discussions and empirical analyses of first marriage, which in large part have been limited to non-Hispanic Whites and non-Hispanic Blacks (hereafter referred to as Anglos and African Americans, respectively). Latinas' marital transitions are the central focus of the current analysis both because previous research indicates that women's motivational and economic factors for marriage are unique (see, e.g., Xie, Raymo, Goyette, & Thornton, 2003) and because women's economic independence, as a theoretical framework, is inappropriate for a direct evaluation of Latino men's transition to first marriage.

FAMILISM AND THE TIMING OF LATINAS' TRANSITION TO FIRST MARRIAGE

To a large extent, research on Latino marriage has focused on pronuptial behavior documenting a relatively early age at first marriage, high rates of legal union formation, and a strong endorsement of pronuptial statements. For instance,

Table 1. Hypothesized Effects of Familism, Assimilation, Women's Economic Independence, and Marriage Market Theories on Latinas' Probability of First Marriage

Predictor	Theoretical Perspectives			
	Familism	Assimilation	Women's Economic Independence	Marriage Market
Individual characteristics				
Relative probability of first marriage	High	—	—	—
Age at first marriage	Low	—	—	—
Parent(s) foreign born	—	Positive	—	—
Black	—	Negative	—	—
English proficiency	—	Negative	—	—
Enrolled in school	—	—	Negative	—
Education	—	Negative	Negative	—
Weeks worked	—	—	Negative	—
Contextual characteristics				
Men employed	—	Positive	—	Positive
Women employed	—	Positive	Negative	—
Men foreign born	—	Negative	—	Positive
Black Latino	—	Negative	—	—
African American	—	Negative	—	—
AFDC	—	—	Negative	—
Sex ratio	—	—	—	Positive
Men enrolled in school	—	—	—	Negative

compared with their Anglo and African American counterparts, Latinas report significantly stronger support of the statement, "It's better to get married than go through life being single" (Oropesa, 1996). Blea (1992) argues that Mexican American women are socialized to believe that marriage is their primary life objective. Others assert that Latin cultural ideology stresses traditional views of familial obligations, places greater emphasis on the collective as opposed to the individual, and considers "the family" as the single most important characteristic of Latin culture (see discussion in Oropesa & Landale, 2004). Perhaps it is not surprising, therefore, that Latinas enumerated in the 2000 Census were 13% more likely than Anglo women, and more than 30% as likely as African American women, to experience first marriage by ages 20 – 24 years (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

A dialogue centered on theories of familism has emerged from these and similar research findings. Familism is typically defined loosely as a strong set of cultural values, emphasizing the importance of marriage and a family (Vega, 1990). But, is the marital timing of U.S. Latinas actually accelerated relative to the Anglo majority as some studies suggest? Although this is an important question, it is almost impossible to answer based on the existing literature because formidable challenges intrinsic to nationally representative data sets have led researchers to exclude Latinas from their empirical studies of the transition to first marriage. Furthermore, census estimates of marriage are less than ideal because they reflect marriage *prevalence* as opposed to marriage *incidence*. This makes it difficult to distinguish marriages that were initiated in the United States versus those that were initiated in the respondent's sending country. As a consequence, census estimates include an unknown proportion of Latinas who married prior to arriving in the United States. If selective marital migration occurs, as some suggest (Oropesa & Landale, 2004; Smith & Edmonston, 1997), then the pronuptial behavior of Latinas may actually reflect high levels of marital migration and not the strong cultural predisposition to marriage that previous research has proposed.

The present analysis examines the proposition that the marriage timing of Latinas is accelerated compared with that of Anglos and African Americans as advanced by a theory of Latino familism. Specifically, as seen in the second column of

Table 1, hypotheses derived from a theory of familism predict that Latinas' probability of first marriage should be high and their age at first marriage low, when compared with their Anglo and African American counterparts. As depicted in Table 1, omitted factors that are associated with earlier marriage among Latinas, but are not controlled, may lead to an interpretation of greater Latino familism.

Although a more nuanced theory of familism may predict differences between Latinas of different national origin, sample size limitations inherent in the NLSY do not permit separate examinations of marriage timing. Following the lead of others (Oropesa & Landale, 2004), the analyses include measures of self-reported ethnic identity as one indicator of Latinas' national origin and cultural identification. This is accomplished by distinguishing membership in one of the following four national-origin groups: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or Other Latina. Respondents are coded as *Mexican* if they report feeling closest to the response categories Chicano, Mexican, or Mexican American and categorized as *Other Latina* if they self-identify with Other Spanish, Other Hispanic, or do not otherwise report feeling close to Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban decent. Mexican is the reference category in the analyses that follow.

ASSIMILATION THEORY

Assimilation theory argues that immigrants become increasingly integrated into the host society with the passage of time (Gordon, 1964). Acculturation occurs in a more or less linear fashion as immigrants become further removed from the norms of their sending country and are exposed to new cultural messages through media, host society schools, and social interaction with host members. Assimilation theory maintains that the most complete integration occurs across generational time. The children and grandchildren of immigrants progressively acquire the human, social, and cultural capital of the receiving country. As a result, the attitudes and behaviors of successive generations become indistinguishable from those of the native-born majority as immigrant offspring embrace the norms, values, and lifestyle of the receiving country's middle class.

The majority of Latina immigrants originate from countries where marriage enjoys strong

cultural support, is nearly universal, and occurs at a relatively young age. Assimilation theory predicts that this strong commitment to the family as a social institution will wane as exposure to U.S. society encourages Latinas to internalize a mainstream Anglo ideology stressing individualism and a tolerance for remaining single. As previously mentioned, the NLSY initially sampled respondents in 1979 when they were between the ages of 14 and 22 years. Consequently, many foreign-born Latinas in the NLSY entered the United States as very young children. Parental nativity, therefore, may be a better indicator of assimilation because exposure to American culture is likely to be similar for child immigrants and second-generation Latinas. Therefore, if the classic assimilation model is correct, Latinas with foreign-born parents should display greater pronuptial behavior—including an early age at first marriage and a higher proportion making the transition to first marriage over the young-adult life course—because of the pronuptial beliefs and practices in their parents' sending countries, whereas the marital timing of Latinas with native-born parents should more closely resemble that of Anglo women. This hypothesis is presented in the third column of Table 1.

Additional individual characteristics are also central to classic formulations of assimilation theory and should therefore be considered in the analysis. For instance, Warner and Srole (1945) identify skin color and a reliance on one's language of origin as two readily identifiable characteristics that help to determine an immigrant member's acceptance within a host society. Others argue that educational attainment is also an important indicator of exposure to U.S. norms and values (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou, 1997).

Assimilation factors are examined by constructing four measures. Parent's foreign-born status is defined as Latinas with at least one biological parent who is born in either a foreign country or Puerto Rico. Although Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, not immigrants, the majority of prior research regards their experiences as similar to those of international migrants (see Landale, Oropesa, & Gorman, 2000). For instance, Puerto Ricans are culturally distinct from people born on the U.S. mainland, often speak Spanish as their primary language, and are frequently not proficient in English. As noted in Table 1, classic formulations of assimilation theory hypothesize

that Latinas with foreign-born parent(s) will experience an earlier transition to first marriage.

A second measure, *Black*, is based on the NLSY interviewers' subjective perception of the Latina respondent's skin color as being either *Black-other* or *White*. This indicator serves as an unusually appropriate proxy of race in that it represents a host member's subjective perception of the respondent's skin color and not the Latina's own perception. Assimilation theory argues that it is not one's own assessment of skin color that is important but rather that of the members of the receiving country. In short, the argument is that in the United States, social and economic barriers are constructed that inhibit the assimilation of people who are perceived to have relatively dark skin.

