

# **DEMOGRAPHIC DESTINIES**

## **Interviews with Presidents of the Population Association of America**

### **Interview with Linda Waite PAA President in 1995**



This series of interviews with Past PAA Presidents was initiated by Anders Lunde  
(PAA Historian, 1973 to 1982)

And continued by Jean van der Tak (PAA Historian, 1982 to 1994)

And then by John R. Weeks (PAA Historian, 1994 to present)

With the collaboration of the following members of the PAA History Committee:  
David Heer (2004 to 2007), Paul Demeny (2004 to 2012), Dennis Hodgson (2004 to  
present), Deborah McFarlane (2004 to 2018), Karen Hardee (2010 to present), Emily  
Merchant (2016 to present), and Win Brown (2018 to present)

## LINDA WAITE

PAA President in 1995 (No. 58). Interview with John Weeks and Dennis Hodgson at the San Diego Bayfront Hilton Hotel, San Diego, California, May 2, 2015.

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:** Dr. Linda Waite is the Lucy Flower Professor of Urban Sociology at the University of Chicago. [In 2020 she was named the George Hebert Mead Distinguished Professor at the University of Chicago.] She is also a Senior Fellow of the NORC, a member of the Institute for Mind and Biology at the University of Chicago, Chair of the Committee on Demographic Training, and Co-Director of the MD/PhD Program in Medicine, the Social Sciences and Aging at the Pritzker School of Medicine, University of Chicago. From 1994-2014 she was Director of the Center on Aging at NORC/University of Chicago, [and 2018-2019 she was Chair of the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago]. She received her B.A. from Michigan State University in 1969, her M.A. in Sociology from the University of Michigan in 1970, her Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Michigan in 1976. She taught at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign from 1976 to 1980, at which time she accepted a position at the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, CA, where she became Director of the RAND Population Research Center. In 1991 she moved to the University of Chicago, where she has been since.

Her work on the demography of the family, and more recently on aging, has brought her a great deal of international acclaim. She has published articles in all of the major demographic and social science journals, and has a long list of highly influential books to her credit, including the following: Waite, Linda J. and Thomas Plewes (Editors). 2013. *Perspectives on the Future of the Sociology of Aging*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press; Waite, Linda J. (Editor). 2005. *Aging, Health, and Public Policy: Demographic and Economic Perspectives*. Supplement to Population and Development Review vol. 30. New York: Population Council; Schneider, Barbara and Linda J. Waite (Editors). 2005. *Being Together, Working Apart: Dual-Career Families and the Work-Life Balance*. New York: Cambridge University Press; Waite, Linda J. and Maggie Gallagher. 2000. *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*. Doubleday; Waite, Linda J., Christine Bachrach, Michelle Hindin, Elizabeth Thomson and Arland Thornton, (Editors). 2000. *Ties that Bind: Perspectives on Marriage and Cohabitation*. Aldine de Gruyter; Goldscheider, Frances K., and Linda J. Waite. 1991. *New Families, No Families? The Transformation of the American Home*, University of California Press.

**HODGSON:** This is May 2nd, 2015. We're at the PAA meeting and we're going to do an interview with Linda Waite, who is the past PAA president from 1995. Currently she's the Lucy Flower Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago. We've got lots of other things you're currently doing. We've got director for the Center of Aging at NORC [National Opinion Research Center], Chicago. We have senior fellow at NORC. We've got chair of the Committee on Demographic Training at Chicago, Co-director of the Program in Medicine, the Social Sciences, and Aging, School of Medicine, University of Chicago. We could spend half the interview just telling people what you're doing right now. But our task is to come up with an interview in which basically—we have presidential interviews all the way back to 1947 to the present. And we found that it's interesting to ask you to go through a little bit of an intellectual biography, in terms of how you got into the study of population and demography, and a little bit about your experience when you were PAA president. And really, in your case, I think it would be a wonderful insight, in terms of what you think of the changes you've seen happen to the field of demography and where you think we're headed. So that's our game plan for an hour.

**WAITE:** Okay. Given how terrible demographers are at prediction....

**HODGSON:** Well, who knows? You might be different on that one.

**WAITE:** You might be better than Richard Easterlin.

**HODGSON:** So can we go back in time? Let's see, [you were] an undergrad at Michigan State. You graduated in 1969. Can you tell us, did you get interested in population back then, in terms of what was your major?

**WAITE:** No. When I went to college, I thought that I would maybe teach. I thought I would maybe teach home economics. I was very interested in clothing construction and clothing design. And somewhere in there I realized that it wasn't the kind of intellectual challenge I wanted. And I took a sociology course just as an elective, and I loved it. So I took another one, and loved it. By that point I was finishing college in three and a half years, and I had time to take enough courses for a major, but I didn't have enough time to take what they called the cognates—the anthropology and the psychology that you needed—so I actually graduated with a degree in, what was it called, human ecology or something like that.

Then I applied immediately to graduate school, because I had terrific grades and great test scores, but not the right background. And I think it was just lucky for me that the University of Michigan in that cohort over-admitted. There were fifty people in my entering graduate school class.

**HODGSON:** Wow.

**WAITE:** And people fell by the wayside pretty quickly. There were seventeen women, and two of us finished.

**HODGSON:** Finished in terms of getting the Ph.D.?

**WAITE:** Right. And at that point I was committed to sociology. But I had never even heard of demography.

**HODGSON:** Even in grad school?

**WAITE:** No. When I started grad school, I was committed to sociology. But I didn't actually know so much about it. And maybe my second year I enrolled in Ron Freedman's population class, and then the light bulb turned on, and I fell in love.

**HODGSON:** He was doing all the Taiwanese fertility stuff?

**WAITE:** IUD retention in Taiwan, which actually did not light me up. [laughter]

**HODGSON:** That didn't light you up?

**WAITE:** But the approach did. The topic did. It turned out I loved the data, the quantification, being able to have something to compare that you could actually, I don't know, sink your teeth into, get your arms around.

**HODGSON:** And you came up with a dissertation topic that was demographic?

**WAITE:** I did. In fact, Ron Freedman was my chair, because he'd done a Detroit-area study project on women's work. So though he wasn't working on it, he had a data set. And he agreed to chair the dissertation, just out of the goodness of his heart, though he wasn't interested and wasn't working on it and really couldn't give me much direction.

**HODGSON:** But he gave you the data?

**WAITE:** He gave me the data. And there was a wonderful professor in economics, Malcolm Cohen, who had written a monograph on women's employment. And he was unfailingly supportive and really extremely helpful.

**HODGSON:** I did notice that you got your undergraduate degree in '69. And then you got a master's degree one year later. And then I think you spent two years at the Census Bureau.

