



Sexual Initiation and Relationship Outcomes in Adulthood



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INTRODUCTION

Extensive research has focused on predictors and correlates of teens’ sexual activity. Much remains to be learned, however, about the timing of sexual initiation and its consequences for individuals’ well-being.

Most research in this area has focused on the short-term outcomes associated with “early” initiation of vaginal intercourse, ignoring the potential effects associated with the timing of oral sex initiation and the effects of “late” transitions to sexual activity or remaining a virgin into adulthood. Moreover, few studies, examine whether timing effects extend beyond adolescence and into adulthood. As such, we do not yet know whether timing of sexual initiation is associated with relationship engagement and quality of romantic relationships in adulthood.

OBJECTIVE

• To explore the relationship between timing of sexual initiation (for both vaginal and oral sex) and both engagement in and quality of intimate unions during adulthood

DATA & SAMPLE

• Waves I and IV of The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)

• Analytic sample includes all respondents who participated in both waves of data collection, who had data for all variables, and who had initiated vaginal sex by Wave IV

• Sample: Women (n = 3,790) and Men (2,868) ages 24 – 32 at Wave IV

TIMING CATEGORIES

- Age at first vaginal sex (both women and men)
 - Early (10-14 years)
 - Normative (15-18 years)
 - Late (>18 years)