Table 1 identifies two additional individual-level characteristics that are predicted to impede Latinas' transition to first marriage under classic formulations of assimilation theory: proficiency in English and educational attainment. *Proficiency in English* is measured by constructing a binary indicator that is coded 1 if the *NLSY annual interview was conducted in English* and coded 0 otherwise. *Educational attainment* is defined as a Latina respondent's highest year of completed schooling as of May 1 of each survey year.

The classic formulation of assimilation theory has enjoyed a long and prolific history in social sciences (for discussions see Alba & Nee, 1999; Hirschman, 1983). Nonetheless, it has also been criticized for emphasizing both an irreversible monotonic progression of acculturation that evolves toward a mainstream Anglo norm and for ignoring the context of immigrant reception upon arrival to the host society (Gans, 1992; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou, 1997). Scholars note that for many immigrants and their native-born children, downward assimilation into an impoverished underclass is a more frequent occurrence than upward assimilation into an affluent middle class. Portes and Zhou (1993), for example, argue that the segmented assimilation of some immigrants upward, and others downward, is not solely a function of an individual's own characteristics—which has been the primary focus of classic formulations of assimilation—but also contextual factors. Key contextual factors include labor market conditions, the presence of foreign-born immigrants who may create poor and linguistically isolated neighborhoods, and the residential

presence of native minorities, especially those with dark skin, who have a long history of racial oppression in the United States.

While examining individual determinants derived from classic formulations of assimilation, the present analysis also incorporates several theoretically pertinent contextual measures derived from *segmented assimilation* theory. First, two gender-specific measures of residential labor market conditions are constructed: the proportion of men and the proportion of women who are employed. Hypotheses derived from segmented assimilation theory predict that both indicators of aggregate residential employment will be positively related to Latinas' transition to marriage. That is, when the proportion of the labor market that is employed is high, Latinas' probability of marriage will resemble that of Anglo women. Under the reverse scenario, when aggregate employment is low, Latinas' marriage timing will reflect a downward assimilation toward the African American norm.

Second, prior research notes that Latino immigrants tend to have relatively limited endowments of human capital (Borjas, 1999). Segmented assimilation theory therefore argues that residing in communities characterized by a large foreign-born population leads to downward assimilation because of concentrated poverty and linguistic isolation. In the current analysis, the community presence of foreign-born immigrants is measured as the proportion of men who were born in a foreign country or in Puerto Rico. If segmented assimilation theory is correct, a higher proportion of foreign-born men in the labor market should impede Latinas' transition to first marriage. This hypothesis is noted in the third column of Table 1.

Finally, because the skin color of members of the residential community is central to segmented assimilation theory, two additional contextual measures are included in the analysis: the proportion of the population comprised Black Latinos and the proportion of the population that is African American. Each of these measures is hypothesized to lead to downward assimilation, thereby delaying Latinas' transition to first marriage.

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

Theories of women's economic independence are frequently cited to explain the decline in marriage rates over the last half century. Such theories highlight women's increasingly prominent

role in the U.S. labor force and the growth of the welfare state, arguing that women are less prone to marry if they have economic alternatives to the traditional roles of wife and mother (Becker, 1991; Moffitt, 1998). In particular, high levels of women's human capital—measured in terms of educational attainment and employment status—as well as access to relatively generous government transfers are theorized to reduce women's gains from marriage, extend women's marital search process, and simultaneously raise the reservation wage of potential husbands.

Unfortunately, previous studies of women's economic independence often exclude Latinas, whereas conclusions derived from studies of Anglo and African American women are conflicting. In support of the theory of women's economic independence, aggregate analyses generally demonstrate that measures of women's human capital are associated with lower marriage prevalence (Lichter, LeClere, & McLaughlin, 1991; McLanahan & Casper, 1995). But, contrary to theoretical predictions, recent individual-level studies often find a facilitating association of women's human capital and their marriage formation (Goldstein & Kenney, 2001; Sweeney, 2002). Studies in the latter vein stress the need to distinguish between marriage timing and marriage prevalence when examining the effect of women's human capital, noting that marriage delayed until relatively late in a woman's life course is not equivalent to marriage forgone. Furthermore, contrary to arguments that human capital liberates women from the roles of wife and mother, researchers increasingly recognize that economic resources help women overcome the financial obstacles involved in the creation of marriage and a family.

The present analysis adds to this important body of literature on women's economic independence by examining the effect of both Latinas' aggregate- and individual-level human capital characteristics on their transition to first marriage. Five indicators of Latinas' socioeconomic status are included in the subsequent analysis. School enrollment, educational attainment, and weeks worked in the year preceding the annual interview (a measure of job stability) reflect individual-level indicators. The proportion of single women aged 20 – 30 years who are employed in the local labor market serves as a contextual indicator of women's aggregate labor force participation. The average value of AFDC payments is also included in the [3]

analysis. As noted in the fourth column of Table 1, traditional theories of women's economic independence hypothesize that these individual and aggregate human capital measures will be inversely associated with Latinas' propensity to marry.

MARRIAGE MARKET THEORY

Marriage market theory—such as a marital search model, imbalanced sex ratio theory, and the men's marriageable pool—stresses the importance of both the numerical availability and human capital characteristics of potential husbands for determining women's marital timing. Broadly speaking, marriage market theory posits that women make marital decisions according to the availability of desirable partners residing in their local geographical area, known as the marriage market. When the numerical availability of single men with desirable characteristics is low, women must settle for a husband with different qualities than they would ideally prefer, delay marriage until a more appealing husband can be found, or forgo marriage altogether. In this way, marriage market composition contributes to the acceleration or delay of a woman's transition to first marriage.

In addition to the numerical availability of potential husbands, marriage market theory asserts that men's aggregate human capital characteristics are central to women's marriage timing. Past research highlights men's labor force participation (Lewis & Oppenheimer, 2000; Wilson, 1987). Men's traditional role as financial provider makes those with high socioeconomic status more desirable marriage and dating partners because they possess the ability to provide greater financial security and to sustain a household once married. Oppenheimer, Kalmijn, and Lim (1997), for instance, argue that recent declines in marriage stem more from men's declining employment opportunities than from women's increasing economic independence. Moreover, men's economic characteristics shape their own familial ambitions (Lloyd & South, 1996). Thus, as depicted in the last column of Table 1, marriage market theory predicts a positive relationship between single men's aggregate human capital and the probability that women will marry.

Past research finds support for the facilitating nature of mate availability and men's aggregate socioeconomic status on the probability that

Anglo and African American women will marry. For example, Lichter, McLaughlin, Kephart, and Landry (1992) find that Anglo and African American women are significantly more likely to marry if they reside in marriage markets characterized by a large number of single men with earnings above the poverty threshold and high levels of full-time full-year employment. When examining the race-specific percentage of employed single men separately for both Anglo and African American women, South (1996) finds that men's employment is associated with an increased likelihood that women will make the transition to first marriage.

How do the marital experiences of Latinas compare with those of Anglo and African American women? Oropesa, Lichter, and Anderson (1994) examine Anglo, African American, and Mexican American women's marriage propensities and find that the ratio of single men employed full time—relative to all single women—is positively associated with first marriage among Anglo and African American women at the bivariate but not at the multivariate level. This ratio does not appear to be a significant predictor of Mexican Latinas' marital transitions. Because the measure reflects the ratio of single men employed full time relative to all single women, one cannot ascertain whether the lack of a direct correlation is the result of sheer spousal availability, men's employment, or some combination of the two factors.

