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Research Article

Partnership formation and dissolution among immigrants in the Spanish context

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Contents

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Abstract

BACKGROUND
The diversification of partnership patterns away from the traditional marriage standard emerged in Spain relatively late. This makes Spain an interesting case for the study of the partnership dynamics of natives and immigrant groups.

OBJECTIVE
This paper analyzes partnership formation and dissolution among immigrant women of various origins, in comparison to natives in Spain. The study aims to identify variations in timing and incidence of partnership transitions.

METHODS
Data from the Fertility and Values Survey 2006 is used to conduct discrete-time logistic regressions for several union transitions. In a further step, the data are analyzed including cohort interactions to explore the extent to which differences are due to the younger profile of the migrant population.

RESULTS
The obtained results lend support to the selection and disruption hypotheses in the case of immigrant women who arrived in Spain before their first union formation. However, when explaining the high propensity of Latin American and EU-15 women to enter cohabiting unions, socialization effects cannot be ruled out. Immigrant women also show higher risk of union dissolution than natives.

CONCLUSION
Immigrant women differ consistently from native Spanish women across the various partnership transitions. They generally display higher risks of forming a union, particularly a cohabiting union, and of separating from their first partner. Models

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including interactions between birth cohort and migrant status showed that differentials between immigrants and natives are not due to compositional effects.

1. Introduction

Research on family dynamics among immigrant populations in Europe has focused mainly on Western European countries, due to the large foreign-born populations that arrived in the post-war period in those countries. However, since the mid-1990s there have been large inflows of immigrants to Southern European countries such as Spain. These new and large immigrant groups have affected demographic change and family dynamics in the receiving societies. Spain and other Southern European countries are latecomers to the transformation of family dynamics experienced in Europe since the mid-20th century. The diversification of partnership forms emerged later and progressed much slower in Southern Europe than, for example, in Scandinavia or Western European countries. On the one hand, this could possibly lead to a smaller gap in partnership patterns between immigrants and natives in Spain than in other European countries. On the other hand, given that the foreign-born population in Spain comes from a variety of countries of origin, some of which have more diversified union patterns, we may see that it is the native population that lags behind immigrants with regard to non-traditional partnership trajectories, instead of the classic one-sided assimilation process where immigrants adapt to the native behavior over time.

Research on family and union trajectories among immigrants has concentrated on childbearing behavior (Coleman 1994; Coleman and Dubuc 2010) and intermarriage patterns (Kalmijn 1998; Safi 2010), while often ignoring other aspects of partnership and family dynamics (Kulu and González-Ferrer 2014). The main goal of this study is to identify similarities and differences in patterns of partnership formation and dissolution between immigrant and native women in Spain, making this paper the first of its kind. The lack of in-depth research on immigrants' partnership trajectories in Spain is mainly due to the lack of suitable data sources. Before the rapid increase of migration to Spain in the mid-1990s the foreign population in Spain was small and, accordingly, these research topics did not receive much attention.

Often the comparison of the family dynamics of immigrants and natives tries to capture the degree of integration and adaptation of certain migrant groups to the cultural and social norms of the host society (Dribe and Lundh 2008; Song 2009). The timing of union formation and the choice of partnership type have received hardly any attention in this context. Furthermore, most existing papers concentrate on the descendants of immigrants, the 'second generation' (Huschek, Liefbroer, and de Valk 2010; Wiik and

Holland 2015). Among the studies that do investigate the partnership patterns of first-generation immigrants, many focus on a single partnership transition, such as entry into first marriage or divorce (Andersson and Scott 2010; Feng et al. 2012). By contrast, this study analyzes a variety of union formation and dissolution transitions among immigrants and natives in Spain, which allows a more complete understanding of the union dynamics in both population subgroups. Furthermore, this study distinguishes between immigrants from several regions of origin in order to take the different cultural and background characteristics of the immigrant groups into account. Thus this study will help to fill some of the gaps in the literature on partnership dynamics among immigrants and natives in Spain.

In section 2 we briefly review different theoretical frameworks and previous research on immigrants' family formation processes. This is followed by section 3, which depicts union formation and dissolution processes over the last decades in Spain. In section 4 we describe the context and profile of international migration to Spain, provide a detailed account of the heterogeneity – by age, sex, origin, and marital status – present in the immigrant population living in Spain, and formulate our expectations. Section 5 describes the advantages and limitations of the available data sources, including a description of the Fertility and Values Survey, which is used for the empirical analysis in this study. Subsequently, we present the results of our models and discuss whether the findings are in line with our expectations formulated in the theoretical section.

2. Theoretical framework and previous research

The family values and partnership preferences of immigrants who arrive in the destination country as adults have often already been shaped in their country of origin. Therefore, finding a matching partner in the local marriage market, which operates according to different social and cultural norms, is a challenge, especially for immigrants from culturally distant origins. Accordingly, if there is a large difference between the dominant union patterns, gender roles, and household arrangements in the origin and destination countries, the disruptive effect of migration on partnership formation is likely to be strong. Such a disruption may result in delay in the entry into partnership or a higher likelihood of dissolution, especially if the union was formed before migration and went through a period of migration-related separation. However, the relative importance of early socialization to partnership formation is likely to vary across individuals and migration origins. Migration is a strongly selective process, especially in its initial stages: migrants tend to be more educated, more resourceful, and more risk-taking than the average individual in the sending areas (Chiswick 1999; Salt

and Clout 1976). This selectivity also operates with regard to the stage in the family life cycle at which the migration takes place, and selection criteria are likely to differ between women who are already in a union and women who have not yet entered a union upon migration.

Assuming that entry into partnership tends to happen earlier in most immigrants' origin countries than in Spain, if socialization is the dominant force, migrant women can be expected to enter their first union earlier and more often than comparable natives. However, the disruptive effect of migration as well as potential selectivity into migration might delay the age of entry into partnership for those who were not yet in union at the time of arrival. An example of such a joint effect of disruption and selection can be found in the U-shaped pattern followed by the rate of mixed marriage for immigrants arriving in Germany in the early 1960s. As several authors have suggested (Kane and Stephen 1988; Klein 2001), the high rates of intermarriage in the initial stages of the migration process were due to the interaction between the disruptive effect of marriage market constraints (few potential partners of the same origin) and the stronger selection of migrants at the beginning of the migration flow, who tend to be more open-minded individuals. Later on, the increase of co-nationals in the marriage market and the importation of partners from the country of origin reduced the rate of mixed marriages, whereas in the final stage increased cultural convergence and integration brought about a new upturn in mixed marriages. However, at the individual level it is more complicated distinguishing between selection, disruption, and adaptation processes as competing explanations. Only through a threefold comparison between immigrants, natives, and non-migrants at origin would it be possible to distinguish between the various processes. Moreover, a certain degree of selection, adaptation, and disruption might occur simultaneously, which would affect the size of the migrant-native gap in union formation.