- Age at first oral sex

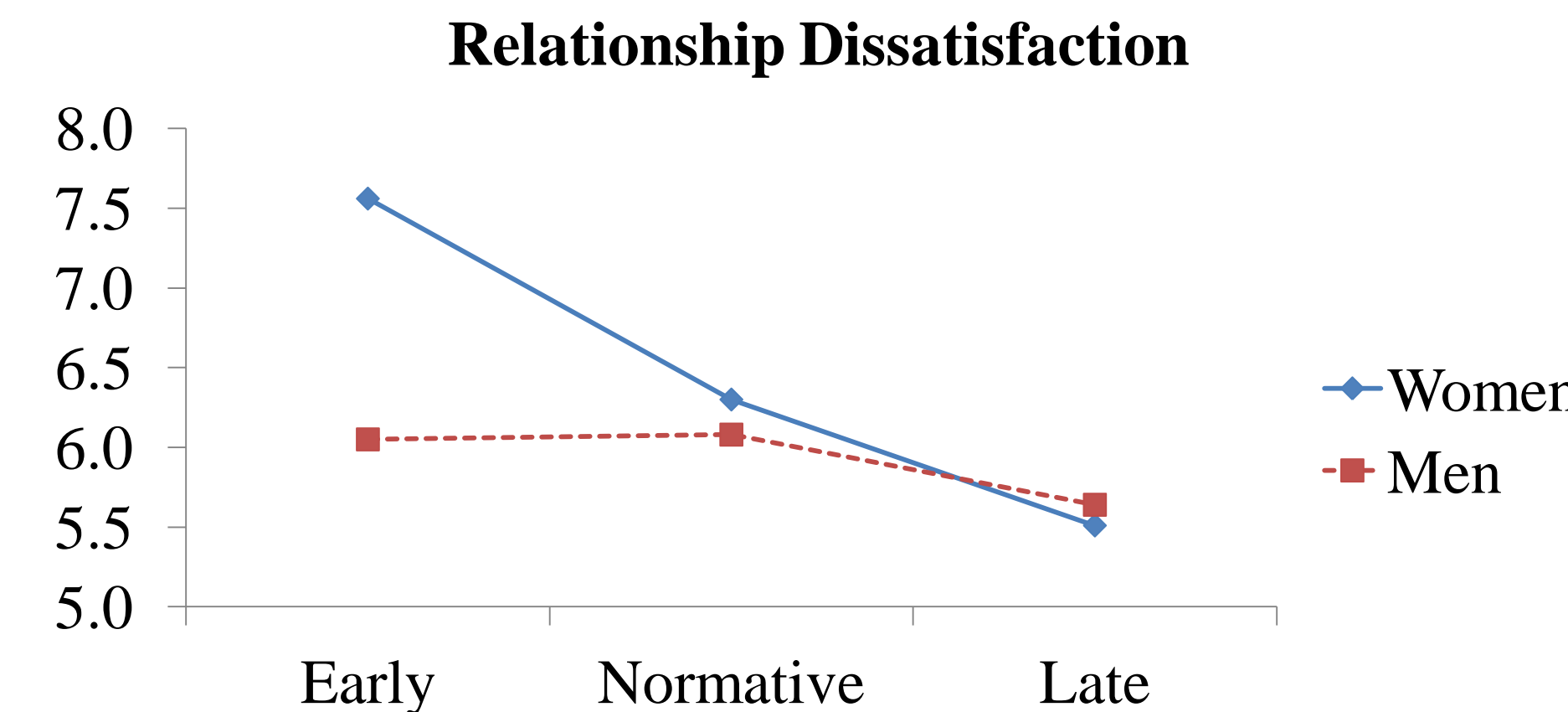