Marriage market theory argues that additional aspects of single men's human capital—such as school enrollment and a greater presence of foreign-born men—may also be important determinants of women's marital timing. Research demonstrates that men's school enrollment may depress women's transition to first marriage by removing potential husbands from actively participating in the marriage market (Thornton, Axinn, & Teachman, 1995). Although not examined in previous studies, the proportion of men who are foreign born may also play an important role in Latinas' transition to marriage. If foreign-born men possess a greater desire to marry (as research on familism suggests), then a higher proportion of foreign-born men in the marriage market may facilitate Latinas' transition to first marriage by increasing the number of available partners who desire a wife. As noted by segmented assimilation theorists, however, the opposite dynamic may also be in play. Immigrant men's limited endowments of human capital may

delay Latinas' transitions to marriage by reducing the socioeconomic status of potential husbands.

CONTROLS

Six additional variables are added to the analysis as controls: age, mother's education, number of siblings, residing with both biological parents at the age of 14 years, the population of the labor market area in which the respondent resides, and whether the respondent was cohabiting at the time of the previous interview. Where appropriate, these variables are treated as time-varying covariates measured at each annual interview. The inclusion of age, measured in years, and age squared permits a quadratic parameterization of the baseline hazard of marriage. The respondent's mother's highest year of completed schooling is also included as a control. Previous analyses of Anglos and African Americans suggest that those with highly educated mothers are more likely to postpone marriage until relatively late in young adulthood (Lichter et al., 1992). Previous research also suggests that individuals raised in single-parent families are more likely to delay first marriage (Avery, Goldscheider, & Speare, 1992), whereas those with more siblings marry earlier (Michael & Tuma, 1985). Size of the population is controlled because prior studies of Anglo and African Americans indicate that women residing in heavily populated areas may experience greater freedom, whereas those in small communities may feel greater pressure to conform to traditional codes of familial behavior—including early marriage—because of less individual autonomy (McLaughlin, Lichter, & Johnston, 1993).

Finally, research clearly reveals that cohabitation is associated with women's marital timing. Roughly 40% of Latinas aged 19–44 years report cohabiting with a partner of the opposite gender; the majority of current marriages are now preceded by cohabitation (Smock, 2000). This is consistent with theoretical arguments and empirical findings indicating that cohabitation is often a precursor to marriage. For instance, roughly 55% of cohabiting unions result in marriage within 5 years (Seltzer, 2000). Furthermore, U.S. Latinas appear to be only slightly less likely to cohabit prior to marriage than are their African American and Anglo counterparts (Smock).

Unfortunately, data limitations inherent in the NLSY preclude treating cohabitation as a competing risk because complete cohabitation histories

are lacking. Fortunately, the NLSY did collect data on whether the respondent was living with a partner of the opposite gender at the time of each annual interview. These data, however, cannot establish (a) the beginning and ending dates of cohabiting unions, (b) whether a cohabiting union occurred between interviews, or (c) if respondents married the same person they were cohabiting with during the previous annual interview as opposed to someone else. Because of data limitations, as well as issues of endogeneity (Brien, Lillard, & Waite, 1999), the analysis explores the effect of cohabitation on Latinas' marital timing by estimating a separate nested model.

METHOD

Data

Three sources of data are used to investigate Latinas' transition to first marriage: the NLSY, PUMS, and Statistical Abstracts of the United States. The NLSY is a national probability sample of 12,686 noninstitutionalized individuals, aged 14–22 years at the time of their initial interview in January 1979. Respondents are reinterviewed annually through 1994. The present analysis examines Latinas' marital transitions over a 16-year period by incorporating data from the 1979 through 1994 waves. 4

The NLSY has many advantages over competing data sets for investigating Latinas' transition to first marriage. First, the retention rate of the NLSY is high, with the vast majority of respondents remaining in the sample through 1994. Second, Latinas are oversampled in the NLSY, thereby making an examination of their marriage timing possible. Third, the survey covers the young-adult years in which most first marriages take place. Fourth, the survey contains extensive and detailed information on family background, marital history, labor market experience, and other socioeconomic attributes. Finally, supplementary geocode files allow the researcher to identify the state and county of residence at each annual interview. This information is used to merge contextual data obtained from the 1980 and 1990 censuses and Statistical Abstracts with each Latina respondent's annual record.

The analysis is restricted, by use of the NLSY sample, in several ways. First, I focus on the marital timing of Latinas, who represent 7.9% ($n = 1,002$) of the original NLSY respondents.

Second, because first transitions are unique and represent the progression of life course events, the analysis is limited to Latinas' first-marriage transitions. Third, 161 Latinas (16%), who experience marriage prior to their initial interview in 1979, are excluded from the analysis because detailed geocode information on the marriage market in which their marriages were initiated is lacking. An additional 96 Latinas (9.6%) are excluded from the analysis because they lack complete information on one or more predictor variables. Finally, the analysis is restricted to an examination of marital transitions through the 1994 wave. This year provides a convenient point of termination because the NLSY did not reinterview respondents in 1995. Furthermore, by 1994, Latina respondents were 29 – 37 years of age and 82.2% had experienced first marriage.

After applying the above restrictions, the final sample consists of 745 Latinas whose first-marriage transitions are evaluated from ages 14 to 37 years. Pooled analysis includes Anglos and African Americans and is based on 2,706 and 1,231 women, respectively. Of the Anglo women, 569 (15.3%) are excluded because they married prior to their initial interview in 1979 and 445 (12%) are excluded because of missing data. Analogous exclusions for African American women are 129 (8.3%) and 201 (12.9%), respectively.

Defining Contextual Areas

Examinations of the tenets put forth by segmented assimilation, women's economic independence, and marriage market theories require the construction of aggregate contextual characteristics. Labor market areas are used to approximate the geographic boundaries of contextual areas. Specifically, data from the 1% PUMS-D file of the 1980 Census (Tolbert & Killian, 1987) and the 0.45% PUMS-L file of the 1990 Census (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992) are used to compute contextual characteristics across all 382 labor market areas in 1980 and all 394 labor market areas in 1990. As others note (see, e.g., Lichter et al., 1992), labor market areas are superior to competing operationalizations of labor and marriage markets because they are constructed around journey-to-work patterns that represent the spatial boundaries within which daily social action occurs. Furthermore, unlike counties, labor market areas can intersect state

boundaries and, unlike metropolitan statistical areas, they encompass the entire United States and are not limited to urban populations. Moreover, the microlevel PUMS-D and PUMS-L files provide the necessary detail to compute aggregate sex ratio, human capital, and other population composition measures.

Seven contextual indicators are constructed from PUMS data. Each is based on the characteristics of residents living in the Latina respondents' labor market area in 1980 or 1990. These indicators are (a) the proportion of single men who are employed, (b) the proportion of single women who are employed, (c) the proportion of single men who are foreign born (including in Puerto Rico), (d) the proportion of the population who are Black Latino, (e) the proportion of the population who are African American, (f) the proportion of single men who are enrolled in school, and (g) the sex ratio.

These seven indicators can be separated into marriage market characteristics and additional contextual measures. This distinction is important because previous studies of Anglos and African Americans demonstrate that U.S. marriage markets are stratified not only according to geography, which is relevant for all contextual measures, but also according to age and race/ethnicity (Schoen & Weinick, 1993; South & Lloyd, 1995). Although the ethnoracial boundaries of Anglo and African American marriage markets are fairly straightforward, the ethnic, racial, and national-origin boundaries of Latino marriage markets are more ambiguous. Lloyd (2001) finds that the Latino marriage market is endogamously stratified by both race and ethnicity, encompassing different national groups within the pan-ethnic Latino designation. Relatedly, Qian (1997) uses 1980 and 1990 Census data to document the existence of strong Latino endogamy, with only limited out-marriage to Anglo, African American, or Asian spouses. Rosenfeld (2001) extends Qian's work by examining the national-origin characteristics of Latino couples. In so doing, he finds support for the existence of a pan-national Latino marriage market in the United States.