**WAITE:** I did.

**HODGSON:** And that was '74 to '76. Were you doing women's labor force in the Census Bureau?

**WAITE:** Sort of. I was in the education and social stratification branch, so that did include some of that. And I got to work on some things that were fun. But what was nice is they let me do some of my own work with some of the data sets the Census Bureau was collecting. So, the Census Bureau did the data collection on all the NLS [National Longitudinal Surveys]: young men, young women, older men, older women. Since it was a Census Bureau data set, I actually got my first grant while I was a Census Bureau employee, from NICHD [National Institute of Child Health and Human Development].

**HODGSON:** And this was before your Ph.D.?

**WAITE:** Well, I finished my Ph.D. while I was at the Census Bureau. That was actually pretty common at that time. People really finished graduate school in four years. Bob Hauser, for example, went to Brown and finished his dissertation. Jim Sweet and Larry Bumpass went to—

**HODGSON:** Some of us did take longer.

**WAITE:** Yeah. I found that what I had to do is, I had to go part-time. So I got permission at the Census Bureau to go part-time. And I took every Tuesday and every Thursday—

**HODGSON:** And you flew back?

**WAITE:** And I worked on my dissertation.

**HODGSON:** But you physically left Michigan? And you were living in DC?

**WAITE:** Actually, in Baltimore.

**HODGSON:** Wow.

**WAITE:** And what I found is, if the house was quiet [and] I had nothing to do—I knew I was investing at that point fifty dollars net a day in this effort. I basically didn't move the whole day and in six months I got it done.

**HODGSON:** Wow. That's impressive. And then your first academic job was University the Illinois.

**WAITE:** University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana.

**HODGSON:** And you didn't stay there very long. But can you say anything about that?

**WAITE:** Four years. It was a very good place. I have very nice memories. My colleagues were terrific. They were very supportive.

**HODGSON:** Did you teach population or demography?

**WAITE:** I did. I taught population and the family and wrote a couple of proposals. I already had, I guess, a couple of publications. But I wrote a few things from my dissertation. One an AJS [*American Journal of Sociology*] piece on women's employment from the ideas from my dissertation. And then a demography piece that was completely different. And a couple of other things.

**HODGSON:** I did interrupt you when you were going to tell us about colleagues.

**WAITE:** They were wonderful. Ken Land.

**HODGSON:** Oh, Ken was there at the time?

**WAITE:** Ken was there at the time. Joan and Bill Huber. Rita Simon.

**HODGSON:** So there were a lot of—

**WAITE:** A lot of excellent people.

**HODGSON:** Did you overlap with Bob Schoen?

**WAITE:** Oh, yeah. We're still friends. I see him at the meetings. Absolutely. And he was a wonderful colleague. Harvey Choldin. And everybody was very supportive. So if I wanted to write a proposal they didn't know so much about it, because, you know, if you're not at a pop center, then you have to rely on the university. And they don't tend to know, especially if you know the social sciences as much as about NIH or NSF as grantors. So especially if you're a junior person, it's hard. You don't have anybody to ask, because there's nobody else who is doing that sort of thing.

**HODGSON:** And then we have, I think, eleven years at Rand?

**WAITE:** Eleven years at Rand.

**HODGSON:** And at this stage, the focus seems to be women and work.

**WAITE:** Right. Except that I got there in 1980. Peter Morrison basically recruited me. I don't know how he decided I was the one he wanted, but he did. And I was excited at the prospect of having colleagues, a lot of colleagues, who were doing the same kind of work. And when I went in the summer of 1980, Fran Goldscheider, who was then Fran Kobrin, arrived at the same time for a sabbatical with her teenage daughter, the same exact time. And we became friends immediately. While she was there for that year, we wrote a proposal on living arrangements, basically, changes in living arrangements. And it was funded. So then we had a three-year project that we did together that resulted in the book *New Families, No Families?*, an ASR [*American Sociological Review*], an AJS, [and] two *Journal of Marriage and the Family* [articles].

**HODGSON:** Lots of Rand publications I'm looking at.

**WAITE:** And a lot of Rand publications. So it was very, very productive. We're still very close friends. It really transformed my career. And then I worked on some projects that were already ongoing. That's the one publication I have on Malaysia.

**HODGSON:** That's true. I was going to ask about that. So that was in the pipeline?

**WAITE:** That was already a funded project, ongoing.

**HODGSON:** In the context of those eleven years at Rand, it sounds like you could sort of direct the areas of your research by getting grants.

**WAITE:** That's right.

**HODGSON:** And so you're making decisions about what you want to study.

**WAITE:** That's right.

**HODGSON:** And is there a switch more towards the family? Or at least looking at work and family?

**WAITE:** I was always looking at work and family. My dissertation was on—I don't know what it was called, something like working wives in the family life cycle. The big question then—and I got just by accident in at the beginning of it—was why do some women make the choice to work, and under the same circumstances more or less, other women don't? Because it was pretty clear that it was a time of transition. Women were moving into the work force, but everybody didn't. And I was really interested in, always have been, why do some people make some choices and other people make—basically why doesn't everybody do what I see so clearly as the right thing to do? Which is of course ridiculous.  
[laughter]

**HODGSON:** And do you have an elevator speech that explains that?

**WAITE:** Well, you can't do it. It's not doable, because people actually see things differently. It's not just that they're differentially situated, which they always are. But they see things differently. They want different things. They have different capacities. They come with different backgrounds. They have different vulnerabilities.

**HODGSON:** Now, if I remember at the time, since I think myself, I'm just having our first kid, so it's the end of the '70s, early '80s, and the controversial issues about women—my wife is a professor, and it was, what to do with small children and working wives? That seemed to be, at the time anyway, a more debatable point than perhaps it is today.

**WAITE:** But in addition, most universities had nepotism laws. So when I was a graduate student, Dudley Duncan worked at Michigan. He was a full professor. And Beverly didn't have an academic appointment, because she couldn't. And then those barriers fell and the department made her a full professor. So there were these structural impediments to women's equal careers.

**HODGSON:** That was a little bit of a legacy, but then things began to change.

**WAITE:** Absolutely. Very fast.

**HODGSON:** What I find in the context, looking at what you've done research-wise, is that you're sort of following along with all these relatively controversial things at the time, and making them the central point of your analysis. Looking at kids and then looking at teenagers.

**WAITE:** Looking at marriage versus cohabitation, looking at divorce, looking at the consequences of marriage for individuals.

**HODGSON:** So now, what made you leave Rand and go back to academics? I think we're up to '91 now.

**WAITE:** Right. So, my husband at the time was unhappy where he was, and he wanted to move. I didn't actually want to move.