The previous reasoning applies mostly to immigrants. However, some of the aforementioned hypotheses are also likely to play a role in explaining the behavior of immigrants' descendants. Adaptation is likely to have a stronger impact on them, since descendants of immigrants have spent at least part of their childhood in the country of destination, whereas the time available for finding a partner (and adapting to the dominant marriage market behavior in the destination country) is clearly shorter for immigrants who arrived as adults. Obviously, socialization into the values and partnership patterns of the origin society will still play a role for descendants through the intergenerational transmission of family values, which is known to remain particularly strong in larger immigrant communities (De Valk and Liefbroer 2007; Nauck 2001, 2007; Phalet and Schönpflug 2001; Schönpflug 2001). By contrast, selection and especially the disruptive effects of migration play no part in explaining differences in partnership patterns between the descendants of immigrants and

comparable natives. As much as an intergenerational comparison of union trajectories would contribute to the understanding of union behavior among migrant groups in Spain, this study is unable to provide such an analysis. This is mainly due to the late start of immigration to Spain and the resulting very small numbers of immigrants' descendants who are old enough to experience their own family formation processes.

3. Union formation and dissolution in Spain over the last decades

The evolution of union formation in Spain over the past three decades has been marked by a decline in marriage rates and an increase in the age of entry into first marriage. While both processes became manifest in the 1980s, they intensified considerably throughout the 1990s. Indeed, Spain displayed the highest age at marriage within the European context by the end of that decade (Muñoz Pérez and Recaño-Valverde 2011). Since the turn of the 21st century the mean age at first marriage has continued to steadily increase: from 28.1 in 2000 to 32.3 in 2014 among women, and from 31.7 to 34.4 among men (INE [Spanish Statistical Institute] 2016).

In addition, as far as marital unions are concerned, it should be noted that in 2009 for the first time there were more civil marriages than religious, mostly Catholic marriages (55% vs. 45%). The incidence of civil marriages has virtually tripled over the past two decades – from 23% of all marriages in 1994 to 68% in 2014 (INE (Spanish Statistical Institute) 2016) – reflecting a rapid secularization process and another indication of the shift in partnership patterns away from the traditional model.

In Spain, the retreat from marriage did not automatically go hand in hand with an increase in cohabitation, in contrast to the typical development in other European countries. From the early 1980s to the mid-1990s the prevalence of this type of co-residential union increased at a fairly slow pace. From that point onwards, and particularly after the year 2000, the diffusion of cohabitation gained momentum, and this type of union has become increasingly common among younger cohorts. Accordingly, cohabitation can no longer be regarded as a marginal phenomenon in Spain. By the age of 35, 39% of women born in the 1970s had entered their first conjugal union through cohabitation, compared to 17% of women born in the 1960s and 6% of women born in the 1950s (Domínguez-Folgueras and Castro-Martín 2013). Furthermore, most cohabiting unions are not short-lived unions but rather stable partnerships (Creighton et al. 2013).

In fact, the marked increase in childbearing rates registered within cohabiting couples confirms the recent spread of cohabitation in Spanish society not only as a transitional phase towards marriage but also as an alternative to it. In 2014 nearly one in three births (31%) in Spain took place within cohabiting unions, suggesting that in

less than two decades cohabitation has become a socially accepted context for childbearing and childrearing.

Further evidence of the growing diffusion of cohabiting unions is the fact that, whereas one decade ago there was a distinctive positive educational gradient for cohabitation, nowadays it is spread equally across all educational strata. Nonetheless, the most recent analyses of the impact of socio-demographic characteristics on the propensity to cohabit in Spain show that cohabitation is still comparatively more common among individuals with particular characteristics. Women who engage in employment, have secular values, and display a political left-orientation have greater probability of opting for cohabitation as an alternative to marriage. Other cohabitation-promoting characteristics are experience of previous childbearing and independent living arrangements (Domínguez-Folgueras and Castro-Martín 2013).

Spanish society has also experienced considerable change in terms of union dissolution over the past thirty years. Marital break-up used to be a fairly rare occurrence because the legal ban on divorce was only lifted in 1981[4]. Since then, marital disruption has become increasingly common. While one out of ten marriages formed in the 1970s were dissolved, in the 1980s one out of six marriages ended in divorce (Bernardi and Martínez-Pastor 2011). In 2014 the crude divorce rate reached 2.3 divorces per 1000 persons, slightly above the EU average. However, this figure underestimates the true extent of union break-up, since it does not include separations in cohabiting unions.

Furthermore, it is not only the incidence of divorce but also its correlation with socio-demographic characteristics that have changed over time. For women who got married before 1981, higher divorce rates were primarily associated with higher education and labor market participation. The experience of union dissolution within the family of origin and the presence of children from a previous relationship were additional factors linked to an increased risk of divorce. For those married after 1981 the level of education is no longer significantly associated with divorce, and the importance of employment status has also declined. By contrast, a couple having children has been consistently linked to a decreased risk of divorce (Bernardi and Martínez-Pastor 2011).

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[4] Even with the lift of the divorce ban, the procedure to get a divorce was lengthy and it required prior legal separation of at least one year. In most cases, couples went to court to get a legal separation but only filed subsequently for a divorce if they wanted to remarry. A new Divorce Law in 2005 eliminated the requirement of prior separation to grant a divorce.