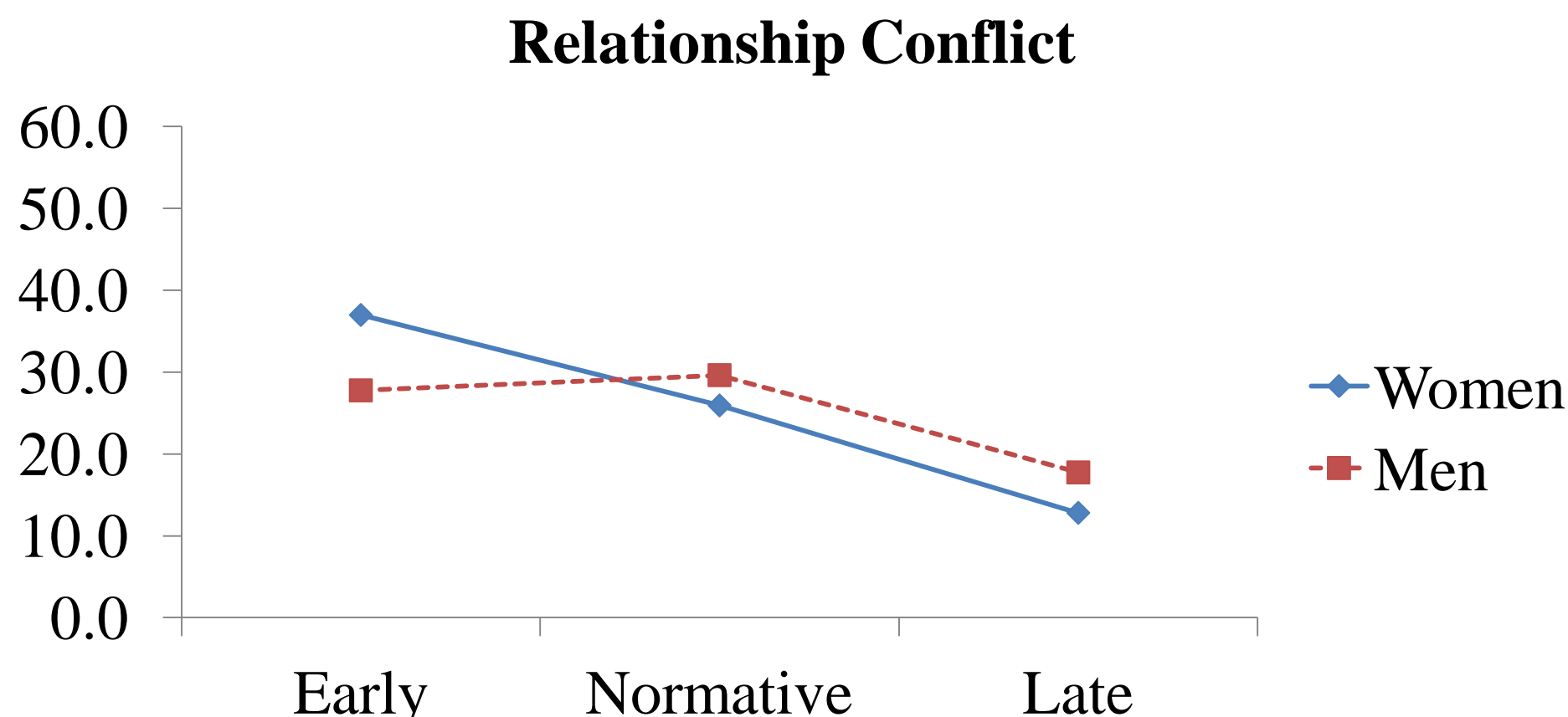
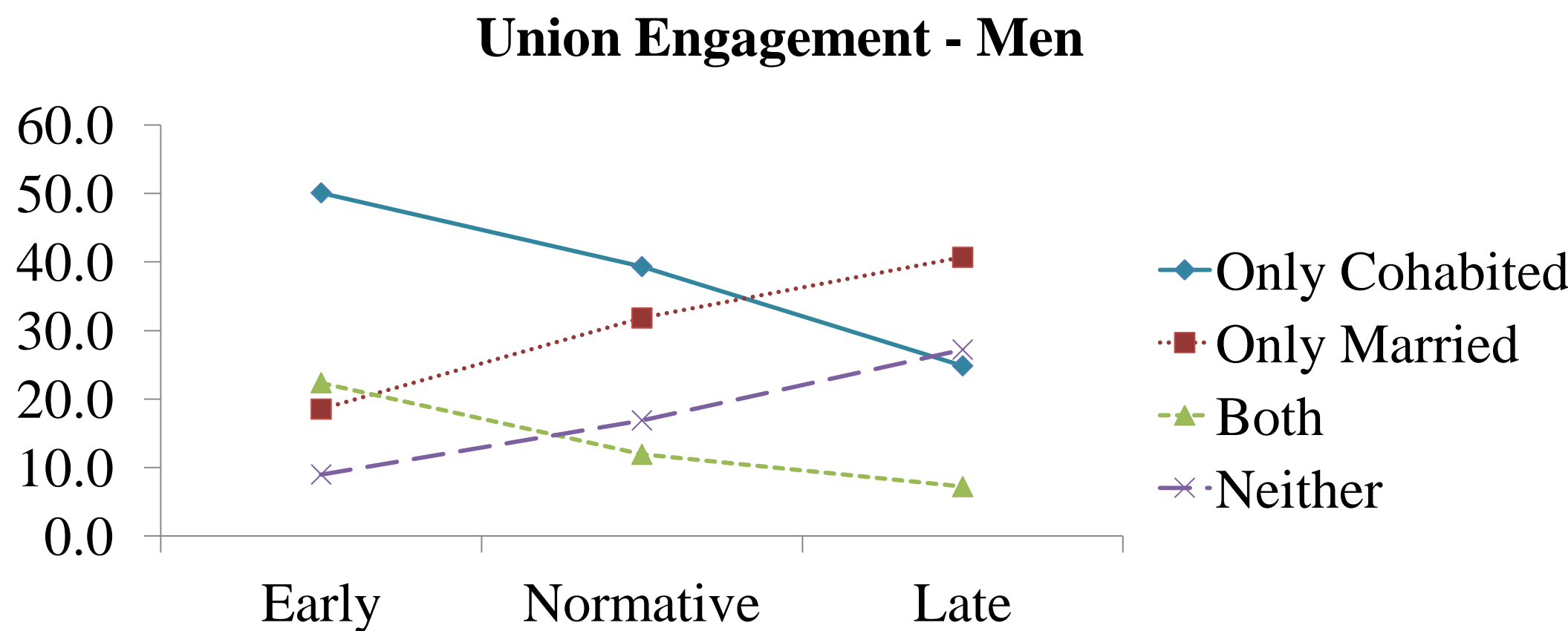
