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Provisional title: The spectacular rise of cohabitation in Colombia: pushing its spatial and social boundaries

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1. Abstract

In the current context of diversity family forms, this study attempts to document and explain the often spectacular increase of non marital cohabitation in Latin America. We take the case of Colombia and examine the expansion of cohabitation in this region. To this purpose, we use explanatory variables of socio-demographic character in a geographic and historical perspective. In this sense, this research has two aims: the first is to establish internal geographic differences at the province level (Municipalities); the second is to explain these differences through individual characteristics and the influence of social phenomena such as educational expansion, urbanization, migration and female activity in the labour market. The micro-data comes from the IPUMS international project database. In this case, we selected data from the last four census rounds in Colombia which correspond to the years 1973, 1985, 1993 and 2005.

At present, we are finishing the preliminary results regarding the descriptive and cartographic phases. The first results show an apparent association between cohabitation and areas with a high prevalence of non-mixed populations (black and Indian groups) and sparsely populated regions. Furthermore, we observe a how the differences by education level are diminishing, especially at early ages.

2. Background: The rise of non-marital cohabitation in Latin America

Non-marital cohabitation has spread dramatically in Latin America during the last four decades (see Table 1). In the 1970s, cohabitation was more likely to occur within the lower social strata, indigenous and African-descent populations and in remote rural areas. However, by the year 2000 cohabitation had spread among the higher social and educational groups and in urban areas. In consequence, marriage rates have been declining throughout the region and cross-national differences in the degree of cohabitation have narrowed. There has been an increase in cohabitation in countries where the lowest levels were previously seen, and levels of cohabitation are remaining steady or increasing slightly in countries that used to have the highest levels of cohabitation. The extent to which rates of cohabitation in Latin American can be compared to those of developed countries has begun to receive scholarly attention. Some authors suggest that non-marital cohabitation in Latin America cannot be compared to that of developed countries where cohabitation is understood as a sign of women's independence, or as an ideological rebuke against institutional intrusion in private life. Also, unlike in industrialized countries, evidence suggest that Latin American consensual unions remain common at later stages of the life cycle and that they constitute a regular context for bearing and rearing children, even though some proportion of these consensual union is eventually legalized at older ages.

Given both the historical presence and recent spread of non-marital cohabitation, it seems reasonable to assume that this type of union may have multiple significances depending on the social class and country. Some consensual unions may resemble ones we observe in high-income countries while others may bear

the traditional marks of poverty and gender oppression. This duality has its roots in the dynamics of the economic, political and social modernization processes that have taken place in various countries within the region. Some of the relevant elements in these modernization processes have not yet fully developed, allowing only a small fraction of the population to gain access to social and material benefits. Likewise, a great many of these modern transformations have been carried out partially, without providing the modern cultural and identity elements that are characteristic of such changes.

Table 1. Cohabitation rates by sex, country and census round (persons in union age 25-29)

	1970	1980	1990	2000	Dif. 2000-1970
Men					
Argentina	13.05	14.90	25.85	48.72	35.67
Brazil	7.15	13.29	25.24	45.52	38.37
Chile	4.36	6.19	12.06	29.29	24.93
Colombia	20.32	36.42	54.81	72.95	52.63
Costa Rica	16.99	20.10	.	38.05	21.06
Mexico	16.61	.	16.19	25.04	8.43
Women					
Argentina	11.05	13.02	22.47	41.28	30.23
Brazil	7.59	13	22.22	39.27	31.68
Chile	4.63	6.72	11.35	24.6	19.97
Colombia	19.66	33.18	49.17	65.6	45.94
Costa Rica	16.82	19.44	.	32.58	15.76
Mexico	15.34	.	15.16	22.69	7.35

Source: IPUMS - international census microdata samples

3. Objective: Bringing in the spatial analysis to the study of cohabitation

The main goal of this dissertation is to examine the spatial distribution of the prevalence and growth of cohabitation in Colombia to see whether it is just an intensification of its traditional form (H0: no change in geography), or it is a modern form of cohabitation stemming from a traditional model of cohabitation (H1: different geography). The analysis will be carried with the greatest geographic detail. We expect that these results will be directly linked to the emerging debate about the kind of cohabitation is growing in the region. The specific objectives are:

- To document the prevalence and growth of non-marital cohabitation in Colombia at the lowest level of geography available (preferably at municipality scale) and to identify internal differences.
- To determine the social and structural factors that are correlated to the different levels of cohabitation (e.g. educational attainment, ethnicity, rural/urban status, immigration, age).

