

The Instability of Family Instability: Spatiotemporal Variation in the Disruption of Cohabiting Unions with Children

**David Pelletier and Solène Lardoux
Université de Montréal**

As growing numbers of children are born to cohabiting couples, increasing attention is paid to the higher instability of cohabitation as opposed to marriage. Even if theoretical thinking about the diffusion process of cohabitation is contemporaneous to studies on cohabitation instability, associations between them have seldom been tested. We argue that the instability gap between cohabiting and married families is not constant over time and place; rather, it evolves in relation to the social status achieved by cohabitation in a given society. We explore a normativity hypothesis stating that as births within cohabitation become more common, and thus more socially normative, cohabiting family instability decreases. We use multilevel logistic models with a series of cross-sectional Canadian data to compare the evolution of the odds of parental disruption for children in various geolinguistic groups, taken as proxies for normative environments. We find support for the normativity hypothesis in the Canadian context.