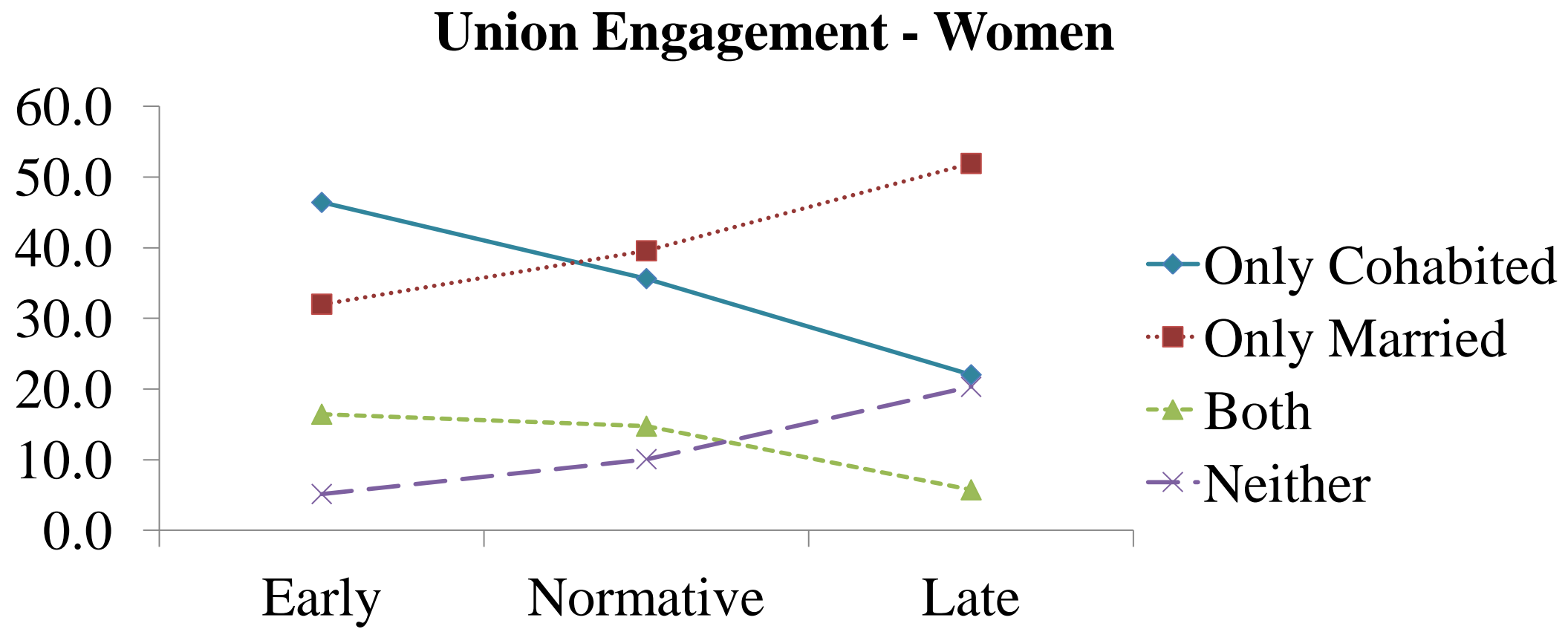
WOMEN