4. Immigration to Spain and immigrants' family dynamics

The foreign-born population increased from 1.2 million in 1998 to 5.65 million in 2011, which represents 12% of the total Spanish population (INE Census 2011)[5]. Approximately 4 million of these were immigrants who arrived in Spain at age 16 or older (also referred to as first generation immigrants), and one million were immigrants who arrived at age 15 or younger (the so-called 1.5 generation or middle generation).[6]

These immigration figures are large in comparison to other European countries and clearly reflect the size of recent migration inflows to Spain. By contrast, the size of the second generation (Spanish-born descendants of two immigrant parents) remains relatively small (less than 800,000 individuals according to the authors' calculations based on data from the Census 2011) compared to the size of the first and 1.5 generation. The share of descendants of immigrants is also small compared to other European countries, due precisely to the recent arrival of the majority of immigrants in Spain. In fact, the second generation and the 1.5 generation have, on average, been residing in Spain 9 and 10 years respectively, and most of the latter arrived after the year 2000. Moreover, they are still very young: on average 11 and 18 years old respectively. This is a crucial aspect for the subject of interest in this study: It implies that there are very few descendants of immigrants in the adult age range, and even fewer who have already formed their first union. Only 10% and 7% of the 1.5 and 2nd generation, respectively, were married in 2011 (Census 2011, authors' calculations). By contrast, by that time approximately 20% of individuals in Spain with mixed parents (one parent born in Spain and one parent born abroad) had already married (Census 2011, authors' calculations). Unfortunately, most sources do not include information on parents' country of birth and therefore potential particularities in the partnership behavior of descendants of mixed couples remain largely unknown.

In Spain the largest migrant groups come from a variety of regions such as Latin America, the Maghreb countries, and Eastern Europe. Migrants from the EU-15 countries also represent a sizable fraction of the total foreign-born population. Overall, Romanians, Moroccans, and Ecuadorians are the largest migrant groups from a single sending country.

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[5] Most undocumented immigrants are also included in these numbers since the sampling frame for the 2011 Census were the Municipal Population Registers (*Padrón*), and legal status is irrelevant for registration. Moreover, registration in *Padrón* is required to gain access to public schools and all social services in the municipality, and also utilized as proof of length of residence in Spain for regularisation processes. The police and immigration authorities have, as yet, never used this register for detecting and deporting unlawful residents.

[6] The rest, approximately 700,000 individuals, were descendants of Spanish emigrants, who were born abroad and returned to Spain at some point.

Immigrants from these four major regions of origin (Latin America, Maghreb, Eastern Europe, and EU-15) widely differ in dimensions such as length of stay, sex composition, and legal status, which might be important in explaining union patterns. Immigrant flows from Latin America and especially Eastern Europe are more recent than those from the EU-15 and the Maghreb. In terms of sex composition, the EU-15 and Eastern European groups are much more balanced than those from the Maghreb, which are strongly male-dominated, and those from Latin American, which are slightly female-dominated.[7] This variation in sex ratios across immigrant groups reflects, at least partially, different selection patterns by gender in the process of emigration from the home country, which are also likely to affect union behavior in Spain. With the exception of EU-15 countries, gender norms are less egalitarian in the countries of origin of most immigrants than in Spain. Accordingly, independent female migration from these countries is expected to be quite selective in dimensions such as education, labor market participation, and gender attitudes, which will be reflected in their family-forming behavior. Moreover, this sort of selectivity may also exist among migrant women who migrated after having (been) married, especially when they are the pioneers of migration within a family, a pattern which has been relatively common in recent migration flows to Spain due to strong labor demand in certain female-dominated sectors; or when women migrated after having separated or divorced from their partners.

Among recent immigrant flows to Spain, a large share of women had formed a union before migrating. As González-Ferrer (2011a) showed, utilizing data from the National Immigrant Survey (2007), approximately 58% and 65% of male and female immigrants living in Spain who had migrated at age 16 or older were already married at the time of their arrival in Spain. Most of them reunified with their spouses in Spain quite rapidly in comparison to the pace of reunification in other countries (González-Ferrer 2008, 2011a, 2011b).[8] This feature is potentially important for explaining their union trajectories in Spain, since a shorter separation period associated with migration might diminish the risk of union dissolution after reunification.

The rest of adult immigrant women living in Spain in 2007 (35%) came as singles and therefore were at risk of entering into a first union during their time in Spain. Four years later, in 2011, the proportion that remained single was 27%, which suggests that

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[7] According to the 2011 Census, the sex ratios were 96 women for every 100 men among Romanian immigrants, 74 women for every 100 men among Moroccan immigrants, 102 women for every 100 men among Ecuadorian immigrants, and 119 women for every 100 men among Colombian immigrants.

[8] The author showed that for approximately 80% of immigrants living in Spain in 2007 who were married before migrating, it took less than two years to reunify with their spouse in Spain. However, official figures on residence permits do not reflect this phenomenon as many of these couples reunified de facto, i.e., without following the legal procedure for family reunification.

many entered into marriage in a relatively short time (Census 2011, authors' calculations), and might be indicative of relatively small disruption effects.

According to the previous figures, a comparison of union patterns between immigrants and natives that focused only on the latter type of immigrant (i.e., those without a union history before migrating) would offer a partial and biased view of the main differences between the adult Spanish population and the immigrant population in this regard. Therefore we have decided to compare the entire adult immigrant population living in Spain to the Spanish immigrant population. However, we will also run separate analyses for those immigrant women who arrived in Spain without prior union experience. On the one hand, this strategy will allow us to better identify socialization and selection effects in union formation behavior. On the other hand, it will separate those effects from potential adaptation and disruption effects, since the latter can only be expected for women who did not have a union history before migration.

Given the outlined theoretical framework and the particular characteristics of recent immigration to Spain, we expect the following results to emerge from the data analysis. First of all, according to the socialization hypothesis and given the less egalitarian gender ideologies in all regions of origin of migrants except the EU-15, we expect higher hazards of union formation for immigrant women than for comparable natives. However, disruption effects associated with international migration, possibly reinforced by the intense selectivity at work for independent adult female migration, are likely to reverse this pattern in the case of immigrant women who were single upon arrival. Secondly, in line also with the socialization hypothesis, cohabitation is expected to be more likely among immigrant women than native women, due to the relatively late development of this type of union arrangement among natives and the higher incidence of cohabitation in some regions of origin such as the EU-15 (Sánchez Gassen and Perelli-Harris 2015) and Latin America (Castro-Martín 2002; Cortina Trilla, Garcia, and Castro-Martín 2010) compared to Spain. However, it is not clear in advance whether this pattern will also be maintained among the selected group of adult immigrant women who were still single when they moved to Spain. In their case, it is difficult to anticipate whether socialization or assimilation and disruption effects will dominate in shaping the final observed outcome. Finally, unions of migrants from the EU-15 and Eastern European countries are expected to have higher dissolution risks than those of comparable natives, due to the traditionally low incidence of divorce in Spain, associated with the strength of Catholic values and legal obstacles to divorce until quite recently. Results are more difficult to predict for Latin American migrant women, since in their case traditional marriage values coexist with high rates of cohabitation and intense selection into independent female migration, both of which are associated with higher dissolution rates.