Preliminary analyses presented in Table 2 explore this question further. Using data from the 2002 wave of the CPS, Table 2 documents that the majority of Latina wives are indeed married to husbands who share their race and ethnicity. For instance, over 82% of all Latinas in the 2002 CPS are married to a Latino husband,

whereas only 17.6% are married to a non-Latino. Racial endogamy is also evident. Of the 1,979 Latina wives who report their race as *White*, nearly 99% ($n = 1,955/1,979$) are married to a White husband (i.e., either a White Latino or a non-Latino White spouse). When examining marital sorting simultaneously by race and ethnicity, we see again that the overwhelming majority of Latina wives, both White and Black, are married to a husband who shares both their race *and* their Latino ethnicity. Specifically, roughly 83% of White Latina wives are married to a White Latino husband, whereas approximately 64% of Black Latina wives are married to a Black Latino husband. In sum, Table 2 supports the conclusions of previous research reported above. Namely, Latinas' marriage market measures should ideally coincide to both the Latina respondent's race and ethnicity as well as be sensitive to changes in her age and geographic location across the 16-year observation period.

Marriage market characteristics include the sex ratio, the proportion of single men who are employed, the proportion of single men who are foreign born, and the proportion of single men who are enrolled in school. The sex ratio is calculated as the ratio of noninstitutionalized single men per noninstitutionalized single women who reside within the same labor market area and share their race and ethnicity with the Latina respondent and where potential husbands are on average 2 years older than potential wives. Formally, the sex ratio is defined by the formula:

$$\text{Sex Ratio}_i = \left(\frac{\sum_{i-2}^{i+7} M_i}{\sum_{i-4}^{i+5} W_i} \right),$$

where *Sex Ratio_i* is the race/ethnicity-specific ratio of potential spouses for each Latina respondent at age *i*; *M_i* represents the number of single men available in the local marriage market who are 7 years older to 2 years younger than the Latina respondent; and *W_i* is the number of single women who are 5 years older to 4 years younger than the Latina respondent. The latter represents the women with whom the respondent must "compete" for the men in the numerator. The sex ratio thereby simultaneously controls for both partner availability and marriage market competition.

The three additional marriage market measures represent the human capital characteristics of potential husbands. Each is measured as the number of noninstitutionalized single men in the numerator of the Latina respondent's sex ratio who are employed, foreign born, or enrolled in school divided by all single men of the same age. For instance, the proportion of single men employed is defined as:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{Proportion Single Men Employed}_i \\ &= \left(\frac{\sum_{i-2}^{i+7} ME_i}{\sum_{i-2}^{i+7} M_i} \right), \end{aligned}$$

where *Proportion Single Men Employed_i* is the race/ethnicity-specific proportion of all single men who are employed and "available" to each Latina respondent at age *i*; *ME_i* represents the number of single employed men who are 7 years older to 2 years younger than the Latina respondent at age *i*; and *M_i* is the number of all single men who are the same age as those in the numerator. An analogous strategy is used to construct measures of the proportion of single men who are foreign born or enrolled in school.

Table 2. *Ethnic and Racial Composition of Couples With a Latina Wife: CPS, 2002*

Wife	Total	Husband					
		Total	Latino		Non-Latino		
			White	Black-Other	Total	White	Black-Other
Ethnicity							
Latina	100 (2,097)	82.4 (1,728)	78.6 (1,648)	3.8 (80)	17.6 (369)	15.4 (322)	2.2 (47)
Race							
White Latina	94.4 (1,979)	83.3 (1,648)	83.0 (1,643)	0.3 (5)	16.7 (331)	15.8 (312)	1.0 (19)
Black-Other Latina	5.6 (118)	67.8 (80)	4.2 (5)	63.6 (75)	32.2 (38)	8.5 (10)	23.7 (28)

Note: Percentage with sample size in parentheses.

Parallel marriage market measures are also constructed for Anglo and African American women.

Two modifications are made to the marriage market measures. First, marriage market indicators based on broad 10-year age intervals inevitably include men who are very young in the marriage market measures for young women. Marriage market indicators for 14 – 19 year old respondents are truncated slightly to more accurately model the availability and human capital characteristics of potential husbands. Because marriage market indicators require detailed labor market area cross-tabulations simultaneously by age, gender, and race/ethnicity, measures may contain an unknown degree of sampling error. Furthermore, Latinos' high regional concentration and relatively small representation in some parts of the country means that both under- and overenumeration may be likely. To reduce the effect of extreme marriage market observations, which most likely occur because of sampling error in smaller labor market areas, values below the 5th and above the 95th percentiles are recoded to those points in the age-race-ethnicity-specific distributions.

The remaining contextual indicators measure single women's aggregate economic independence—that is, the proportion of single women aged 20 – 30 years who are employed—and ethnoracial population composition—that is, the proportion of the population between the ages of 10 – 40 years who are Black Latino or African American. These three contextual measures are independent of the age, race, or ethnicity of the respondent but are sensitive to changes in the respondent's residence across the observation period.

Each of the seven contextual indicators are treated as time-varying covariates, measured in 1980 and again in 1990, and attached to each NLSY record by respondents' residence at each annual interview. To increase temporal accuracy, indicators derived from the 1980 Census are attached to 1979 – 1985 individual records and indicators derived from the 1990 Census are attached to 1986 – 1994 records. This strategy permits both the fluctuation of contextual conditions over time as well as the sensitivity of indicators to changes in geographical residence. There is no evidence of multicollinearity among contextual measures included in the analysis. All bivariate correlation coefficients are below an absolute value of .49. Moreover, supplementary analyses reveal that substantive conclusions are not altered

with the systematic omission of contextual indicators from the models estimated below.

Method

A dichotomous dependent variable is constructed from detailed marital history data, coded 1 if the respondent *experiences first marriage* during each annual interval and coded 0 *otherwise*. The final sample consists of a person-year file containing 5,483 records, representing the marital experiences of 745 Latinas residing in 133 labor market areas. Similar files are constructed for Anglos and African Americans that consist of 19,064 and 12,784 person-year records based on the marital experiences of 2,706 and 1,231 Anglo and African American women residing in 295 and 193 labor market areas, respectively.

The primary goal of the current analysis is to examine hypotheses derived from four leading theories of Latinas' transition to first marriage. Because hypotheses involve both contextual- and individual-level predictors, two methodological issues arise. First, observations across the 16-year period are nested within individuals. Second, individuals are nested within labor market areas. The current analysis uses a discrete-time event-history approach to duration data that adjusts the standard errors to account for clustering within labor market areas. Specifically, robust standard errors are estimated that correct the variance-covariance matrix of estimators to account for the possibility that observations are not independent within labor market areas. This technique controls for unobserved labor market area characteristics that may be correlated to those included in the analysis (Rogers, 1993). Furthermore, Allison (1995) demonstrates that, conditional on the lack of repeated events (e.g., including in the analysis second and higher marriages), discrete-time event-history methods that analyze multiple person-year observations created from a single individual produce unbiased standard errors, do not inflate test statistics, and should statistically be treated as distinct, independent observations.

To shed light on Latinas' pronuptial behavior, relative to those of other major ethnoracial groups residing in the United States, I begin by generating life-table estimates of the transition to first marriage for Latina, Anglo, and African American women. Logistic regression equations that control for clustering within labor market areas then estimate Latinas' marital timing.

Initial estimates examine the role of variables derived from familism, assimilation, women's economic independence, and marriage market theories in facilitating or impeding Latinas' transition to first marriage. A second model then adds a binary indicator of whether the Latina respondent was cohabiting at the time of the previous NLSY interview to explore whether cohabitation significantly increases the model's ability to predict Latinas' transition to first marriage or mediates the substantive effects of other predictors. Final analyses examine the extent to which ethnoracial differences in marital timing can be explained by predictors indicative of the four theories. This is accomplished by pooling data for Latina, Anglo, and African American women and estimating a series of sequential models that alternately focus on each of the theories summarized in Table 1.