- Early (10-15 years)
- Normative (16-20 years)
- Late (>20 years)

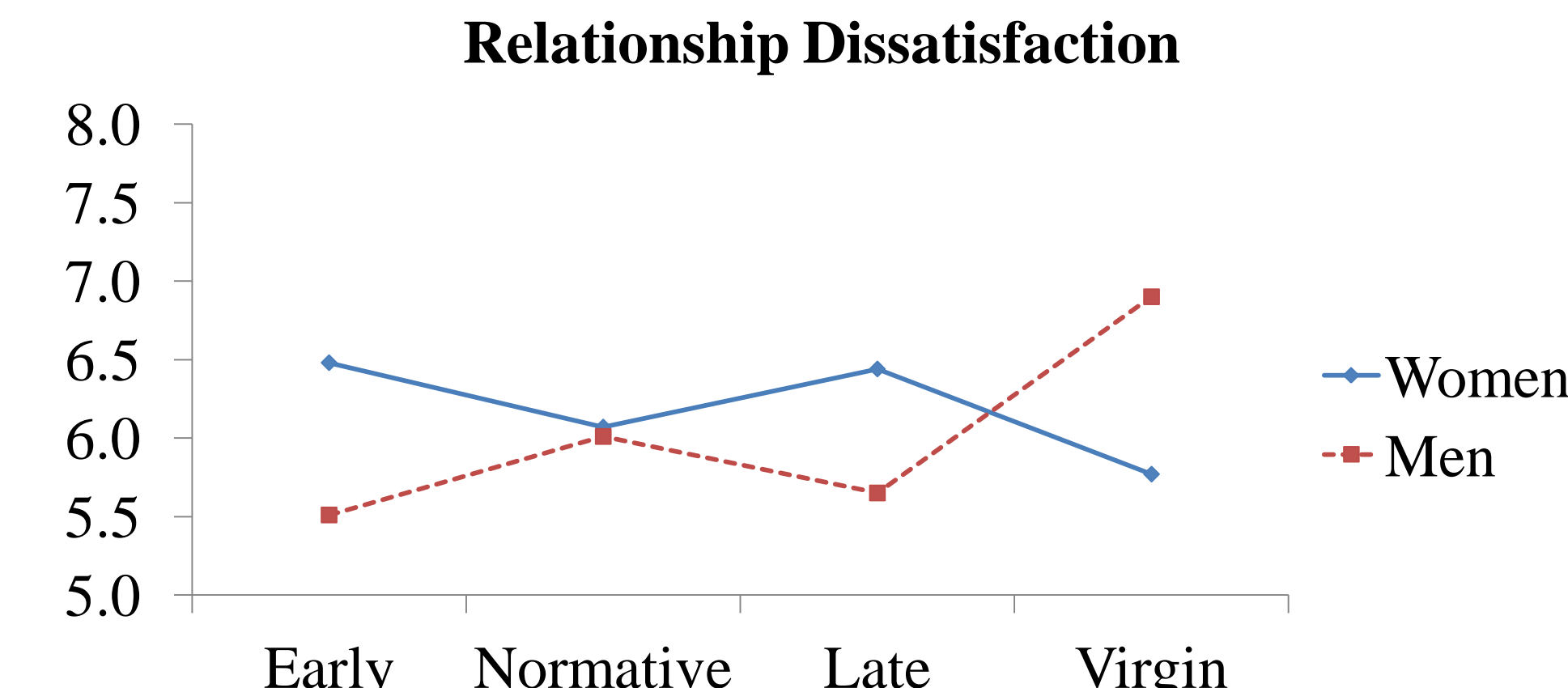
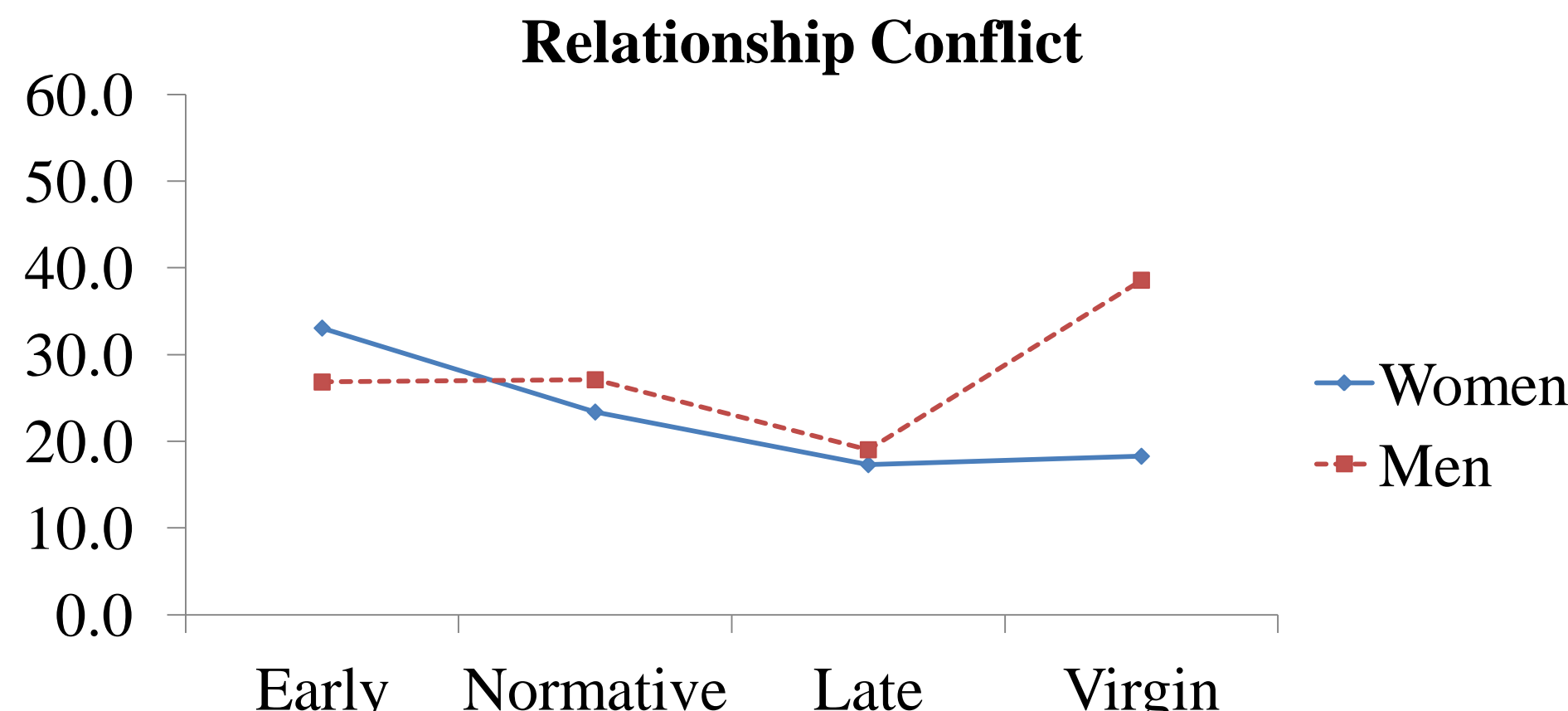