We will run cohort interaction models in order to test whether expected differences between native and immigrant women are due to a composition effect or reflect truly different behaviors across the two groups. These models will allow us to investigate whether these two groups have experienced significant changes in their union behavior over time, and the extent to which both groups experienced this change at different speeds.

5. Data and method

Unfortunately, most socio-demographic surveys carried out in Spain lack dated information and sufficient numbers of immigrants. The Fertility and Values Survey (FVS), carried out by the Centre for Sociological Research in 2006, offers the best possibility of exploring the type of union transition examined in this study. The FVS2006 collected detailed partnership and fertility histories, with dated information. To the best knowledge of the authors, this is the first paper to utilize the immigrant sample of the FVS dataset for detailed analysis of immigrants' union formation in comparison to that of natives. Unfortunately, the FVS2006 did not include men and did not over-sample immigrant populations. The total sample of the FVS2006 comprises 6,187 women, of which almost 90% are native Spanish, leaving 643 women of foreign origin. Due to the late start of immigration to Spain and therefore the lack of a migrant population born in older cohorts, we only include women born in 1950 and later. Table 1 shows the distribution of the analytical sample for 10-year birth cohorts.

This study distinguishes between immigrant women from four different origin groups. The first group consists of Eastern European countries, with the majority of women coming from Romania and Ukraine. Although both countries are important sending countries for migration to Spain, neither of them has enough women in this dataset to be analyzed separately. The second migrant group consists of women from all Latin American countries, with the majority coming from Ecuador, Colombia, Argentina, and Bolivia, in that order. The third group includes immigrant women from EU-15 countries, mostly from France, Portugal, and Germany, and the last group consists of women from other countries. Among the latter group, a large share comes from Morocco, which due to its geographical proximity plays an important role in Spanish migration history. However, the available number of Moroccan women in the FVS2006 dataset does not support a separate statistical analysis of this origin group[9].

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[9] Despite the large size of the Moroccan-born population living in Spain, its imbalanced composition by gender makes the number of women of Moroccan origin much smaller than expected. In fact, according to the Population Register figures, only 34% of the population aged 15 to 45 born in Morocco and living in Spain in 2006 were women.

Table 1: **Descriptive statistics for Spanish natives and immigrant women**

	Immigrants		Natives	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
Sample	643	10.4	5544	89.6
Birth Cohort				
1950−59	59	9.2	1180	21.3
1960−69	142	22.1	1524	27.5
1970−79	218	33.9	1410	25.4
1980+	224	34.9	1430	25.8
Educational level				
Less than tertiary	515	80.1	4368	78.8
Tertiary	128	19.9	1176	21.2
Immigrant origin				
Eastern Europe	104	16.2		
Latin America	361	56.1		
EU15	98	15.2		
Other	80	12.5		
Partnership trajectories				
Ever in union	493	76.7	3872	69.8
Ever cohabited	231	35.9	1006	18.1
Ever married	334	57.7	3204	61.3
Ever separated	91	14.1	372	6.7
	Immigrants		Natives	
Partnership demographics	**N**	**Mean (SD)**	**N**	**Mean (SD)**
Age at first union	493	21.7 (4.6)	3872	23.5 (4.4)
Age at first cohabitation	231	22 (5.1)	1006	23.8 (5.0)
Age at first marriage	334	22.1 (4.2)	3204	23.7 (4.1)
Age at first dissolution	91	27.9 (6.7)	372	30.8 (7.2)
Migration trajectory				
Years since migration		8.3 (8.4)		
Age at migration		24.4 (10.5)		
In union before migration	327	50.1		

Source: Fertility and Values Survey 2006.

In the immigrant sample, the median age at migration was 24 years and the median duration of residence in Spain by the time of the survey (2006) was 8.3 years, which guarantees a substantive coverage of the life period where first partnership transitions (cohabitation, marriage, and separation) largely occur. This study performs discrete-time hazard regressions for the following union formation and dissolution transitions: 1) first union formation (cohabitation and direct marriage), 2) cohabitation, 3) direct marriage, and 4) separation in first unions (regardless of first union type). While the analysis of first union will provide relevant insights into general differences between natives and migrant groups regarding the propensity and timing of entering a first partnership, the analysis of the competing events of cohabitation and direct marriage

will provide information on the type of first union. Finally, the analysis of separation will show if the spread of union dissolution, which was uncommon for a long time in Spain and has only recently gained momentum, is different among natives and immigrant women of various origins.

The hazard regression models for union formation transitions use age groups as the baseline. Women become at risk of union formation at the age of 15, and age is categorized as under 20, 20–24, 25–29, 30–34, 35–39, and 40 and older. The models for union dissolution use union duration as the baseline. Union duration is categorized in 5-year spells (up to 5, 6–10, 11–14, 15–19, 20–24, 25 or more years), and individuals are censored at partner's death. Besides the age baseline, the initial models for union formation include birth cohort, migrant origin, and education level. Because the numbers of immigrant women in the younger birth cohorts are still small, the models control for birth cohort as a dichotomous variable, distinguishing between women who were born before and after 1970. This cohort division is also relevant to the change in family dynamics among the Spanish native population because major changes associated with the second demographic transition emerge precisely at that time, as described in the background section. The models for separation follow a similar pattern, with an additional model including information on union type. For the transitions to cohabitation, direct marriage, and union separation, further models are estimated including cohort interaction terms.

In line with the description of recent immigration flows to Spain made in section 4, a large proportion of our sample of immigrant women, approximately 50%, had entered a union before migrating to Spain (see Table 1). First, as we mentioned before, omitting all of them would offer only a partial view of the differences between immigrant and native populations. Secondly, the underlying motives of migration and the selection mechanisms are possibly different for women who were already in a union and women who are still single before migration. Both groups may differ from each other in their union trajectories, and do not necessarily conform to the majority union pattern prevailing in their country of origin. In order to test whether immigrants who entered their first partnership before and after migration differ substantially from each other, and in which ways, additional models are presented focusing exclusively on the union transitions of women who had not yet entered into partnership upon arrival in Spain. Unfortunately, sample size limitations do not allow us to run these separated models for dissolution analyses.