RESULTS

Table 3 presents summary statistics for variables included in the analysis. The distributions of national origin, nativity, and English language proficiency closely mirror those found in other national surveys (Bean & Tienda, 1987; Massey, 1993; Oropesa & Landale, 1997). Table 3 also reports the means and standard deviations of contextual variables that represent aggregate spousal availability (i.e., sex ratio), human capital, and compositional characteristics of the labor market areas in which respondents' reside.

An examination of Table 3 demonstrates that Latinas tend to hold a middle position on most contextual characteristics with their Anglo and African American counterparts representing opposite ends of a continuum. For example, across all person-years, the average Latina respondent resides in a marriage market with 92 single men per 100 single women, where 57% of single Latino men are employed, and 29% are enrolled in school. Predictably, Latinas are more likely than Anglos and African Americans to reside in labor market areas comprising the foreign born. Roughly a third of Latinas' eligible partners are immigrants, compared with less than 4% of the single men residing in the labor market areas of Anglo or African American women.

Familism and the Timing of First Marriage

As seen in the first row of Table 3, the ethnoracial probability of first marriage does not support as-

sertions made by the theory of Latino familism. Familism argues that Latinas' pronuptial attitudes will result in a greater propensity to marry when compared with the Anglo majority. Instead, Table 3 suggests that Anglo women have the highest probability of marriage, followed by Latinas, with African American women a somewhat distant third.

Figure 1 presents life-table estimates of the cumulative percentage of Latina, Anglo, and African American women ever married over the young-adult life course. By the end of the 1979–1994 observation period, roughly 82% of Latinas experience first marriage. Latinas have a slightly greater propensity to marry during their teen years than do either Anglos or African Americans. By about the age of 20 years, the cumulative percentage of Latina and Anglo women who have experienced first marriage converge. From this point onward, the percentage of ever-married Latinas starts to lag behind that of Anglo women. By 37 years, Latinas are roughly 5% less likely to have experienced first marriage compared with Anglos.

The life-table estimates in Figure 1 do not support the notion of Latinas' greater familism, at least in terms of more prevalent marriage. The exception may be Latinas at the youngest ages, but these differences are slight. By their early 20s, U.S. Latinas actually appear less likely to marry than their Anglo counterparts. Not surprisingly, the cumulative percentage of Latinas experiencing marriage over their young-adult years is substantially higher than the percentage of African American women. Compared with African American women, Latinas are nearly 20% more likely to be married by 25 years. Although the life-table estimates presented in Figure 1 are not consistent with predictions made by the theory of familism, they are consistent with the ethnoracial probability of first marriage reported in Table 3.

Why do some previous studies find evidence of greater Latina pronuptialism? A likely reason is that many previous analyses fail to exclude marriages initiated prior to immigrating to the United States. Selective marital migration is apt to lead to substantial ethnoracial variation in marriage patterns consistent with the census figures reported above (also see, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

Assimilation

Table 4 presents event-history logistic regression models that control for clustering within labor

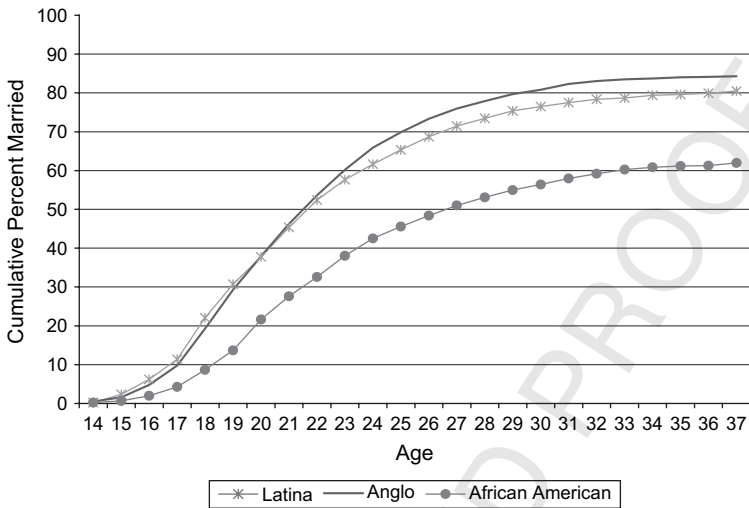
Table 3. Summary Statistics for Variables Included in Event-History Analysis of Latina, Anglo, and African American Women's Transition to First Marriage

Variables	Latina		Anglo		African American	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Dependent variable						
Marriage	0.09	0.29	0.11	0.31	0.05	0.22
Individual characteristics						
Parent(s) foreign born	0.45	0.50	0.08	0.28	0.03	0.18
Black	0.30	0.46	—	—	—	—
English proficiency	0.95	0.21	0.99	0.08	0.99	0.08
Enrolled in school	0.37	0.48	0.40	0.49	0.28	0.45
Education	11.77	2.32	12.59	2.44	12.19	2.08
Weeks worked	27.04	22.21	32.78	20.64	23.97	22.25
Contextual characteristics						
Men employed	0.57	0.28	0.72	0.13	0.58	0.17
Women employed	0.72	0.05	0.71	0.07	0.69	0.08
Men foreign born	0.34	0.26	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.06
Black Latino	0.52	0.74	0.23	0.43	0.35	0.57
African American	0.12	0.09	0.13	0.11	0.26	0.14
AFDC (in 100s of dollars)	3.32	1.57	3.07	1.20	2.58	1.28
Sex ratio	0.92	0.43	1.04	0.14	0.76	0.22
Men enrolled in school	0.29	0.24	0.33	0.19	0.24	0.19
Ethnic identification						
Mexican	0.57	0.49	—	—	—	—
Puerto Rican	0.19	0.39	—	—	—	—
Cuban	0.06	0.24	—	—	—	—
Other Latina	0.17	0.38	—	—	—	—
Controls						
Age	22.14	4.92	21.88	4.55	23.53	5.13
Age ²	514.30	235.23	499.46	213.48	579.88	252.34
Mother's education	8.10	4.08	11.97	2.63	10.72	2.65
Siblings	4.20	2.78	3.13	2.04	4.71	3.09
Biological parents	0.68	0.46	0.78	0.42	0.48	0.50
Population size (in millions)	3.46	4.26	1.79	2.65	1.79	2.64
Cohabiting in previous year	0.08	0.27	0.08	0.27	0.06	0.24
Number of person-years	5,483		19,064		12,784	
Number of women	745		2,706		1,231	
Number of labor market areas	133		295		193	

market areas. These analyses allow for a further examination of hypotheses derived from the four theories of women's marital timing presented in Table 1. Individual- and contextual-level determinants that represent assimilation, women's economic independence, and marriage market theories, are regressed on the timing of Latinas' first marriage. Model 2 adds an additional control to Model 1, representing whether the Latina respondent was cohabiting in the previous year. Support for each theory, or lack thereof, is examined in turn.

Classic formulations of assimilation theory argue that because of the pronuptial beliefs and practices in their sending countries, foreign-born Latinas should display a higher propensity to marry relative to the native born. Assimilation theory also predicts that greater exposure to U.S. society will encourage Latinas to internalize mainstream Anglo American beliefs about the appropriate timing of first marriage and a tolerance for remaining single. Years of completed education serve as a proxy for exposure to U.S. norms, values, and lifestyles. According

FIGURE 1. LIFE-TABLE ESTIMATES OF THE CUMULATIVE PERCENT OF LATINA, ANGLO, AND AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN EVER MARRIED BETWEEN AGES 14 – 37 YEARS.