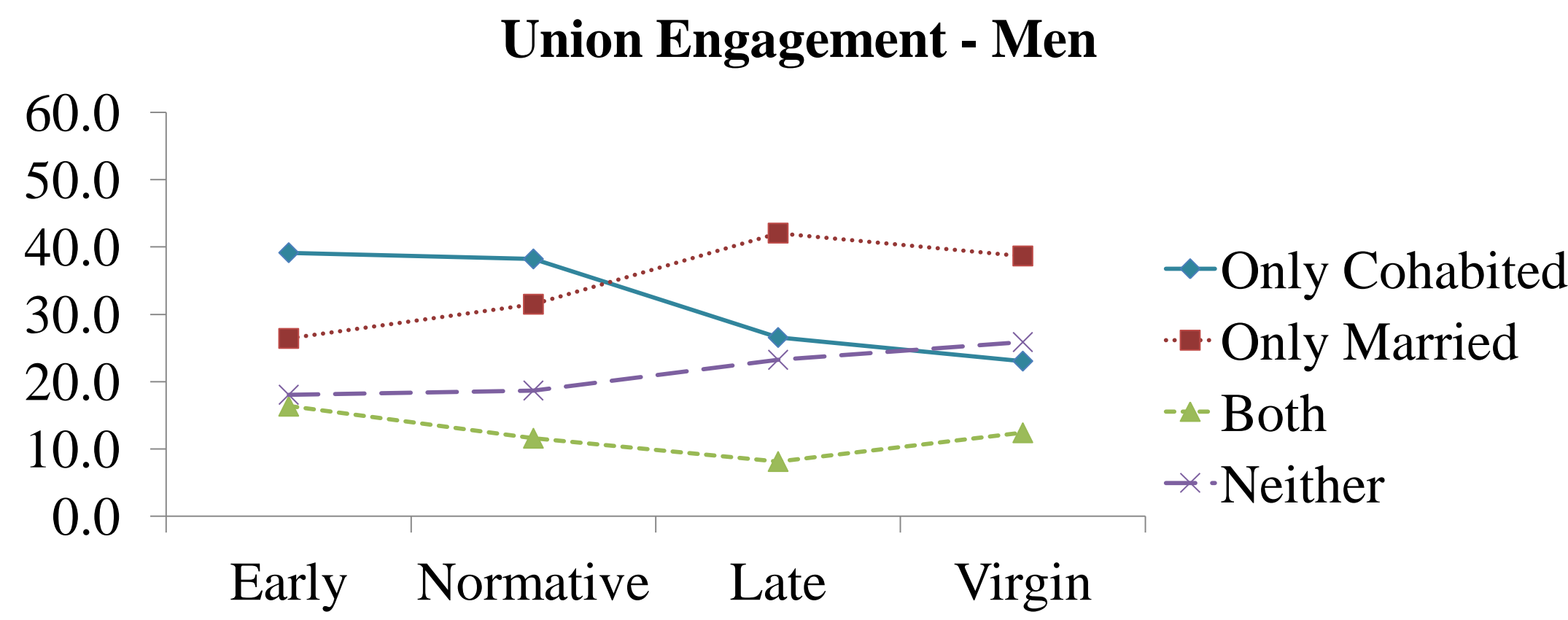
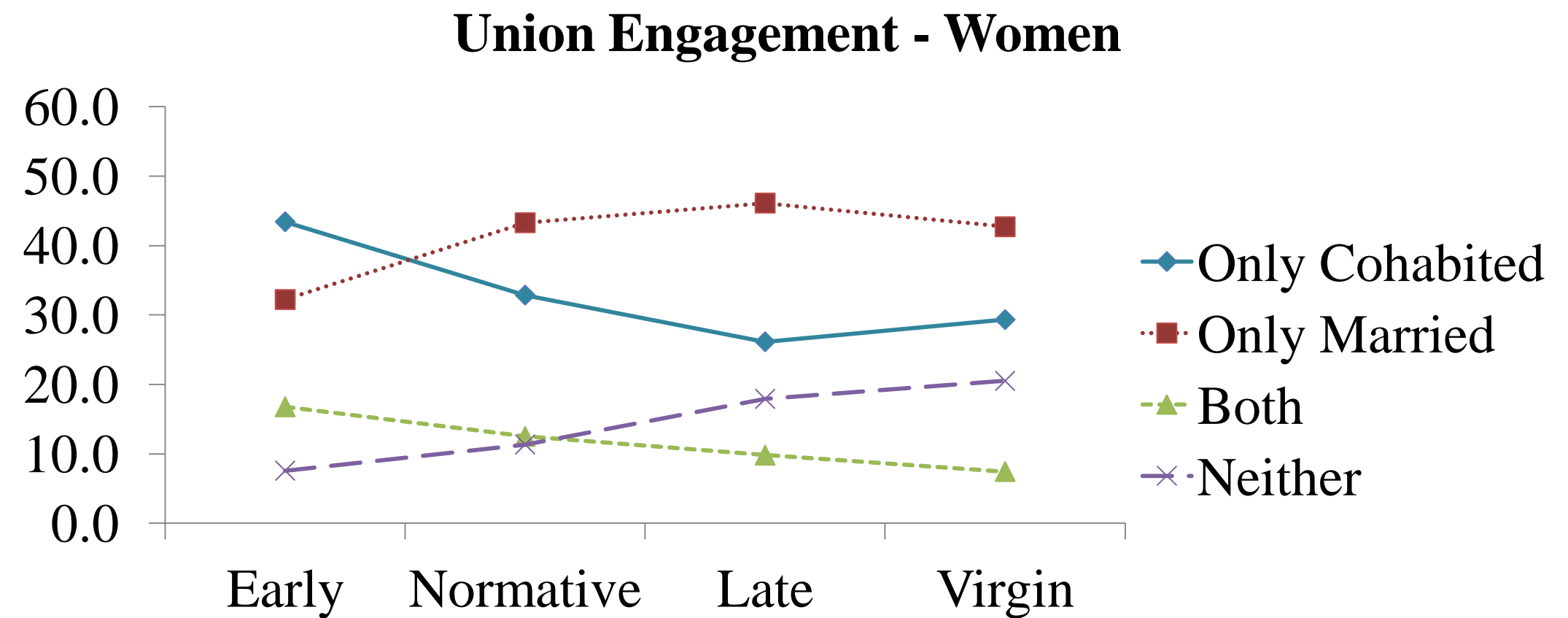
MEN