6. Results

6.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 1 provides some preliminary descriptive statistics regarding partnership trajectory differences between natives and the total foreign-born population. For instance, the share of women who have ever entered a union is higher among immigrants than natives. Once the two union types, cohabitation and direct marriage, are distinguished we can note that immigrant women have a higher incidence of cohabitation while the proportion of ever-married women is larger among natives than immigrants. Moreover, in the analyzed sample, twice as many immigrant women have separated at least once in comparison with native women. For those women who have ever entered a union, the mean age at first union is lower for immigrant women (21.7 years) than for native women (23.5 years). Timing differentials are also noticeable when the mean age at first cohabitation and first marriage are compared: both are younger for immigrant women than natives. This age gap between natives and immigrant women for union formation is also reflected in the mean age at first separation for those who do experience a separation.

6.2 Union formation

6.2.1 Formation of first union (both union types)

Table 2 displays the results of the discrete-time hazard regression for first union formation, regardless of union type. The results confirm earlier expectations. First of all, the age pattern for entering first union (independent of union type) is bell-shaped, with the highest risk for women at age 25–29 and lower risks for younger and older women. Women who are born after 1970 are significantly less likely to enter into first union than women born in earlier cohorts, which could hint at a general postponement of union formation for younger cohorts. Further, a higher education level also predicts a lower risk of union formation. Regarding immigrant origin, all migrant groups display significantly higher risks of union formation than native Spanish women. The largest coefficient can be found among women from Eastern European countries. Women from Latin America and EU-15 countries display somewhat lower risks, but still higher than those of natives. The second model, which includes only immigrant women who arrived in Spain before entering their first union, shows a very different picture. Only women from Eastern European countries show a clearly higher propensity to enter into union than native women, although the effect does not reach the level of statistical

significance. Women from the EU-15 and 'Other' countries now display a much lower risk than in the previous model, and their propensity to enter a first union is no longer significantly different from that of native Spanish women. Moreover, women from Latin American are now significantly less likely than comparable native Spanish women to enter into a union. These results probably reflect the disruptive effect of migration on partnership formation, but they are also compatible with explanations based on the intense selectivity for independent female migration, and also with some adaptation to the union behavior of younger cohorts of Spaniards.

Table 2: **Hazard regression of the transition into first union (both union types), women age 15−45**

	Model 1			Model 2		
				Only women who migrated prior the start of their first union		
	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.
Age						
<20 (Ref.)	0			0		
20−24	1.38	***	(34.24)	1.46	***	(33.73)
25−29	1.81	***	(38.15)	1.92	***	(38.54)
30−34	1.39	***	(18.92)	1.48	***	(19.44)
35−39	0.23	*	(1.70)	0.25	*	(1.78)
40+	-0.78	**	(-2.57)	-0.69	**	(-2.27)
Birth cohort						
1950-69 (Ref.)	0			0		
Cohort 1970+	-0.38	***	(-11.39)	-0.41	***	(-12.04)
Immigrant origin						
Spanish native (Ref.)	0			0		
Eastern Europe	1.00	***	(5.75)	0.33		(1.06)
Latin America	0.46	***	(5.70)	-0.26	**	(-2.13)
EU15	0.41	***	(2.90)	0.06		(0.33)
Other	0.25	**	(2.03)	0.07		(0.38)
Education						
Less than tertiary (Ref.)	0			0		
Tertiary	-0.61	***	(-16.85)	-0.62	***	(-16.47)
Constant	-3.24	***	(-87.84)	-3.30	***	(-82.58)
Person-years	60,104			57,828		
Individuals	6,187			5,860		
Events	4,365			4,038		

t statistics in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
Source: Fertility and Values Survey 2006.

6.2.2 Cohabitation versus direct marriage

The analysis of entry into first union provided a general overview of partnership patterns among native and immigrant women in Spain. To gain further insight into partnership trajectories, the following analyses distinguish between cohabitation and direct marriage as first union modes (Table 3a and 3b). Both events are investigated as competing risk models, where an individual is censored for the risk of one event in case the competing event occurs.

The age pattern for entry into cohabitation as first union displays somewhat different results than for overall union formation. Although still bell-shaped, the highest risk for cohabitation is at age 30−34, while it remains at age 25–29 for direct marriage (Table 3a and 3b). Opposing time trends are observed for each union type, as expected. The risk of cohabitation increases significantly for the cohorts born since 1970, while the risk of direct marriage decreases significantly for these younger cohorts. While the decrease of direct marriage can be partially explained by the general rise in age at first union entry (Muñoz Pérez and Recaño-Valverde 2011), the increase of cohabitation in recent birth cohorts is an indicator of the late acceptance of this union type in Spain (Domínguez-Folgueras and Castro-Martín 2013).

For cohabitation we find an elevated risk for all migrant groups, but only the groups of Eastern European and EU-15 women remain with significantly higher risks in the model excluding women with a union history prior to arrival in Spain. These results again indicate different patterns for immigrant women who entered into a first union before and after migration, as well as significant differences across migrant groups depending on their region of origin. While the results for EU-15 and Eastern European migrants are consistent with the socialization hypothesis, the results for the Latin Americans seem to be a combination of selection and adaptation effects: women with more diverse and progressive union behavior might be more prone to migrate to Spain and adapt to the dominant patterns found among native Spanish women.

For direct marriage, again, only Eastern European women show a significantly higher risk, while the other immigrant groups are indistinguishable from the Spanish reference group. Once we only include women who had not entered their first union before arriving in Spain, the coefficients of all three specific immigrant groups show negative effects, with Eastern European women on the margins of statistical significance and a significantly different risk for Latin American women. While the lack of significance could be caused by the small sample sizes, the shift from positive to negative effects is universal for all migrant groups. These results could support the disruption theory: single immigrant women, once in Spain, postpone their entry into marriage longer than native women, whereas this effect is not found for women who had entered a union in their country of origin. Furthermore, exposure to the Spanish late-union formation pattern in more recent years might have influenced immigrants'

propensity to enter marriage at later ages. Finally, the effect of education has a negative effect on the transition into cohabitation and direct marriage, which is larger for for direct marriage, indicating a postponement of union entry for higher-educated women.