4. Data and methods

The analysis will mainly rely on harmonized census micro-data from the IPUMS international website. We will make intense use of the census micro-data in a comparative perspective. First, we'll work on the description of the patterns. Second, we'll try to explain internal differences using several indicators (ex. % indigenous, urbanization, educational attainment, internal migration, etc.). In order to respect the interdependence of macro and micro dimensions of this project, we propose to use multilevel analysis which allows us to work at multiple levels of analysis.

A study is based on the use of a broad geographical and temporal scale, with the inclusion of complex data. As this study has a clear comparative scope, we expect to complete various tasks that will be

methodologically challenging, including the merge of a dataset, building models that incorporate different levels of data, periods of time and regions, as well as the cartographic representation of results.

5. Preliminary research results

Currently, our research is still in progress, although some preliminary findings can be advanced at this point. In general, the prevalence of cohabitation is progressive over time, independently of educational level, age or sex. However, this type of union form is decreasing with age (Table 2). Moreover, there is some evidence that leads us to suspect that cohabitation is more rooted in non-mixed groups (Blacks and native Indians), (see Table 3).

Table2. Cohabitation in Colombia within years of schooling by sex, age and census round.

		1973	1985	1993	2005			1973	1985	1993	2005
Men						Women					
20-24	0	45,0	64,3	79,8	88,4	0	46,5	63,6	80,0	85,4	
	1 - 5	27,9	53,7	73,0	89,4	1 - 5	24,2	46,3	68,0	84,1	
	6 - 9	16,7	47,6	68,8	89,0	6 - 9	9,3	38,6	61,8	87,2	
	10 - 11	11,6	37,4	56,3	82,6	10 - 11	3,8	22,7	45,2	76,9	
	12 +	5,3	19,0	42,7	71,6	12 +	1,8	9,5	29,5	58,0	
	Total	26,7	49,6	68,1	85,6	Total	23,9	40,7	60,9	79,3	
25-29	0	37,0	56,8	73,7	84,5	0	40,5	61,1	72,3	83,5	
	1 - 5	21,2	42,0	62,3	79,6	1 - 5	18,8	39,8	58,3	74,8	
	6 - 9	13,5	35,0	55,7	79,8	6 - 9	6,4	29,6	49,9	75,3	
	10 - 11	6,5	25,3	43,2	69,3	10 - 11	2,3	17,1	35,3	62,7	
	12 +	3,0	11,8	29,3	51,3	12 +	1,4	7,0	21,7	43,9	
	Total	20,1	36,2	54,6	72,9	Total	19,4	33,0	48,8	65,6	
30-34	0	33,9	51,7	67,3	80,3	0	36,7	54,5	66,6	79,9	
	1 - 5	18,5	35,4	54,1	70,9	1 - 5	15,9	33,1	50,4	66,9	
	6 - 9	10,3	27,6	46,7	69,7	6 - 9	5,1	22,3	42,9	64,5	
	10 - 11	5,8	20,6	36,8	56,3	10 - 11	2,4	12,7	29,6	52,0	
	12 +	2,5	9,3	22,6	37,4	12 +	1,7	6,3	18,0	32,9	
	Total	18,3	30,3	45,8	62,0	Total	17,9	28,2	42,0	56,6	
35-39	0	32,2	47,5	61,6	75,2	0	33,3	49,1	63,3	76,3	
	1 - 5	15,7	30,5	45,9	62,2	1 - 5	14,3	27,4	43,9	58,3	
	6 - 9	8,8	23,8	41,4	59,5	6 - 9	4,4	17,0	34,9	55,4	
	10 - 11	5,8	17,3	32,2	45,9	10 - 11	1,5	8,6	25,3	40,7	
	12 +	1,7	7,1	20,4	29,8	12 +	0,3	5,2	15,8	27,7	
	Total	17,3	27,3	40,3	53,4	Total	17,4	25,3	37,8	49,2	

Source: IPUMS-International census microdata samples.