**HODGSON:** Oh, okay. So, you would be staying there at Rand?

**WAITE:** I was very happy. It was great for me. The move was great for me because at Rand, you do have to have money to do whatever you want to do. So if you have, and I'd become now senior, so what that meant was I could write proposals for big projects. But I was sort of too expensive to do the work.

**HODGSON:** Oh, okay. So you got the money?

**WAITE:** I got the money. And then somebody else, not entirely, but too much, somebody else got to do the work. But it was also the period at Rand was an extremely productive time for me. I was just publishing like crazy.

**HODGSON:** Sounds like you really liked that.

**WAITE:** I did. You're not pulled in as many ways as you are in academia. In academia you've got a hundred masters, especially if you run a grants program.

**HODGSON:** Right. And that wasn't something you missed, having a hundred masters.

**WAITE:** So I never taught.

**HODGSON:** I noticed that. And then obviously you would have stayed there. So what was it like then finding yourself all of the sudden in the department of sociology in Chicago?

**WAITE:** The hardest part—well, I loved my colleagues. I love Chicago as a city. I love the university. It took me about five years to put my grant portfolio back together.

**HODGSON:** So it did take time to recover, because you all of the sudden found yourself having to teach and grad students?

**WAITE:** Well, it wasn't that. But a lot of the stuff that I had was institution-specific.

**HODGSON:** Okay.

**WAITE:** There was an aging center. That stayed at Rand. There was a training grant. That stayed at Rand.

**HODGSON:** It took until 1994. Then you became director for the Center of Aging at Chicago.

**WAITE:** Right. And wrote a training grant, wrote a center grant, wrote some other grants. Got, eventually, the Sloan Working Families Center [established]. But it took a while. It takes a while.

**HODGSON:** And in terms of those, it looked like a lot of administrative positions you took in the context of—were they just misusing you, or was this something that you wanted to do?

**WAITE:** No, no, no. And if you'll notice, it's all research administration. I have never been department chair.

**HODGSON:** Okay. What's the Institute of Mind and Biology?

**WAITE:** The University of Chicago has departments and then it has centers and institutes. And the Institute for Mind and Biology was established when my good friend and close colleague, Martha McClintock, had an offer elsewhere. And she really works at the intersection of biology and psychology. So the university established this institute where she could do her work. It's now many people working—

**HODGSON:** And so you inherited it?

**WAITE:** Not me. They just asked me to be a member.

**HODGSON:** So it wasn't a move to biosocial research on your part?

**WAITE:** No. I was just asked if I would.

**HODGSON:** And then you became chair of their committee on demographic training?

**WAITE:** Right. But that's been around in Chicago for a long time. So when I wrote the training grant in the demography and economics of aging, that with the training grant from NICHD, which we then lost and still haven't recovered, though I hope we will, were the committee and demographic training. So the aging center, the pop center, and the two training grants were like a coherent whole.

**HODGSON:** That sounds like a lot of work.

**WAITE:** It's not bad, actually.

**HODGSON:** Okay.

**WAITE:** It's not bad.

**HODGSON:** How about a little bit more on the Sloan Working Families Center?

**WAITE:** Yeah. So the Sloan Foundation was very interested in middle-class working families and the challenges they face. So they decided to fund a series of centers. And they came to Barbara Schneider, who was working at NORC at the time, and told her to come to me. So she had done a lot of work on education with Jim Coleman, written a number of books, and is a wonderful scholar and a good friend. And so she came to me and said, "They want the family part. They know you do work [in this area]. Are you interested in this?" And I said, "Absolutely." And we wrote a proposal to the Sloan Foundation, which they funded. And we did a big data collection effort where we interviewed, using a

lot of modalities, 500 working families around the country. We picked cities and interviewed the husband, the wife, the teenager, and in some other families, got information on a kindergartener or a first grader. We did experience sampling data collection, which is, basically you give people a beeper watch and a log, and when the watch beeps, they fill out the log. And it gets a lot of emotional [data]: how stressed you feel, how happy, are you in pain? What are you doing? What else are you doing? Who is there? How do you feel about it? There were about thirty questions. And then we did an in-person interview, qualitative intensive interview. And then we gave them a questionnaire. So the data collection was all done with graduate students. Data entry was all done with graduate students. All the coding, everything.

**HODGSON:** So really it's a continuation of all those topics that you had been doing, a lot on work, a lot on gender, a lot on family.

**WAITE:** Right. And it was a lot of fun.

**HODGSON:** It was? Now, all this that you've been doing up to now, it seems like you're taking a good, close, empirical look at significant, relatively contemporary trends that seem to attract attention that have perhaps a potential for problematic aspects. And if I remember, I took a look at your PAA presidential talk, which is "The Case for Marriage." And it was sort of funny because it was 1995. And all the things that were problematic, we would be so happy if today's statistics were anything like those.

**WAITE:** Right.

**HODGSON:** And so maybe a little reflection on your part about how you view that sort of connection between the research you're doing and the desire for coming up with at least policy suggestions or policy recommendations. I imagine that the nature of the research is one where you're going to be solicited about your ideas about, well, what can we do about this? So how do you feel about that advocacy/policy component to what flows from the kind of research that you were doing? And Rand always had a policy component, too.

**WAITE:** Right. Absolutely. So I think it's Daniel Patrick Moynihan who is quoted as saying, "Demographers don't care what you do as long as you let them count it." And that's sort of always been my view. But I also think there is an overlay, especially in sociology, of political correctness, that you don't talk about or don't work on certain things.

**HODGSON:** Moynihan is a good example of that, too.

**WAITE:** That's for sure. And I think as a demographer, I'm more willing to go where the facts as I can unearth them take me. Even if it's not—I mean, I don't notice that it's not politically correct until it's too late. Even the stuff on marriage. And I can tell you the history of that—

**HODGSON:** That would be great.

**WAITE:** —you, know, how I got to that. I really never had necessarily a policy or political agenda. I thought where we, as a society, were making it harder for people to get married, to stay married, through various policies, especially income-transfer policies, and that we ought to at least make it neutral, that we shouldn't be punishing people for getting married. And that is especially the case for poor people. A lot of the programs we have, the Earned Income Transfer Credit, some of the Medicaid policies on spending down assets, you know, we should at least be neutral.

So how I got to work on marriage as a social institution, Lee Lillard and I got funding for a project on the relationship between marriage, divorce, widowhood, and mortality. It was part of an aging center. And the first paper we did used the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. And we created histories, marital histories, for everybody from age fourteen that we saw in the twenty years of the PSID, and looked at changes: when people got married, when they got divorced, when they got widowed, when they became separated, separately men and women. And then we looked at the probability that they died in the future.