Note: From National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 – 1994.

to assimilation theory, exposure is predicted to delay Latinas' transition to first marriage because of the less traditional familial norms in the United States relative to those in Latin America and the Caribbean. Finally, assimilation theory also maintains that the subjective perceptions of a Latina's skin color (i.e., perceptions of race) or her reliance on a language other than English will impede marriage.

These predictions receive mixed support in Model 1 in Table 4. Consistent with assimilation theory, proficiency in English is estimated to decrease Latinas' odds of marriage by 37%. The association between years of completed schooling and Latinas' marriage timing, however, is contrary to hypotheses derived from assimilation theory. Educational attainment is associated with an increased likelihood of first marriage, which parallels studies of Anglo and African American women (Goldstein & Kenney, 2001). Finally, having foreign-born parents or dark skin, at least as measured here, is not significantly related to Latinas' transition to marriage.

Reformulations of assimilation theory stress the importance of residential context in shaping the experiences of immigrants and their children (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997). Segmented assimilation scholars note that downward assimilation may be more likely if group members reside in labor markets

characterized by few employment opportunities, a substantial presence of native minorities with a history of racial oppression, or where a substantial proportion of residents are foreign born. These hypotheses are examined through contextual indicators of men's and women's employment, ethnoracial population composition, and nativity status. Of the five indicators constructed to represent these factors, only one is consistent with expectations derived from the theory of segmented assimilation. A greater residential presence of Black Latinos appears to impede Latinas' transition to first marriage, controlling for her individual characteristics. Women's aggregate employment is actually associated with a decrease, whereas the proportion of men who are foreign born is associated with an increase, in Latinas' probability of marriage. The latter findings, although not consistent with segmented assimilation theory, are consistent with predictions made by theories of women's economic independence and the marriage market, respectively. Men's employment and the proportion of the population that is African American do not appear to be significant predictors of Latinas' transition to first marriage.

Women's Economic Independence

Model 1 in Table 4 also finds mixed support for the theory of women's economic independence.

Table 4. Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Latinas' Transition to First Marriage

Predictor	Model 1			Model 2		
	β	Robust SE β	e^{β}	β	Robust SE β	e^{β}
Individual characteristics						
Parent(s) foreign born	-0.08	0.114	0.92	-0.07	0.14	0.93
Black	-0.05	0.10	0.95	-0.05	0.10	0.95
English proficiency	-0.46*	0.20	0.63	-0.48**	0.19	0.62
Enrolled in school	-0.89**	0.17	0.41	-0.89**	0.17	0.41
Education	0.08**	0.03	1.09	0.09**	0.03	1.09
Weeks worked ^a	0.09**	0.02	1.01	0.09**	0.02	1.01
Contextual characteristics						
Men employed	0.15	0.20	1.16	0.15	0.20	1.16
Women employed	-1.81**	0.74	0.16	-1.90**	0.74	0.15
Men foreign born	0.49*	0.25	1.63	0.50*	0.25	1.65
Black Latino	-0.15*	0.07	.86	-0.13*	0.07	0.87
African American	0.09	0.75	1.10	0.11	0.75	1.12
AFDC	-0.03	0.03	0.96	-0.05	0.03	0.95
Sex ratio	-0.10	0.12	0.91	-0.09	0.11	0.91
Men enrolled in school	0.05	0.31	1.05	-0.04	0.31	1.05
Ethnic identification						
Mexican (reference)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Puerto Rican	-0.33*	0.16	0.72	-0.34	0.16	0.71
Cuban	-0.21	0.23	0.81	-0.23	0.23	0.79
Other Latina	-0.03	0.12	0.97	-0.03	0.12	0.97
Controls						
Age	0.07	0.12	1.08	0.05	0.12	1.06
Age ^{2a}	-0.03	0.02	1.00	-0.03	0.02	0.99
Mother's education ^a	0.01	0.13	1.00	0.01	0.13	1.00
Siblings	0.04*	0.02	1.04	0.04*	0.02	1.04
Biological parents	-0.03	0.09	0.96	-0.03	0.10	0.97
Population size	-0.02*	0.01	0.98	-0.02*	0.01	0.97
Cohabiting in previous year	—	—	—	0.38*	0.20	1.46
Constant	-1.55	1.57		-0.09	0.82	
χ^2		240.16**			242.76**	
<i>df</i>		23			24	
χ^2 (change)		—			2.60	
<i>df</i> (change)		—			1	
Number of person-years		5,483			5,483	
Number of Latinas		745			745	
Number of labor market areas		133			133	
Percent married by 1994		82.2			82.2	

Note: Robust SE β = standard errors that correct for clustering within labor market areas; e^{β} = exponentiated β . Change in χ^2 and *df* compared with Model 1.

^aCoefficient and standard error are multiplied by 10 to show significant digits.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$ (one-tailed test).

As predicted, school enrollment delays Latinas' transition to first marriage. Educational attainment and number of weeks worked in the previous year, however, are actually associated with an increased likelihood that Latinas will marry,

as opposed to delaying first marriage, as the theory of women's economic independence maintains. The facilitating nature of educational attainment and weeks worked in the previous year may result from greater access to economic

resources that help couples finance earlier marital unions (Sweeney, 2002). The facilitating nature of women's individual-level human capital may also reflect men's growing preferences for higher achieving, more industrious partners (South, 1993).

Model 1 in Table 4 also provides support for the theory of women's economic independence at the contextual level, in terms of the inverse association between aggregate women's employment opportunities and the probability that Latinas will marry. Contrary to the proposition that more generous government transfers discourage legal union formation (Becker, 1991; Moffitt, 1998), the average value of AFDC payments does not appear to influence Latinas' transition to first marriage in Table 4.

Marriage Market Theory

Hypotheses derived from marriage market theory receive little support. According to marriage market theory, greater spousal availability and greater aggregate human capital among potential husbands should hasten women's transition to marriage, whereas men's school enrollment should hinder marital transitions. Furthermore, following the logic of marriage market theory, the proportion of men who are foreign born may also facilitate marriage by increasing the proportion of single men who desire a wife. The latter prediction is the only one to receive support in Model 1 of Table 4. There is no evidence to suggest that Latinas, who reside in labor market areas that contain a large number of potential husbands (i.e., a high sex ratio) or a higher proportion of single Latino men who are enrolled in school or employed, are more likely to marry.

Additional Determinants of Latinas' Transition to First Marriage

Model 1 in Table 4 also identifies other factors important to Latinas' first-marriage transitions. Specifically, the odds of marriage increase by 4% with each additional sibling, decrease by 2% for every 1 million residents added to the local labor market population, and is 28% lower for Puerto Rican women relative to Mexican women.

Cohabitation as a Potential Mediator of Latinas' Marital Timing

Model 2 in Table 4 adds a binary variable to Model 1, indicating whether the Latina respon-

dent was cohabiting at the time of the previous NLSY annual interview. The relationship between cohabitation at the time of the previous interview and Latinas' transition to first marriage is strong and significant, with a 46% increase in the predicted odds that a Latina will marry. This finding is highly consistent with research reported by Smock (2000) and Seltzer (2000), which indicates that roughly 55% of recent cohabiting couples marry within 5 years. This also supports the argument that cohabitation in the United States often represents a precursor to marriage, rather than a substitute for marriage as is the case in many Scandinavian countries. Although cohabitation during the previous annual interview is a significant predictor of Latinas' transition to first marriage, it does little to change the substantive effect of other predictors included in the model and it does not significantly increase the ability of Model 1 to predict Latinas' marriage timing (change in $\chi^2 = 2.76$, with 1 *df*, $p > .05$). Because of this, as well as issues of endogeneity (Brien et al., 1999), subsequent analyses of ethnoracial differences in women's marriage timing exclude it as a control.