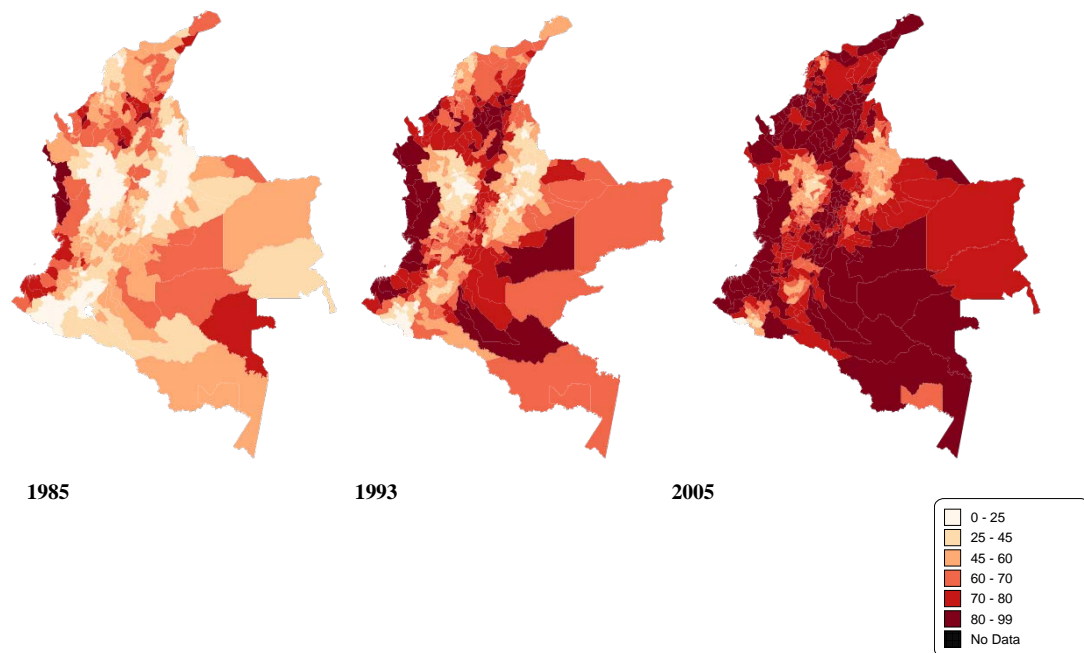
Tabla3. Cohabitation in Colombia according to ethnicity.

Men	1993		2005			
	Indig/Black	No	Indig/Black	No	Indigenous	Black
20 - 24	77,1	67,8	88,9	84,9	84,6	90,3
25 - 29	77,7	54,2	81,1	71,5	74,7	83,1
30 - 34	75,2	45,4	72,9	60,3	69,1	74,0
35 - 39	69,9	39,9	66,7	51,5	63,0	67,7
Total	75,0	49,3	75,8	63,5	71,7	77,0
Women						
20 - 24	81,8	60,6	85,4	78,2	80,7	86,9
25 - 29	77,5	48,4	77,0	63,7	73,8	77,9
30 - 34	72,7	41,7	69,7	54,7	67,5	70,3
35 - 39	68,6	37,6	63,7	47,2	59,3	65,0
Total	75,4	46,6	73,6	59,5	70,4	74,6

Source: IPUMS-International census microdata samples.

The following three maps show the explosion of cohabitation that has been taking place during the last three decades (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Cohabitation rates in Colombia by municipality, 1985-2005 (women 20-29 years).



Source: IPUMS-International census micro-data samples

6. References

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