Lee had this wonderful event history, a very complicated model where you could use time-varying covariates. It was very complicated. And what we found—and this is the first paper we published from this—was that if you looked at the same people over twenty years, the chances that they died in the future changed very significantly when they got married. For men, the chances that they died went down immediately. And for women it took a few years, but then the chances that they died went down. If people got divorced or widowed, the chances that they died went up for the same people. It was really pretty compelling. So then Lee did these fabulous estimates. We had it all out there. And I had to figure out what's going on that's changing life chances for both men and women when they got married? There were differences between the genders. Any unmarried state was terrible for men. And actually, widowhood was not so bad for women. Being never married, separated, or divorced was pretty bad. But widowhood wasn't so bad. So then I had to dig into the literature on marriage and what? What was killing people? And it had to be health, right? Something about health.

**HODGSON:** And you were pretty convinced that there was no subtle activity factor?

**WAITE:** I knew for sure it wasn't, because they were the same people. So it was what happened to them before, and what happened to them later. So then I dug into that literature. I looked at living arrangements. I looked at finances. I looked at what we knew about physical health. Turned out there was a huge literature. I started looking at what we knew about mental health. And so I sort of got this whole picture.

**HODGSON:** What to do with it?

**WAITE:** I looked at earnings. But I didn't actually look at earnings. I looked at the literature. Turned out there was a huge literature on each of these things. But they didn't ever speak to each other. So economists all knew that men made more money when they got married. There's a huge literature. The psychologists all knew that mental health was different for people. But they didn't talk to the economists. And then there's a huge literature on health, on physical health. And physical health differences, starting with Jessie Bernard. But they didn't talk to the economists.

**HODGSON:** So nobody was bringing all this together.

**WAITE:** Everybody knew one of the dimensions, but nobody had ever put it together. And then I started doing some work on sexuality using Ed Laumann's National [Health and Social Life] Survey.

**HODGSON:** This was right there in Chicago.

**WAITE:** Right there in Chicago. And I started doing some work on sex. And then this stuff on sexuality popped up. And I did some work on domestic violence. The stuff on domestic violence popped up. I read Sara McLanahan's work on family structure and children's wellbeing. There's a huge literature on that. There was a huge literature on all of this. Some of the stuff on domestic violence and the stuff on sex was original work. The rest of it was all really—except for this work with

Lee which got me into it—surveying this other literature. But then this pattern emerged [sound mimicking explosion] that was so consistent.

**HODGSON:** Was this before 1995 when you made your PAA talk?

**WAITE:** Yeah.

**HODGSON:** Okay. Because I see do remember in that PAA presentation, “Does Marriage Matter?” you have this neat comment. You were saying that biomedical researchers, when they find something like smoking causes cancer, they go out and tell people to stop smoking. And if they find that exercise improves health, they tell you to go out and exercise. So here you are, you’ve found all this evidence, empirical evidence, about marriage having these positive impacts on the individual, and you’re convinced now that maybe we should, as demographers, sociologists, tell people at least the facts.

**WAITE:** For sure, at least the facts.

**HODGSON:** And maybe the suggestion, get married. So you’re feeling more comfortable coming up with a more specific recommendation.

**WAITE:** Well, I sort of see myself more as the biologist who can say, look, you can see these cellular changes, gene expression changes, for people who smoke. And these receptor changes, so then the body can’t fight off the mutations that lead to cancer. And then you pass it to the people who do the policy stuff, and let them figure out what they want to do. But on the behavioral [level], change is hard. NIH has a whole effort on the science of behavioral change, a whole initiative, because there’s so many things where the health issues are caused by behaviors. So how do you get people to exercise more, give up smoking, eat a healthier diet, give up those ultra-hot Doritos, turn off that Kindle an hour before they go to bed. All of that stuff.

**HODGSON:** Your big 2000 book, *The Case for Marriage*: were you thinking that you were going to make this message more broadly available, not just to an academic audience?

**WAITE:** I actually didn’t think anything about it. No. So I gave the talk. I did the demography paper. I didn’t really know what I was going to go with it. Michael Aronson at Harvard University Press called and said, “I heard your talk. I loved it. What are you going to do with it?” And I said, “I don’t know.” And he said, “Do you want to write a book?”

**HODGSON:** So somebody came and said, write that book.

**WAITE:** And I said, “Yeah. I think I do.” So I wrote him a proposal. He wrote me a contract. And then I started working on the book. And what I discovered was while I think I’m a good academic writer, I’m only an okay journalist. It’s a whole different set of skills. So [while] I could make it clear [and] I could be absolutely sure of the science, I couldn’t make it sing.

**HODGSON:** So you needed excitement.

**WAITE:** And I worked. And I went over it and over it and over it. And I still couldn’t make it sing. So somebody came to me and said, you know, because I had been presenting this stuff all over, “Love the idea.” It was the Institute for American Values. “We have a contributor who would pay for, basically make a contribution, for you to work with this journalist, if you’re interested. She’s done other work on marriage.” So I met Maggie Gallagher, and we hit it off. I read her other work, which I thought was

very respectful of the science. And basically she took my chapters. I drafted all the chapters. And we decided to add in vignettes from elsewhere. And she wrote them to be better written. And that's how that all went.

**HODGSON:** It did sell, didn't it? I think it was quite a popular book. A big splash.

**WAITE:** Yeah. We've sold about 35,000 copies. And we were on Good Morning America.

**HODGSON:** I remember that.

**WAITE:** Yeah. It was like four minutes. We did this whole media training thing. And I spoke to my mother later and she said, "It wasn't very substantive, was it, Dear?" And I said, "Mom, it was a four-minute book commercial."

**HODGSON:** And how did you like that experience of trying to get out there in more public—

**WAITE:** I was happy to do that.

**HODGSON:** Was it fun?

**WAITE:** It was fun. I wouldn't want to spend my life in it. They really want you to come and spend a couple of days. And I really like doing the work. So it started getting in the way of all of that. I mean, you do have to do it. But I like writing the stuff better than I like the talking about it. But it was fine. It was fine.

**HODGSON:** Have you had any other experiences like that, where you got out there and sort of popularized research? It's the only one I can think of to ask you about.

**WAITE:** So there have been a couple of other things where I published a paper where there was a lot of press response. It tends to last about a day. There wasn't the big splash with the book on the family, though. It's had a lot of staying power.

**HODGSON:** Did you get any negative feedback from academics?

**WAITE:** You know about this.

**HODGSON:** I've read some reviews.

**WAITE:** I think the reviews were fine. Really there were two awful experiences. And they were at different ends of the spectrum. So when we published the book, the *New York Times* contacted—Maggie and I were on a book tour—contacted us and said, "Would you write an op-ed piece?" This was when something had happened with the Clinton marriage. "Would you write an op-ed piece on why Hillary Clinton hasn't kicked the guy out?" Basically, why she might want to stay married.