Ethnoracial Differences in Women's Transition to First Marriage

The final analysis pools person-year observations for Latina, Anglo, and African American women to determine whether ethnoracial differences in marital timing are best explained by familism, assimilation, women's economic independence, or marriage market theories. A series of four sequential models are estimated that alternately focus on predictors indicative of each theory. A final inclusive equation simultaneously introduces all explanatory variables. The corresponding change in ethnoracial coefficients across models is examined to determine the degree to which estimated ethnoracial differences between Latina and Anglo women's marital timing on the one hand and Latina and African American women's marital timing on the other hand are explained by indicators derived from the four theories. Likelihood ratio χ^2 tests assess the goodness of fit of the different theoretical models, thereby identifying the overall contribution of factors derived from each theory. As with previous analyses, contextual marriage market variables correspond to each woman's age, race/ethnicity, and annual geographical residence. Latinas serve as the reference category in all models.

Table 5 presents results for the pooled analysis. The second column in Table 5 presents baseline estimates of familism against which subsequent models can be compared. As such, it includes only ethnoraical identification and controls, with no additional predictors of assimilation, women's economic independence, or marriage market theories. Consistent with earlier findings, the baseline-familism model in Table 5 demonstrates that the estimated odds of first marriage are 22% greater among Anglo women than Latinas, whereas the estimate odds of marriage are 48% lower for African American women. Therefore, Model 1 in Table 5 provides little support for the notion of greater Latina pronuptialism when compared with Anglos. On the contrary, it appears from the baseline-familism model that, with controls, Latinas hold a middle position between their Anglo and African American counterparts in terms of the likelihood of first marriage.

Can the observed ethnoraical differences in the probability of first marriage be explained by the leading theories of women's marriage timing? To answer this question, indicators of assimilation, women's economic independence, and the marriage market are added to the baseline-familism model in a sequential fashion. Likelihood ratio tests suggest that each set of theoretical predictors significantly improves the overall fit of the baseline model. An examination of the ethnoraical coefficients in the top row of Table 5, however, reveals stark differences in the pattern of explained ethnoraical variation in marriage timing by the predictors indicative of each theory. Furthermore, these explained differences depend on whether one is comparing Latinas with Anglo or African American women. Therefore, explained variation in each ethnoraical comparison is discussed in turn.

When examining differences between the timing of Latina and Anglo women's transition to first marriage, we see that Anglo women's greater estimated probability of marriage drops only slightly with the inclusion of marriage market predictors. The Anglo coefficient is reduced by approximately half once women's economic independence factors are introduced to the baseline model, whereas the estimated Latina-Anglo difference in marital timing is reduced to non-significance under both the assimilation and inclusive models. Although assimilation predictors eliminate the estimated Latina-Anglo difference in marital timing, several of the coefficients

are counter to assimilation hypotheses. Furthermore, additional analysis (not shown but available on request) based on the marital timing of only Latina and Anglo women reveals that the critical explanatory variable accounting for the Latina-Anglo difference in marital timing is single men's employment. Even though single men's employment accounts for the estimated ethnic difference in marriage timing under the assimilation model, this difference reappears in the marriage market and inclusive model specifications because of the suppression effect of single men's school enrollment.

The predictors of marriage change when examining differences in the marital timing of Latina and African American women. Most notably, none of the theories of marriage timing account for much, if any, of the variation between Latina and African American women's marriage timing. The observed ethnoraical difference in the probability of first marriage becomes even more pronounced with the addition of predictors of assimilation and women's economic independence as well as in the inclusive model. Predictors of marriage market theory appear to account for the greatest variation but explain only about 1% of the differences in Latina and African American women's odds of first marriage. Additional analysis (not shown but available on request) based on the marital timing of only Latina and African American women confirms that (a) single men's school enrollment is primarily responsible for the slight reduction in the estimated Latina-African American coefficient, (b) differences in single men's employment increase the observed ethnoraical difference in marriage timing, and (c) mate availability (i.e., the sex ratio) and the proportion of single men who are foreign born do little to explain the ethnoraical difference in marriage timing.

CONCLUSION

Transformations in American families over the past several decades have stimulated a large body of research on marriage. Although examinations of marriage are fairly common, differences between Anglos and African Americans remain at the forefront of empirical research. There is a substantial deficit in our knowledge of the determinants of first marriage among Latinas. The present analysis begins to fill this gap in the literature by examining Latinas' transition to first marriage across the young-adult life course.

Table 5. Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Women's Transition to First Marriage

Predictor	Baseline Familism			Assimilation			Women's Economic Independence			Marriage Market			Inclusive		
	β	Robust SE	e^β	β	Robust SE	e^β	β	Robust SE	e^β	β	Robust SE	e^β	β	Robust SE	e^β
Ethnoracial identification															
Latina (reference)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Anglo	0.20**	0.06	1.22	0.08	0.08	1.08	0.11*	0.06	1.18	0.19**	0.08	1.21	0.09	0.08	1.15
African American	-0.65**	0.07	0.52	-0.80**	0.09	0.45	-0.70**	0.07	0.49	-0.63**	0.07	0.53	-0.73**	0.08	0.52
Individual characteristics															
Parent(s) foreign born	—	—	—	-0.188	0.08	0.84	—	—	—	—	—	—	-0.12	0.09	1.17
English proficiency	—	—	—	-0.35**	0.14	0.70	—	—	—	—	—	—	-0.35**	0.14	0.74
Enrolled in school	—	—	—	—	—	—	-0.88**	0.07	0.42	—	—	—	-0.87**	0.07	0.39
Education	—	—	—	0.06**	0.01	1.06	0.08**	0.01	1.08	—	—	—	0.08**	0.01	1.10
Weeks worked ^a	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.09**	0.01	1.01	—	—	—	0.09**	0.01	1.01
Contextual characteristics															
Men employed	—	—	—	0.33**	0.14	1.40	—	—	—	0.22	0.16	1.25	0.19	0.16	1.37
Women employed	—	—	—	-0.42	0.29	0.66	-0.79**	0.31	0.45	—	—	—	-0.77**	0.32	0.39
Men foreign born	—	—	—	-0.06	0.23	0.94	—	—	—	0.04	0.22	1.04	0.10	0.23	1.13
Black Latino ^a	—	—	—	-0.03	0.03	0.97	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.04	0.33	1.00
African American	—	—	—	0.52**	0.21	1.69	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.34*	0.20	1.30
AFDC	—	—	—	—	—	—	-0.06**	0.02	0.94	—	—	—	-0.05**	0.02	0.95
Sex ratio	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.09	0.09	1.09	0.13	0.10	1.11
Men enrolled in school	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	-0.65**	0.21	0.52	-0.40*	0.22	0.49
Controls															
Age	0.70**	0.06	2.01	0.57**	0.06	1.76	0.21**	0.06	1.23	0.57**	0.07	1.78	0.13*	0.06	0.90
Age ^{2a}	-0.15**	0.01	0.98	-0.12**	0.01	0.99	-0.06**	0.01	0.99	-0.12*	0.01	0.99	-0.04**	0.01	0.90
Mother's education ^a	-0.20**	0.07	0.98	-0.34**	0.08	0.97	-0.18*	0.08	0.98	-0.19**	0.08	0.98	-0.21**	0.08	0.98
Siblings	0.01	0.01	1.01	0.02*	0.01	1.02	0.02*	0.01	1.02	0.01	0.01	1.01	0.02*	0.01	1.03
Biological parents	0.07	0.05	1.08	0.04	0.05	1.04	0.03	0.05	1.03	0.07	0.05	1.07	0.03	0.05	1.02
Population size	-0.03**	0.01	0.97	-0.03*	0.02	0.97	-0.02	0.02	0.98	-0.03**	0.01	0.97	-0.02	0.02	0.97
Constant	-10.07	.67	—	-8.52	0.70	—	-4.05	0.77	—	-8.48	-0.80	-2.91	0.83	—	—
χ^2	485.65**	—	—	616.57**	—	—	894.32**	—	—	514.99**	—	—	1,069.90**	—	—
df	8	—	—	16	—	—	13	—	—	12	—	—	21	—	—
χ^2 (change)	—	—	—	130.92**	—	—	408.67**	—	—	29.34**	—	—	584.25**	—	—