Table 3a: **Hazard regression of the transition to cohabitation as first union, women age 15–45**

	Cohabitation					
	Model 1			Model 2		
				Only women who migrated prior the start of their first union		
	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.
Age						
<20 (Ref.)	0			0		
20−24	1.00	***	(13.70)	1.09	***	(13.51)
25−29	1.54	***	(18.98)	1.67	***	(19.19)
30−34	1.69	***	(14.88)	1.79	***	(14.96)
35−39	1.19	***	(6.15)	1.22	***	(5.81)
40+	0.68	*	(1.88)	0.84	**	(2.29)
Birth cohort						
1950−69 (Ref.)	0			0		
Cohort 1970+	0.83	***	(13.04)	0.87	***	(12.99)
Immigrant origin						
Spanish native (Ref.)	0			0		
Eastern Europe	1.38	***	(8.57)	1.19	***	(4.96)
Latin America	0.94	***	(9.68)	0.19		(1.23)
EU15	0.75	***	(3.82)	0.46	*	(1.81)
Other	0.50	**	(2.29)	0.27		(0.84)
Education						
Less than tertiary (Ref.)	0			0		
Tertiary	-0.19	***	(-3.00)	-0.17	***	(-2.62)
Constant	-5.16	***	(-67.35)	-5.27	***	(-63.23)
Person-years	60,104			57,828		
Individuals	6,187			5,860		
Events	1,277			1,131		

t statistics in parentheses. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01
Source: Fertility and Values Survey 2006.

Table 3b: **Hazard regression of the transition to direct marriage as first union, women age 15–45**

	Direct marriage					
	Model 1			Model 2		
				Only women who migrated prior the start of their first union		
	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.
Age						
<20 (Ref.)	0			0		
20−24	1.48	***	(30.68)	1.56	***	(30.45)
25−29	1.85	***	(32.77)	1.95	***	(33.09)
30−34	1.20	***	(13.35)	1.29	***	(14.02)
35−39	-0.22		(-1.21)	-0.16		(-0.84)
40+	-1.37	***	(-3.05)	-1.28	***	(-2.86)
Birth cohort						
1950−69 (Ref.)	0			0		
Cohort 1970+	-0.91	***	(-22.32)	-0.95	***	(-22.60)
Immigrant origin						
Spanish native (Ref.)	0			0		
Eastern Europe	0.62	**	(2.50)	-0.83		(-1.45)
Latin America	0.11		(1.00)	-0.61	***	(-3.33)
EU15	0.17		(1.00)	-0.20		(-0.92)
Other	0.16		(1.00)	0.01		(0.04)
Education						
Less than tertiary (Ref.)	0			0		
Tertiary	-0.80	***	(-17.15)	-0.81	***	(-16.96)
Constant	-3.40	***	(-78.70)	-3.46	***	(-74.39)
Person-years	60,104			57,828		
Individuals	6,187			5,860		
Events	3,139			2,953		

t statistics in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
Source: Fertility and Values Survey 2006.

6.3 First union dissolution

While in the traditional union pattern the first partner often remains the only partner throughout the life course, the change in partnership trajectories opened up the possibility of separation and the formation of higher order unions over the life course. In order to gain an overview of this phenomenon, this study also analyzes separation in first unions (cohabitation or marriage). While a separate analysis of dissolution of cohabitation and marriage would provide more detailed insight into union trajectories,

the low rate of separation in this dataset does not allow for this level of disaggregation. However, to partially compensate for this limitation, the second model includes information on type of union (direct marriage, marriage after cohabitation, or cohabitation) as an additional covariate. The baseline for this analysis is union duration, categorized in 5-year intervals. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: **Hazard regression of separation in first unions (cohabitation or marriage)**

| | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | |
| | | | | Including union type | | |
	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.
Union duration						
≤ 5 years (Ref.)	0			0		
6−10 years	-0.06		(-0.52)	0.00		(0.02)
11−15 years	-0.30	**	(-2.02)	-0.22		(-1.47)
16−20 years	0.20		(1.28)	0.27	*	(1.74)
21−25 years	0.29		(1.57)	0.37	**	(1.96)
26+	0.39		(1.05)	0.44		(1.20)
Birth cohort						
1950−69 (Ref.)	0			0		
Cohort 1970+	0.72	***	(6.49)	0.47	***	(3.95)
Immigrant origin						
Spanish native (Ref.)	0			0		
Eastern Europe	-0.25		(-0.62)	-0.30		(-0.72)
Latin America	0.94	***	(6.37)	0.77	***	(4.89)
EU15	0.93	***	(3.62)	0.94	***	(3.64)
Other	0.73	**	(2.23)	0.71	**	(2.09)
Education						
Less than tertiary (Ref.)	0			0		
Tertiary	0.26	**	(2.15)	0.18	**	(1.47)
Union type						
direct marriage (Ref.)				0		
marriage after coh.				0.18		(1.08)
cohabitation				1.00	***	(7.81)
Constant	-5.25	***	(-55.00)	-5.26	***	(-54.82)
Person-years	63,653			63,653		
Individuals	4,322			4,322		
Events	463			463		

t statistics in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
Source: Fertility and Values Survey 2006.

Individuals born in or after 1970 have a higher risk of separating from their first partner than women born before that period. In the first model all migrant women except Eastern Europeans show significantly elevated risks of union dissolution. In Model 2, the coefficients for the union-type variable indicate that women who entered into union through direct marriage display the lowest risk of dissolution, compared to marriages with a prior cohabitation spell and, especially, cohabiting relationships, which present the highest risk of dissolution (only the latter is significantly different to the reference category). Moreover, the coefficients for the different immigrant groups do not change much after adding the type of union control (model 2), the only exception being a slight reduction in the differences between Latin Americans and native Spanish women (reference group). Finally, the higher risk of union dissolution among highly educated women does decrease but remains significant once union type is controlled for.

6.4 Cohort interaction models

As seen in the results above, birth cohort had strong and consistent effects on all union transitions. Women born from 1970 onward were significantly less likely to enter a union in general and a direct marriage in particular. They were also more likely to enter cohabitation and separate from their first partner. Given the importance of birth cohort, this section presents additional analysis of the transition to cohabitation and direct marriage (Table 5a and 5b), as well as separation in first unions (Table 6), including cohort interactions. Due to the small sample size we are no longer able to distinguish between various immigrant origins. However, since the different immigrant origins often show effects in the same direction compared to the native reference group, the loss of information is assumed to be minor for these birth cohort interaction models.