**HODGSON:** That occurred to me when all this was happening. I was wondering.

**WAITE:** So we did and they published it. And it was fine. You know, while certainly marriages can have rocky periods, we see in the book that most people recover from them. And here are the benefits of a long-term marriage. And here's why she might stay with him, though he's clearly not perfect.

**HODGSON:** That was neat. There was sort of a lesson to be drawn from this.

**WAITE:** Right. Then I get a call from Bill O'Reilly's show. I never watch TV. I don't know.

**HODGSON:** You didn't know what was going to hit you?

**WAITE:** I didn't know who Bill O'Reilly was. But they said, "We'll pitch your book."

**HODGSON:** So you said sure.

**WAITE:** I said sure. And there's a Chicago studio. So there's a backdrop of the city of Chicago and a chair and a TV and a cameraman and that's it. You don't even see a thing of Bill O'Reilly.

**HODGSON:** Oh, you don't? But you hear him, though?

**WAITE:** Uchhh. I sat down. And all he did for the 10 minutes or 20 minutes I was on, because I said in the op-ed piece that—did it come up? No. The person who previewed me said, "Well, what do you think of Hillary Clinton?" And I said, "Well, I don't vote in New York." And she said, "Well, what do you think of her as a political candidate?" And I said, "I think she's a good political candidate. I think she's what you want for somebody as the senator for the State of New York, somebody who has good legal training and good political skills."

**HODGSON:** And who is smart.

**WAITE:** And smart. I think she's a good candidate. I don't know that they asked. All [O'Reilly] did was attack me on support of Hillary Clinton. That's all. He just yelled at me for ten minutes. You've seen the guy, right? I don't vote in New York.

**HODGSON:** So he didn't want to talk about the family.

**WAITE:** No. He didn't want to talk about the book. He didn't want to talk about the family. He wanted to talk about my political support. And then I got back to my office that night, and the hate mail.

**HODGSON:** From the right?

**WAITE:** From the right. "You crawled out from under a rock and you should crawl back in." It was unbelievable.

**WAITE:** Even though the message of the book is inherently conservative.

**WAITE:** Right. In fact, it was picked as the—

**HODGSON:** Family Values Book of the Year.

**WAITE:** Or something like that. One of them. Sure.

**HODGSON:** That's funny. It's not funny.

**WAITE:** It wasn't funny. Right. So that was the attack from the right. But it wasn't actually about the book. And then Arland Thornton, who is as clueless as I am—he's not more, but he's as clueless—asked if I would do an author-meets-the-critics session at ASA [American Sociological Association]. He called me up. We're good friends. And we went through the people who would be invited. It was

Suzanne Bianchi, Scott Coltrane, and Pepper Schwartz. And Scott Coltrane got up and said, “You know, there’s some things I don’t like about this book. I sort of liked the family book better. Here’s what I would have done a little differently.” You know, it was that sort of thing. Pepper Schwartz got up and started spraying vitriol. She said, “This book is a conservative tract. The findings are cherry-picked to meet a conservative agenda. It’s politically motivated. It’s terrible science.”

**HODGSON:** So you met your critics?

**WAITE:** And afterwards I got up and said, “Thank God for the University of Chicago. And thank God for tenure.” It’s my feeling that if we take taxpayers’ money to do research, we have an obligation to share the results of that research with the public. I stand behind every single one of these conclusions. And I had sent every single chapter to somebody in the field to say, What am I missing here? I sent the whole thing to Arland. I sent the whole thing to Fran Goldscheider. So I had, from Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, who does the psychology, that I wasn’t missing or misrepresenting anything on the psychology. I sent it to an economist, Shoshana Grossbard, who went through the economics. I had Ed [Laumann] look at the sexuality and I published it. I had Debra Umberson look at the physical health stuff. Somebody looked at every chapter.

**HODGSON:** You didn’t leave out all the negative things that marriage does to the individual.

**WAITE:** What I said is, have I missed anything? Have I misrepresented? Is this okay? So I felt completely comfortable with all of that. And after the session, Arland and I looked at each other and said—

**HODGSON:** What just happened?

**WAITE:** What just happened? Where did that come from? And you know what? It affected my career in sociology. So I was on the council of ASA at the time. And I’ve never been nominated for another position. And I think I was on track to be president of ASA. And that completely derailed it. Thank God it didn’t affect my funding and the University of Chicago didn’t bat an eye.

**HODGSON:** That’s impressive.

**WEEKS:** Shoshana is a colleague of mine. And it seemed to me that maybe she was the one that was telling me that more recently, within this last year, the evidence is that the liberal academic community has come to your point of view, has realized that what you were saying actually is correct. I would say maybe. But what I would say is from that, there’s been a lot of work on the nuance of this broad brush.

**WAITE:** So Debra Umberson, Kristi Williams, a number of other people have looked at things like age differences, gender differences, race differences, and marital quality, especially, marital quality differences. So it’s more that, I think, the findings have been elaborated. It holds here, it doesn’t hold there. Or it holds for a high marital quality, it doesn’t hold for poor marital quality, that sort of thing. So I don’t think anybody’s found that any of the conclusions were wrong. But they were broad-brush, and there’s more nuance than people knew at the time. It’s not that I left anything out. We just didn’t know this.

**HODGSON:** Did you have a chance to listen to Steve Ruggles’s presidential [talk]?

**WAITE:** Oh, yeah.

**HODGSON:** Now, it seems that if I were looking at what's going on in the context of the family, it looks like in [Andrew] Cherlin's new book [*Labor's Love Lost: The Rise and Fall of the Working-Class Family in America*, 2014], there's a recognition that there's an explanation, a structural explanation for the decline in the family. That is sort of a different way of approaching the topic. Why is this happening? Why are people finding it so difficult to get married or stay married? And it sort of removes that focus on the individual. Marriage might be unbelievably useful and beneficial for the individual. But we're coming up with a structural explanation for that decline of marriage that takes it out of the hands of the individual. And is there a way of bringing together—I mean, most of your evidence is individually based. And it's empirical and it's real. And you're coming up with a recommendation that says, look how useful this is for the individual. Go out and get married. And then you've got this other stream of more structural analysis—

**WAITE:** It's hard.

**HODGSON:** —that looks at what's happening in the economy. And Steve Ruggles [in his PAA Presidential Address last night] is blaming it on the one percent and income inequality and globalization. And the individual is just being hit with these forces that they really can't control.

**WAITE:** So both things are going on. But if you think about any of the other large social changes, look at what's happened to student debt and college. That's a structural change. It hits individuals. Or the change in the structure of higher education. I've been reading some of the stuff. It's pretty scary. There are huge structural changes that affect life chances of individuals. And the ones who are lucky and the ones who make good choices and the ones who have abilities that fit in with the structure are the ones who win.

