Cohabitation and Marriage in the Americas: Geo-historical Legacies and New Trends

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Editors

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To Robert McCaa, for his extraordinary efforts in creating a data utopia for social scientists in IPUMS-International

Preface

Fate would have it that I sat next to Prof. Ron J. Lesthaeghe on the plane from New Orleans to New York the day that the 2008 meeting of the Population Association of America (PAA) closed. At that meeting, Ron received the Laureate award of the International Union for the Scientific Study of the Population (IUSSP) from its president, John Cleland, for his influential contributions to demography, amongst which there is the theory of the second demographic transition (SDT). Mine was a more modest contribution to the meeting. I had presented a poster on the marriage implications of the race and gender gaps in educational attainment in six Latin American countries. During the flight, we had a friendly and non-stop conversation mostly centered on non-academic issues. Well into the last stretch of the trip, I invited Ron to a research stay at the Center for Demographic Studies (CED), Barcelona. He accepted my invitation and, 2 years later, Ron came to the CED with the idea to examine the spatial continuities between the first and second demographic transitions in Belgium and Spain. On a Friday afternoon, I invited Ron to my office, and I showed him a series of regional color maps on the percent of partnered women in cohabitation in Latin America over the last four decades. Shades of blue indicated more marriage than cohabitation. Shades of red indicated more cohabitation than marriage. In the course of 40 years, the blue shades faded completely away and Latin America dramatically reddened. The Latin American Cohabitation Boom had emerged.

I still remember Ron's enthusiasm about the cohabitation boom. His first words were 'This is like watching the Mona Lisa for the first time'. It goes without saying that I have nothing to do with Leonardo Da Vinci, but after having co-edited this book and co-authored most of its chapters with him, I can now fully understand his reaction. Our maps were showing the spectacular rise of unmarried cohabitation in Latin America together with a sharp deinstitutionalization of marriage, two of the most salient and expected manifestations of the second demographic transition. I tried to temper Ron's enthusiasm by arguing that there was controversy about the Latin American fit to the SDT framework because, among other things, cohabitation in Latin America had coexisted with marriage since colonial times and it was historically associated with a pattern of disadvantage. At that moment, Ron and I

committed to exploring the social drivers and geography of the trend to more widespread cohabitation and to investigating to what extent economic and ideational factors were the root causes of the rise in cohabitation. We quickly realized that the presence of cohabitation and marriage in the Americas was diverse across social groups and regions and that geo-historical legacies were of paramount importance. Faced with the impossibility of bringing all the elements that emerged during our research in one or several standard journal articles, we decided to edit a book with the title 'Cohabitation and Marriage in the Americas: Geo-historical Legacies and New Trends'.

In this book, we document the rise of cohabitation (and decline in marriage) in the Americas during the last four decades. We do it by relying on the vast collection of census microdata available for most countries in the region since the 1970s. The very large samples sizes allows for disaggregation of national trends in to far more detailed spatial, ethnic and educational patterns. This enabled us to adopt a geo-historical view of the rise of cohabitation for an entire continent, from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. The order of the chapters does not necessarily reflect the order in which they were started and completed. The first two chapters adopt a cross-national perspective. The first one traces the geography of cohabitation and marriage in the Americas across more than 19,000 local units of 39 countries. The second one offers a general overview of the spectacular rise in cohabitation in Latin America over the last four decades and inspects the ethnic, social and educational differentials in cohabitation. From the third to the penultimate chapters, we follow a geographic order. We begin with Canada and continue with the United States, Mexico, Central America, the Andean Region, Brazil and the South Cone. In the last chapter, number 10, we reflect on both the methodological and substantive nature of this book.

All country-specific chapters share several characteristics but they also have their distinctive features. Among the shared characteristics, there is the use of census microdata, the analysis of the social and spatial profiles of cohabiting and married partners and the quest for the historical roots of cohabitation. Among the distinctive features, the Canadian chapter focuses on the differences in cohabitation between Quebec and the rest of Canada. The US chapter examines the social and spatial development of the rise in cohabitation over the last two decades. In the case of Mexico, individual microdata from the 1930 census allow us to better document the phase that preceded the post-1980 cohabitation boom. The chapter on Central America investigates the recent trends in cohabitation in six countries that historically had the highest levels of informal unions in the Americas. In the Andean chapter, we explore in detail the geographic differences within countries and the structuring role of ethnicity, education and religion on the individual and contextual levels of cohabitation. In the Brazilian chapter, we not only document the social and spatial profile of cohabitation but examine the change over time using regression models. Finally, the South Cone chapter combines the analysis of cohabitation with the living arrangements of cohabiting couples.

To make this book possible, many things had to happen before its publication. Hundreds of millions of American citizens had to fill their census questionnaires over the last four decades. Thirty nine statistical offices had to collect, process and

preserve the microdata. The Latin American and Caribbean Center for Demography (CELADE), based in Santiago de Chile, had to organize and maintain an archive of census microdata from most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Integrated Public Use of Microdata international series project (IPUMS-I) had to be funded to preserve, harmonize and disseminate census microdata to the scientific community from all over the world, currently including 23 countries in the Americas. Today, IPUMS-I provides access to the census microdata of over 80 countries, with the number of contributing countries continuing to grow. Our work, as well as that of countless others, would not have been possible without this invaluable resource. Therefore, the authors of this book express their gratitude to all persons and institutions involved in gathering these extraordinary microdata. We especially thank our colleagues in CELADE for providing access to the database needed for documenting the geography of cohabitation. Also special thanks to our colleagues of the Minnesota Population Center for building IPUMS-I, and among them, Steve Ruggles, Robert McCaa and Matt Sobek, who deeply inspired my (Albert) passion for international census microdata.

The European Research Council has provided most of the funding to the researchers that worked on this project, in particular those affiliated to the Center for Demographic Studies (Barcelona). The main funding came through a Starting Grant project granted to Albert Esteve with the title 'Towards a Unified Analysis of World Population: Family Patterns in a Multilevel Perspective'. The book also benefited from the contribution of distinguished scholars with expertise on marriage and cohabitation in the Americas, whose names appear on the chapters. In the final preparation of the manuscript, the professionalism and efficiency of Teresa Antònia Cusidó was fundamental in ensuring editorial consistency and quality. All figures and graphs were carefully crafted by Anna Turu.

In sum, we are proud to present a comprehensive study of a remarkable phase in the demographic history of the Americas, i.e. the universal rise of cohabitation to unprecedented levels in all strata of the population.

Bellaterra, Spain — Albert Esteve
Brussels, Belgium — Ron J. Lesthaeghe

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