Tables 5a and 5b present the results of the birth cohort interaction models for the transition to cohabitation and direct marriage. For both competing events the first models include all covariates, as seen before (Table 3a and 3b), except that all immigrant origins are now aggregated in one group. Consequently, results remain the same as in the previous analysis but the immigrant effect is now estimated as an average effect: all immigrant women together have a more than twice as high risk of entering cohabitation than native Spanish women. The second model includes the dummy variables for the interaction of birth cohort and immigrant status, using Spanish natives born in 1950–1969 as reference group. This reference group displays the lowest risk of entering cohabitation. Spanish natives born after 1970 and immigrant women born before 1970 show similar cohabitation risks, which are both significantly higher than those for the reference group. The highest risk of entering cohabitation is displayed

by the group of immigrants, in particular those born after 1970. In the third model we included only immigrant women who arrived in Spain before entering their first union, and the coefficients of the interaction dummies are lower than in model 2. However, the group of immigrant women born after 1970 still displays significantly higher risks of entering cohabitation than the reference group. By contrast, the group of immigrant women born before 1970 does not show significant differences from the reference group, which can be largely accounted for by the small number of individuals and events in this group.

Table 5a: Hazard regression of cohort interaction model for cohabitation

		Cohabitation							
	Model 1			Model 2 Additionally including interaction			Model 3 Only women who migrated prior the start of their first union		
	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.
Age									
<20 (Ref.)	0			0			0		
20−24	0.99	***	(13.61)	0.99	***	(13.59)	1.08	***	(13.43)
25−29	1.53	***	(18.89)	1.53	***	(18.84)	1.66	***	(19.10)
30−34	1.68	***	(14.78)	1.68	***	(14.74)	1.79	***	(14.94)
35−39	1.19	***	(6.14)	1.19	***	(6.15)	1.22	*	(5.83)
40+	0.69	*	(1.90)	0.69	*	(1.90)	0.84	**	(2.31)
Birth cohort									
1950−69 (Ref.)	0								
1970+	0.83	***	(13.18)						
Immigrant origin									
Spanish native (Ref.)	0								
Immigrant	0.92	***	(12.05)						
Interaction dummies									
Spanish native 1950-69 (Ref.)				0			0		
Spanish native 1970+				0.85	***	(12.48)	0.85	***	(12.40)
Immigrants 1950-69				1.00	***	(7.10)	0.13		(0.48)
Immigrants 1970+				1.74	***	(17.37)	1.29	***	(9.83)
Education									
Less than tertiary (Ref.)	0			0			0		
Tertiary	-0.19	***	(-3.05)	-0.19	***	(-3.06)	-0.17	**	(-2.57)
Constant	-5.16	***	(-67.38)	-5.16	***	(-66.90)	-5.26	***	(-62.99)
Person-years	60,104			60,104			57,828		
Individuals	6,187			6,187			5,860		
Events	1,277			1,277			1,131		

t statistics in parentheses. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01
Source: Fertility and Values Survey 2006.

Table 5b: **Hazard regression of cohort interaction model for direct marriage**

		Model 1			Model 2 Additionally including interaction			Model 3 Only women who migrated prior the start of their first union	
	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.
Age									
<20 (Ref.)	0			0			0		
20−24	1.48	***	(30.66)	1.48	***	(30.72)	1.56	***	(30.46)
25−29	1.84	***	(32.78)	1.85	***	(32.91)	1.95	***	(33.09)
30−34	1.20	***	(13.35)	1.20	***	(13.4)	1.30	***	(14.01)
35−39	-0.23		(-1.22)	-0.23		(-1.22)	-0.16		(-0.85)
40+	-1.37	***	(-3.05)	-1.37	***	(-3.06)	-1.29	***	(-2.87)
Birth cohort									
1950−69 (Ref.)	0								
1970+	-0.90	***	(-22.38)						
Immigrant origin									
Spanish native (Ref.)	0								
Immigrant	0.19	**	(2.46)						
Interaction dummies									
Spanish native 1950-69 (Ref.)				0			0		
Spanish native 1970+				-0.96	***	(-22.72)	-0.96	***	(-22.51)
Immigrants 1950-69				-0.06		(-0.57)	-0.64	***	(-3.30)
Immigrants 1970+				-0.46	***	(-4.57)	-1.21	***	(-7.91)
Education									
Less than tertiary (Ref.)	0			0			0		
Tertiary	-0.80	***	(-17.22)	-0.80	***	(-17.13)	-0.81	***	(-16.93)
Constant	-3.40	***	(-78.78)	-3.38	***	(-78.17)	-3.45	***	(-74.31)
Person-years	60,104			60,104			57,828		
Individuals	6,187			6,187			5,860		
Events	3,139			3,139			2,953		

t statistics in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
Source: Fertility and Values Survey 2006.

In the case of direct marriage, the initial difference between natives and the overall group of immigrant women is smaller in size than that previously observed for cohabitation. Immigrants show a 40% higher risk (exp(0.19)) of entering direct marriage than natives. In model 2, the interaction dummy variables show that Spanish native women born in the later period and the two cohorts of immigrants display lower risks of direct marriage than the reference group, but the differences are only significant for the most recent cohorts. Model 3 again only includes migrants who arrived in Spain as singles. While the magnitude of effects varies among the migrant groups compared to model 2, the lower risk of direct marriage among immigrants persists.

In sum, even allowing for different cohort effects between migrant and native women, the higher propensity to cohabit and lower propensity for direct marriage among immigrants does not disappear. Moreover, the additional models based on immigrant women who had not yet entered into a union by the time of arrival in Spain reveal that only part of the difference with natives is attributable to women who formed their union in their countries of origin.

Applying the same modeling strategy for the transition to separation in either cohabitation or marriage, the interaction between migrant status and birth cohort also shows significant effects (Table 6). With native women born before 1970 being the reference category, native women born in the later birth cohort have a 76% higher risk (exp(0.57)), immigrants born before 1970 have a 2.4 times higher risk, and immigrant women born in the later period have a 2.7 times higher risk of separating from their first partner. Therefore, birth cohort has a much stronger impact on native women than on immigrant women in regard to separation risks in first unions.