**HODGSON:** Steve Ruggles was predicting that by 2050, only 20 percent of people will have jobs.

**WAITE:** Right.

**HODGSON:** Now, the 80 percent are not just unlucky. He's making an argument that this is going to just be something overwhelming.

**WAITE:** Right. The world as we know it will change. I was thinking about that. Unless we stop educating children, we're going to need teachers. Unless we stop providing medical care, we're going to need a whole, huge industry. Unless, I guess, a robot could cut people's hair. Maybe a robot could fix people's teeth. But still, things we'll have to do for the population. We have haven't done so well with having robots prepare food.

**HODGSON:** That's true.

**WAITE:** There are certain things, personal services sorts of things or, I don't know, design and planning things. It's hard to imagine. But we were talking about it last night at dinner, a group of us. And you know, how do you structure a society like that? And we were talking about jobs. What kind of jobs would people have? And so what would you pay them for? Well, you'd have to pay them to exercise. Right? You get \$10 an hour for being on the treadmill for whatever. Maybe you'd pay them to learn something, a new skill. Maybe you'd pay them to do some kind of psychological meditation, stress reduction. You'd pay them to do something social.

**HODGSON:** Pay them to be nice to each other.

**WAITE:** There you go. To develop interpersonal skills. To take care of people who need taking care of. While robots will be able to do—I heard the Japanese are working on some kind of elder-care robot.

**HODGSON:** They have a great robotic dog right now. That would be very nice to have.

**WAITE:** Is it very nice? Do you get the same decline in blood pressure and heart rate?

**HODGSON:** That I don't know. I don't have empirical evidence of that.

**WAITE:** And we do have machines for sex, right? But they don't really make do.

**HODGSON:** Do we have empirical studies on that?

**WAITE:** I don't know. Well, we certainly know that there's differences in the physiology of orgasm depending on—

**HODGSON:** How it happens.

**WAITE:** Yeah. Whether you're with another person.

**HODGSON:** We'll probably need to see if we zoom and get some of your big overall thoughts about what's happening with respect to, sort of, the field.

**WAITE:** So since I've been a demographer, which is getting to be now a long time, what's happened—and I think it's wonderful—is that now demographers work on a whole bunch more topics than we used to.

**HODGSON:** Fertility, mortality, and migration?

**WAITE:** Fertility, mortality, and migration. And when did labor force participation come in, for example? When did health? What happens to you in between? What about living arrangements? What about gender differences? What about abortion, I guess, family planning? That's happened pretty early. But so did labor force participation. What about occupational segregation? What about a lot of the international stuff, which isn't necessarily about fertility, mortality, and migration. It's women's care of infants and domestic violence and pollution. Some of the stuff that economists have brought in has really been transformative.

**HODGSON:** So you like this now?

**WAITE:** I do. Because I think we bring a certain perspective, which is a show-me-the-facts perspective. Let's get the numbers right. We have to think about them the right way and be very thoughtful about what they mean. But demographers don't do big theory unless it's big theory about the numbers, right?

**HODGSON:** When it comes to the numbers though, when I was a grad student in demography, we had this definition of demographic data, census and vital statistics, demographic techniques which were peculiar, different. And to a large extent, many countries now have given up census. And basically the data source is the same now as economists use.

**WAITE:** Sure.

**HODGSON:** And you're responsible for all that wonderful panel studies data and survey data. And it becomes more generic. So if you had a Ph.D. in economics, you could easily produce a study that would fit very nicely in PAA.

**WAITE:** Sure. Absolutely.

**HODGSON:** And you might not actually think of yourself as a demographer. You could think of yourself—and is that at all a worry?

**WAITE:** No.

**HODGSON:** That's not a worry?

**WAITE:** No. If we're doing things the right way that have an appeal, then we want more scholars to do things in a way that meets our standards.

**HODGSON:** So there isn't a worry about how we identify? Do we identify ourselves as demographers, or do we identify ourselves more thematically, like I'm studying inequality. And my community is economists and sociologists and maybe a demographer. But my community is a thematic community as opposed to a disciplinary community.

**WAITE:** If you're studying inequality by talking to poor people. I mean, you still might have a demographic perspective, but it's less likely to appear at PAA.

**HODGSON:** So definitely the change you've noticed is obvious and big and significant.

**WAITE:** Yeah. I mean, for heaven's sake, I'm working on sex. That's not fertility, mortality, and migration. Because now in the United States most—

**HODGSON:** It's less and less connected with fertility, that's for sure.

**WAITE:** Right.

**HODGSON:** How about the future for the field? I think you're on a committee.

**WAITE:** Right. So I think the big thing is that we're going to have different kinds of data, certainly in the short run.

**HODGSON:** So not just survey and panel study data?

**WAITE:** Google and Facebook and Yahoo are hiring our students, because you can learn—and people are using Google and Facebook data to understand demographic [information], to understand disease transmission, to understand mood and geographical differences in mood, to understand social networks. To understand things we can't even think about. So that's going to be a huge change. The other thing is, as a survey researcher, standard survey research of the kind we've been doing, where you go and visit somebody, is unbelievably expensive. And more than that, people are more resistant to answering those questions on the phone. For heaven's sake, United Airlines gives me a survey every time I fly with three questions, right? So there are surveys like crazy. Every time I make a purchase on the web, somebody gives me a survey on how I liked the website. Surveys are all over. How do we distinguish ourselves as a scientific as opposed to a marketing survey? How do we fit in knowledge networks and these internet panels where the response rate is like 5 percent? For a demographer, that's

laughable. But how do we make sense of that? How do we evaluate that stuff as science, as access to knowledge of human behavior? What do we do with administrative records? What about all those photos that all those security cameras are taking? How do we put that together to map people's movements around social spaces and social interactions and to what extent can we? There are huge new opportunities. There are probably new opportunities about how we think about things, too, that will appear when we have different perspectives.

**HODGSON:** All this, though, is an emphasis on sources of data and kinds of analysis. Now, if you think in the context of is there a population component to it? In some ways, there's a methodological component to this.

**WAITE:** For heaven's sake, you can do Google stuff on the population of U.S.—

**HODGSON:** Yes, you can. When I got in demography, it was in a context in which there was a worry about fertility planning.

**WAITE:** Right.

**HODGSON:** And there you are at Michigan. And you've got all the money for those population centers.

**WAITE:** Now it's aging.

**HODGSON:** Now it's aging.

**WAITE:** And how we're going to pay for all this.

**HODGSON:** In the context of that, there's a demographic component to aging. There's no doubt about that.

**WAITE:** Are you kidding?

**HODGSON:** Is there a potential population problem that will be a 21<sup>st</sup>-century one, beyond aging?

**WAITE:** Yeah. If I had to say, it's population and what I'd call world health, by which I mean the health of the world, this environment we live in.