- Early (10-14 years)
- Normative (15-19 years)
- Late (>19 years)

AGE AT FIRST VAGINAL SEX



AGE AT FIRST ORAL SEX



MULTIVARIATE RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Odds Ratios for Age at Sexual Initiation on Engagement in Relationships

	Women			Men		
	Only Cohabited	Both (Only Married)	Neither	Only Cohabited	Both (Only Married)	Neither
Age at First Vaginal Sex (ref = Normative)						
Early	0.85	0.81	0.55	1.77	2.55	0.59
Late	0.89	0.46**	1.82***	0.79	0.60*	1.79**
Age at First Oral Sex (ref = Normative)						
Early	1.47	1.46	1.14	0.60	0.83	1.14
Late	1.03	1.39	1.25	0.87	0.92	0.71
Virgin	0.62	0.46	1.73	0.28*	0.58	0.74

*p≤.05; **p≤.01; ***p≤.001

Odds Ratios and Incident Rate Ratios for Age at Sexual Initiation on Relationship Quality

	Women		Men	
	Relationship Conflict (OR)	Relationship Dissatisfaction (IRR)	Relationship Conflict (OR)	Relationship Dissatisfaction (IRR)
Age at First Vaginal Sex (ref = Normative)				
Early	1.16	1.10	0.70	0.97
Late	0.64**	0.95	0.62**	1.04
Age at First Oral Sex (ref = Normative)				
Early	1.39	1.07	1.06	0.96
Late	0.80	1.03	0.92	0.93
Virgin	0.47**	0.77**	1.48	0.93

*p≤.05; **p≤.01; ***p≤.001

Note: All models control for race/ethnicity, age, nativity status, childhood family structure, parent SES, religiosity, respondent SES, romantic relationship experience during adolescence, any forced sex, ever diagnosed with an STD, and any non-marital pregnancy

Overall, relationship experiences in adulthood are significantly associated with the age at which one first initiates sexual activity.

- Among both women and men, late initiation of vaginal sex is associated with:
 - 1) a lower likelihood of engaging in both a cohabiting and marital union
 - 2) an increased likelihood of engaging in neither type of co-residential union, relative to only engaging in marriage.

• Among both women and men, late initiation of vaginal sex is also associated with a lower likelihood of reporting serious conflict in relationships.

• Among women (but not men), remaining an oral sex virgin into one’s mid-20s and early 30s reduces the likelihood of experiencing relationship conflict and relationship dissatisfaction.