Table 6: **Hazard regression of cohort interaction model for dissolution**

| | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | |
| | | | | Additionally including cohort interaction | | |
	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.
Union duration						
≤ 5 years (Ref.)	0			0		
6−10 years	0.00		(0.03)	0.00		(0.04)
11−15 years	-0.23		(-1.48)	-0.22		(-1.46)
16−20 years	0.26	*	(1.72)	0.27	*	(1.76)
21−25 years	0.36	*	(1.93)	0.37	**	(1.97)
26+	0.44		(1.20)	0.45		(1.21)
Birth cohort						
1950−69 (Ref.)	0					
1970+	0.46	***	(3.83)			
Immigrant origin						
Spanish native (Ref.)	0					
Immigrant	0.67	***	(5.19)			
Interaction dummies						
Spanish native 1950-69 (Ref.)				0		
Spanish native 1970+				0.57	***	(4.31)
Immigrants 1950-69				0.88	***	(5.13)
Immigrants 1970+				1.01	***	(5.49)

Table 6:   **(Continued)**

| | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | |
| | | | | Additionally including cohort interaction | | |
	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.	Coef.	Sign.	t stat.
Education						
Less than tertiary (Ref.)	0			0		
Tertiary	0.18		(1.46)	0.18		(1.44)
Union type						
direct marriage (Ref.)	0			0		
marriage after coh.	0.18		(1.09)	0.17		(1.03)
cohabitation	1.00	***	(7.98)	0.99	***	(7.81)
Constant	-5.37	***	(-54.82)	-5.40	***	(-53.91)
Person-years	63,653			63,653		
Individuals	4,322			4,322		
Event	463			463		

t statistics in parentheses. * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01
Source: Fertility and Values Survey 2006

7. Discussion and conclusions

This study investigated union formation and dissolution among native and immigrant women in Spain. The late onset of partnership diversification, due in part to legal restrictions on non-marital living arrangements and divorce, distinguishes Spain from family formation developments in other parts of Europe. Patterns of late union entry, a preference for marriage over cohabitation, and low separation risks place Spain in an outsider position in comparison with countries of Northern, Western, and Eastern Europe. The much more recent shift from emigration to immigration country, which occurred only at the end of the 20th century in Spain and rapidly gained momentum, has to be taken into account for an investigation of family formation dynamics. Together with the diverse national origins of immigrants, Spain provides a unique setting to investigate union formation and dissolution differences between native and foreign-born women.

The analysis of over 6,000 women from the Fertility and Value Survey 2006 provided support for disruption, selection, and socialization hypotheses. As described in the theoretical section, the socialization hypothesis states that partnership and family trajectory preferences are influenced by early exposure to social norms and value systems. For immigrant women in Spain, this means following partnership patterns close to those dominant in their regions of origin rather than those prevailing in the host

society. Our results provide support for this explanation in some of the analyzed partnership transitions. Firstly, immigrant women are more likely to enter a first union in general and, secondly, they are systematically more likely to enter into cohabitation in particular, which is still less widespread in Spain than in other European countries and in Latin America. More importantly, these effects do not disappear even when we allow for different cohort effects for immigrants and natives, which confirms that the observed differences, in particular the higher risks of cohabitation among immigrants, are not due to the younger profile of the immigrant population compared to the Spanish natives, as might be initially thought.

However, the separated analyses by type of union (cohabitation versus direct marriage), as well as the comparison of union transitions of immigrant women who were single at arrival and those who had already entered a union prior to moving to Spain, allowed us to add some important nuances to the initial conclusions. As we hypothesized, the obtained results suggest that relatively strong socialization effects coexist with both selection and disruption in the union dynamics of immigrant women living in Spain. First of all, for immigrant women who were single upon arrival in Spain, socialization effects can be ruled out with regard to direct marriage behavior. Both Eastern European and, especially, Latin American immigrant women showed lower risk of direct marriage than Spanish native women. This result would be consistent with the disruption hypothesis, according to which settling in a new country and establishing relationships that may lead to dating someone is a process that would take time and most likely will result in a postponement of union formation. However, our results did not confirm the same reasoning in the case of cohabitation. Immigrant women, regardless of whether they entered their first union before or after migration, are systematically more likely to cohabit than comparable Spanish natives. Why does cohabitation not suffer from the same disruption effect associated with migration? One possibility is that our results reflect selection effects rather than disruption effects, or a combination of both. The fact that all Eastern European women in our sample (mostly Romanians) are more likely to cohabit than comparable native Spanish women, regardless of whether they started their union before or after coming to Spain, points in this direction, because the cohabitation rate is not higher in their respective countries of origin than in Spain (see Hoem et al. (2009) for the Romanian case). However, the same argument is not applicable to the case of women from EU-15 countries, where cohabitation rates have been traditionally higher than in Spain. Therefore, the socialization explanation remains the most credible for this origin group.

In the case of Latin American immigrant women, the potential roles of socialization and selection effects are more difficult to separate. In many of the specific countries in the Latin America region the rate of cohabitation is higher than in Spain. In the early 2000s, for instance, the percentages of cohabitating women among all women

in union in the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and Peru were substantially higher than in Spain. However, in other countries that also have a large number of female migrants in Spain, for instance, in Argentina, Bolivia, and Ecuador, the corresponding figures were lower and hence more similar to current levels in Spain (Cortina Trilla, Garcia, and Castro-Martín 2010). Unfortunately, the small sample sizes do not allow us to distinguish further by country of origin instead of region, and consequently it is not possible to reject or confirm the selection hypothesis in these cases. Moreover, we know from previous studies that the social meaning attached to cohabitation varies widely in different contexts (Hiekel, Liefbroer, and Poortman 2014). Cohabitation in Latin America has been associated with low social status and economic difficulty in affording formal marriage (Castro-Martín 2002), which is not the case in Spain (García Pereiro, Pace, and Grazia Didonna 2014). Thus, the higher propensity to cohabit among Latin American immigrant women who have entered a union in Spain could be indicating either the strong influence of union patterns from their countries of origin or selection and adaptation to the dominant social meaning of cohabitation in Spain.

Relevant differences across origin groups also emerge with regard to separation from first partner. Latin American and EU-15 women displayed higher risk of dissolution, especially for cohabiting unions. Eastern European women displayed lower risk of dissolution than Spanish natives, although the differences were not significant. However, these differences are more related to the higher propensity to migrate among women who separated from their partners in their countries of origin compared to their non-separated counterparts, than to an observed higher dissolution propensity among immigrant women who entered their first union in Spain. In other words, our results for dissolution transitions point to selection rather than socialization effects.

Overall, union formation and dissolution processes among natives and immigrants in Spain diverge from what has been described in the literature for Western and Northern European countries (Andersson, Obućina, and Scott 2015; Hannemann and Kulu 2015; Pailhé 2015) for the last decades. The unique migration history and development of union patterns make Spain an interesting case for future research. However, large-scale and more detailed data are needed for the analysis of specific origin countries, which would permit more nuanced explanations of the observed dynamics. Furthermore, in a reasonable time span the second-generation immigrants will have reached union formation and dissolution ages, thus enabling analysis of differences in union behavior between immigrant generations.

8. Acknowledgements

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