**HODGSON:** So we're talking climate change.

**WAITE:** Climate change. There was something in the *New York Times* about evolutionary—something like astrophysics, theoretical physics. This group was doing simulations of energy use and systems collapse, and basically had reached the conclusion that any energy-producing society was bound to collapse. And the fact that we don't see life on a lot of other worlds is probably because there was and the systems collapsed. And they pointed to Mars and Venus and how energy use, energy extraction and energy use, upsets the ecological world, ecological bounds.

**HODGSON:** It limits the growth.

**WAITE:** But it's bigger than that. Just even the extra energy put into the system causes the system to basically get out of whack, and pretty fast. And then basically it all incinerates.

**HODGSON:** [pow] That's a great ending.

**WAITE:** So that's the stuff I worry about.

**HODGSON:** Well, that's good.

**WAITE:** You know, the big, big—what are human populations with the social structures, the institutions, what are our limits? There was also something on, again, in the *New York Times* science section on how human beings consistently destroy resources and species. Talked about the carrier pigeons and when the last—in Michigan this was—the last colony of 100,000 carrier pigeons were wiped out by a group of guys in the 1800s. [Talked about how] we can go back to the large mammals that were wiped out by humans when they came across the Bering Straits and down. In a thousand years they wiped out all the horses that used to be native to the U.S., the mammoths, the bison, the mountain sheep, giant sloths. They just wiped out everything. The only reason we have horses here is that somebody in Europe didn't wipe them out. So what kind of species are we? And what's the population of the world going to do to manage this resource?

**HODGSON:** That sounds 21st century. Now, do you have any questions?

**WAITE:** I think that's an excellent place to end it.

**WEEKS:** Is there something we forgot to ask you that you would like to be included?

[Waite shakes her head in the negative] Well, this was actually quite a lot of fun.

**WAITE:** It was.

**HODGSON:** Thank you so much for coming.

**WAITE:** Sure. My pleasure.

*Interview recorded and transcribed by Nicholas P. Steckel, a Shorthand Reporter and notary public working for Esquire Solutions.*

*Audited and edited by Revan Schendler, April 2016*

*Reviewed and approved by Linda Waite, April 2016*

## Does Marriage Matter?\*

Linda J. Waite

University of Chicago

The last several years have witnessed an active—sometimes acrimonious—debate, occasionally joined by demographers, over the state of the family. Some, like David Popenoe (1993), decry what they see as a dangerous erosion of the family as an institution, with dire consequences for society. Others, like Judith Stacey (1993), see the traditional family, balanced on the monogamous couple, as fundamentally incompatible with women's well-being. Although these two positions seem extreme, both have numerous adherents and are held by serious scholars.

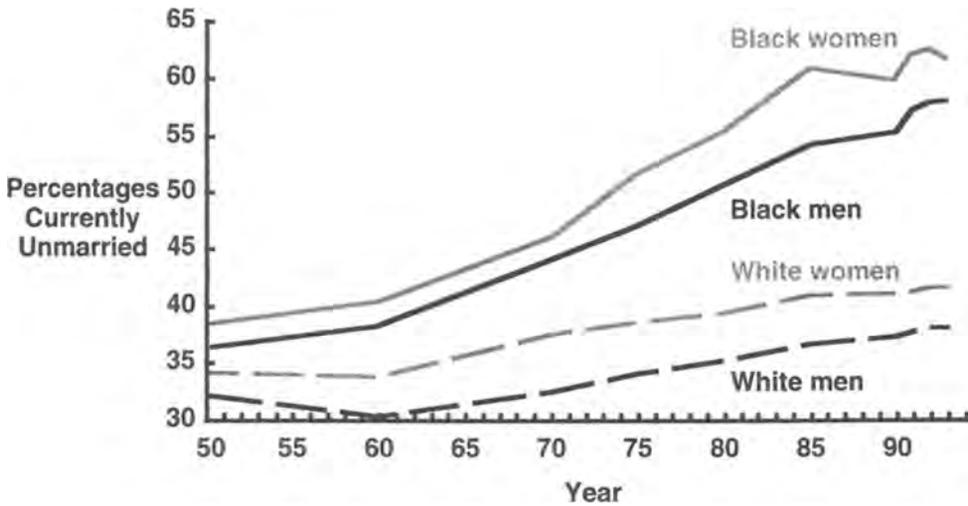
When politicians point to the high social costs and taxpayer burden imposed by disintegrating "family values," they overlook the fact that individuals do not simply make the decisions that lead to unwed parenthood, marriage, or divorce on the basis of what is good for society. They weigh the costs and benefits of each of these choices to themselves—and sometimes their children. But how much do individuals *know* about these costs and benefits? I think that we as demographers have something to contribute here. As individual researchers we investigate the relationship between marriage and longevity, wealth, earnings, or children's achievements, but we rarely try to pull all this evidence together. I would like to argue that we have an opportunity and an obligation to do that, and to tell people what their decisions about marriage and family potentially mean for them as individuals. That is my objective here.

### Trends in Marriage and Cohabitation

Let us review, first, trends in marriage over the last four decades. Figure 1 shows the proportions of the adult population age 15 and over currently not married for the period 1950 through 1993, taken from decennial censuses and March Current Population Surveys. Although black men and women had higher proportions unmarried in 1950 than did white men and women, these differences were modest. Since that time, marriage patterns have diverged dramatically for the races. Figure 1 shows that the proportion of the population age 15 and older which is currently "unmarried" has increased for both whites and blacks, but with especially striking rises for blacks, so that in 1993, 61% of black women and 58% of black men were not married, compared with 38% of white men and 41% of white women. Insofar as marriage "matters," black men and women are much less likely than whites to share in the benefits, and much less likely today than a generation ago.