Table 5. Continued

Predictor	Baseline Familism			Assimilation			Women's Economic Independence			Marriage Market			Inclusive		
	β	Robust SE	e^β	β	Robust SE	e^β	β	Robust SE	e^β	β	Robust SE	e^β	β	Robust SE	e^β
<i>df</i> (change)	—			8			5			4			13		
Number of person-years	37,331			37,331			37,331			37,331			37,331		
Number of women	4,85,65			4,682			4,682			4,682			4,682		
Number of labor market areas	322			322			322			322			322		
Percent married by 1994	81.0			81.0			81.0			81.0			81.0		

Note: Robust SE β = standard errors that correct for clustering within labor market areas; e^β = exponentiated β . Change in χ^2 and *df* compared with baseline model (i.e., familism).
^aCoefficient and standard error are multiplied by 10 to show significant digits.
^{*} $p \leq .05$. ^{**} $p \leq .01$ (one-tailed test).

Discrete-time event-history models that account for clustering within labor market areas estimate Latinas' transition to first marriage. The present analysis goes further than conventional individual-level studies to explore how the social context shapes Latinas' decisions to form marital unions. Divergent hypotheses derived from familism, assimilation, women's economic independence, and the marriage market are evaluated. Throughout the analysis, the marital experiences of Latinas are integrated with those of Anglo and African American women. The analysis concludes by exploring whether observed ethnoracial differences in marriage timing can be explained by factors indicative of these four leading theories of marriage timing.

The current analysis demonstrates that simplified generalizations about marital timing based on Latino familism or assimilation conceal important variations by race and ethnicity. Contrary to the notion of familism, the observed probability that Latinas residing in the United States will marry is lower than that of their Anglo counterparts but, not surprisingly, remains considerably higher than that of African American women. Latinas' marital timing also has substantial implications for classic formulations of assimilation theory. Assimilation theory maintains that women born to parents who emigrate from traditionally pronuptial countries should display a greater propensity to marry than women whose parents were born in more secular countries. This is because successive generations are hypothesized to progressively adopt the host society's norms and values regarding the appropriate timing of first marriage.

Contrary to theoretical predictions, greater exposure to the United States is not associated with Latinas' marital timing in the multivariate analysis. Additional analysis (not shown but available on request) redefines nativity as whether the Latina respondent herself, as opposed to one or both of her parents, is foreign born. Using this definition, foreign-born status is associated with a significant increase in the odds that a Latina respondent will marry, which is consistent with assimilation theory. Moreover, this is the case under all model specifications presented above. Therefore, the nonsignificance of parental nativity status, as opposed to the significance of the respondent's nativity status, is most likely the result of measurement. Ultimately, the most appropriate indicator of nativity may reflect

the foreign-born Latinas' age at arrival to the United States. This would distinguish between those who immigrated to the United States during adolescence from those who came to the United States at a very young age (i.e., the "1.5 generation"). The latter are likely to experience similar exposure to American culture as children of immigrant parents (i.e., second-generation Latinas), whereas the former are more likely to identify with their sending country's norms and values.

Unfortunately, the NLSY did not ask foreign-born Latinas their age at arrival to the United States. The NLSY did ask the following two questions: "Some people live in the same place all of their lives, while others move from time to time. How about you—have you lived here in this city/town/county all of your life?" If respondents were not residing in their birth place, the NLSY further asked, "When did you last move to this city/town/county—during what year." Additional analysis, using these data, reveals that the average foreign-born Latina respondent moved to her current city/town/county when she was 11.7 years old (approximately 26% moved prior to 8 years and about 20% moved after 15 years of age). Because there is no way to identify where the foreign-born Latina moved from, however, these ages inevitably overestimate respondents' "age at arrival" to the United States.

Both segmented assimilation and marriage market theories predict that men's aggregate level of human capital will hasten women's transition to first marriage because men with high socioeconomic status are able to fulfill their traditional role as family breadwinner and financial provider. By examining potential husband's employment and school enrollment, the current analysis provides little support for single men's human capital facilitating Latinas' transition to first marriage. Results suggest that residing in labor market areas characterized by a relatively large supply of single Latino men who are employed or enrolled in school is not significantly associated with Latinas' marital timing. Single men's employment and school enrollment, however, appear to be important predictors of Anglo and African American women's transition to first marriage. Furthermore, Latinas residing in marriage markets characterized by a large proportion of single foreign-born Latino men, who may possess a strong desire to marry, appear to accelerate Latinas' transition to first marriage. Although this is con-

trary to the tenets put forth by segmented assimilation theory, it supports a marriage market theory explanation in that a high concentration of foreign-born men may increase the likelihood that Latinas encounter single men desirous of marriage.

The current analysis finds mixed support for predictions derived from women's economic independence. Women's economic independence theory asserts that women who possess or have access to greater economic resources have less incentive to marry. Women's economic resources encompass both individual human capital as well as the general availability of adult women's labor market opportunities and alternative sources of financial support, such as relatively generous government transfers. The current analysis suggests that Latinas' personal human capital, measured by weeks worked in the previous year and educational attainment, may actually promote marriage, whereas women's aggregate employment opportunities may delay Latinas' transition to marriage. The mixed nature of these findings, in addition to the mixed findings of previous research based on Anglo and African American women, confirm that a reformulation of women's economic independence theory may be warranted. Such a reformulation should take into account changing family roles of women and men and the complex multilevel relationships between women's own socioeconomic characteristics and those of the greater labor market in which they reside.

Although the current work advances the literature on Latinas' transition to first marriage by examining the individual, social, and economic contexts in which Latinas ultimately make decisions to marry, it has a number of limitations that future research might address. First, sample size limitations prevent the separate estimation of origin-specific models. Such analysis would provide further insight into the way different theoretical models account for the marital timing of Latinas from diverse national origins. Sample size limitations also preclude the reliable estimation of interaction terms that would more fully capture hypotheses put forth by segmented assimilation theory. Finally, although the current analysis underscores the fact that cohabitation is an important precursor to Latinas' transition to first marriage, future research should provide a more rigorous examination of the role of cohabitation in Latinas' transition to first marriage.

Previous literature reveals high rates of both cohabitation and consensual unions among Latinas residing in the United States, yet the NLSY data used in the present analysis are inadequate to fully explore the effect of cohabitation on Latinas' transition to first marriage.

Given these and other important research issues, there remains a tremendous need for national surveys to provide greater representation of Latinos living in the United States. A principal concern of research on Latino families has been locating representative data with a large enough sample to support meaningful analysis. Unfortunately, this and other complex measurement issues inherent in studying U.S. Latinos have been the primary reason that many macroanalyses of life course transitions opt to focus only on the marital behavior of Anglos and African Americans. As Massey, Zambrana, and Bell (1995) note:

(There is) a remarkable absence of Hispanic groups from both empirical work and large-scale national, state, and local data sets. Furthermore, in examining the available literature, a significant portion of studies have included only Mexican-Origin groups, and many have failed to take into account important variables, such as socioeconomic status, immigrant generation, and nativity. (p. 191)

The present analysis overcomes many of these obstacles. It utilizes a nationally representative sample of U.S. Latinas, includes national-origin groups, and incorporates measures of nativity status, as well as other important individual- and contextual-level variables. The increasing numerical presence of the Latino population in the United States makes further research essential if we are to fully understand American families in the 21st century.

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