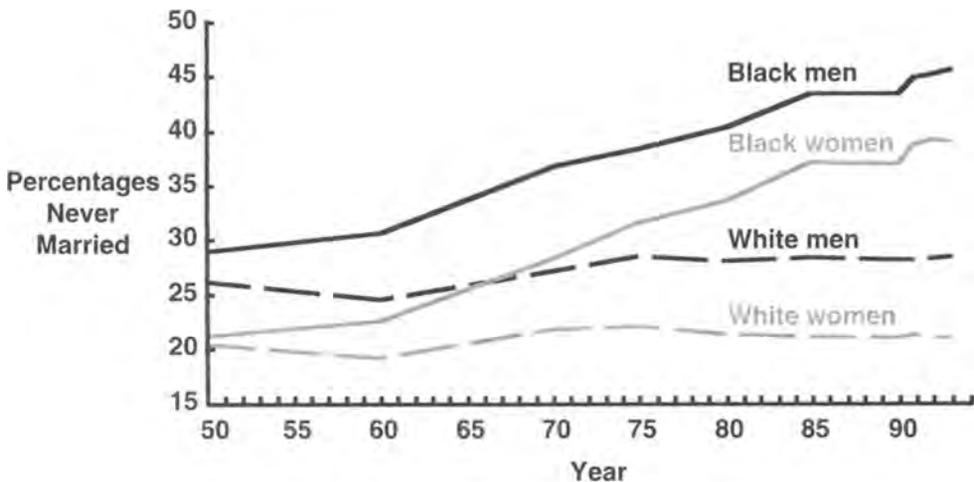
Figure 2 depicts the proportions of men and women age 15 and older who have never married for the period from 1950 to 1993. This figure shows that for blacks, much of the

\* I would like to acknowledge the generous assistance of Kermit Daniel, Kara Joyner, Lee Lillard, Stan Panis, Joyce Peterson, Becky Sandefur, and James Smith. Thanks to Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur and to Debra Umberson for permission to reproduce material from published papers.



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1953, 1961, 1971, 1975, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994)  
 Figure 1. Percentages of the Population Age 15 and Older Not Currently Married, by Race and Sex

increase in current nonmarriage shown in Figure 1 occurred because of a dramatic rise in the proportion that has *never* married. In 1993, 46% of all adult black men and 39% of all black women had never married. For whites, we see very modest increases in the proportion never married; increases in marital disruption and declines in remarriage account for the rise in the proportion currently unmarried that we saw in Figure 1 for this group. Taken together, Figures 1 and 2 suggest that black men and women have led the retreat from marriage, becoming much more likely to avoid any contact whatever with the institution, whereas

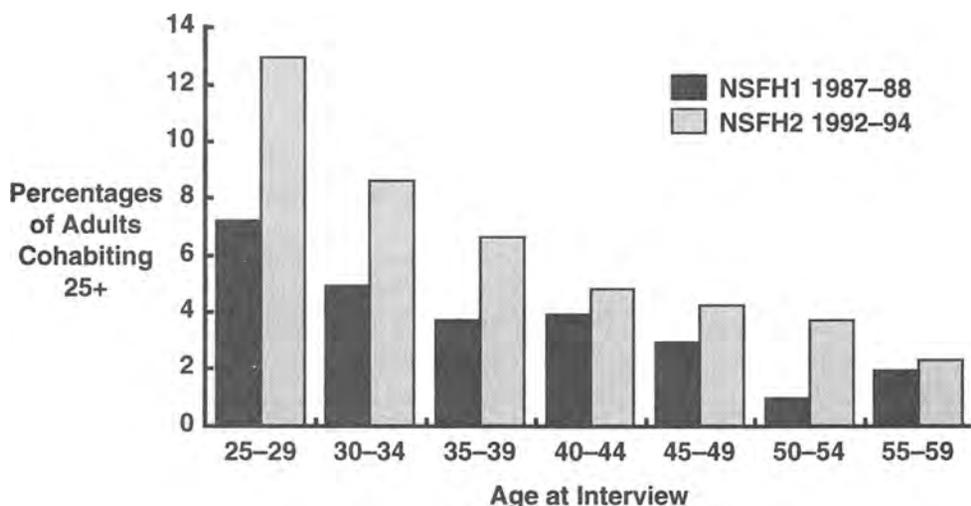


SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1953, 1961, 1971, 1975, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994)  
 Figure 2. Percentages of the Population of the Population Age 15 and Older Never Married, by Race and Sex

whites have continued to enter marriage but have left it in larger numbers than in the past and have become more hesitant to remarry after a separation or divorce (Smock 1990).

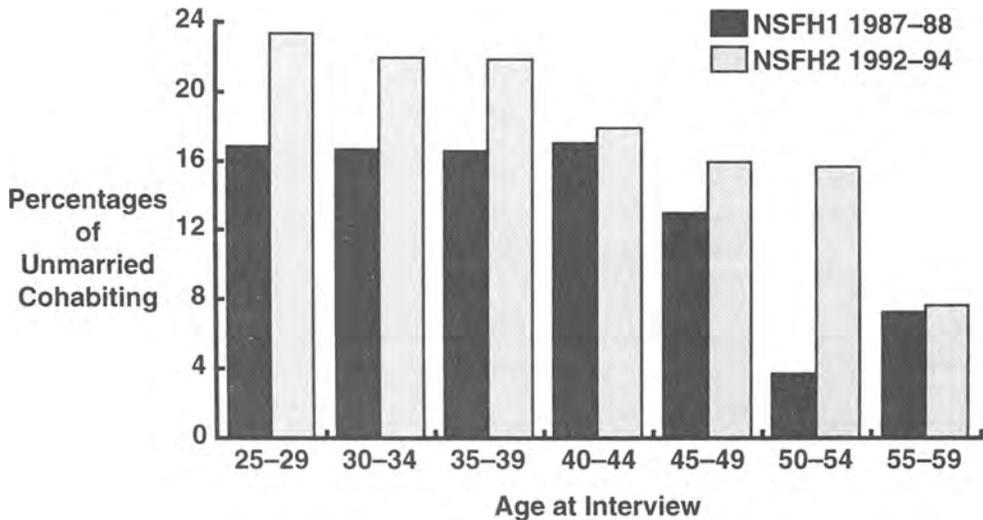
## Cohabitation

Any discussion of marriage in American society today must address the issue of cohabitation. Figure 3 shows the percentages of adults who are currently cohabiting, as reported in the National Survey of Families and Households interviews conducted in 1987–1988 and 1992–1994. The NSFH is a probability sample of 13,017 individuals representing the noninstitutional U.S. population age 19 and over and including an oversampling of minorities. The second wave of the NSFH, conducted in 1992–1994, includes interviews with surviving members of the original sample, their current spouse or partner, selected children, previous spouse or partner, and parents (see Bumpass 1994). Although the interviews are only five years apart, we see substantial rises in cohabitation even in this relatively short period. In the late 1980s, about 7% of those 25 to 29 years old were living with someone in a “marriage-like” relationship. By the early 1990s this figure had risen to about 13%. We see similar increases, although at lower levels, for older individuals. Figure 3, however, also shows that the proportion of adults who *currently* live with someone is modest—never more than 13%, and quite low at older ages. Figure 4 shows the percentage currently living with someone among those eligible to do so—the unmarried. This figure shows that in the prime ages of union formation—ages 25 to 34—between 20 and 24% of unmarried adults are cohabiting. A good deal of recent research finds that cohabitations tend to be relatively short-lived; couples move rather quickly into either marriage or disruption of the partnership (Bumpass and Sweet 1989; Thornton 1988; Willis and Michael 1994), although recent cohabiting couples seem to be delaying their move to marriage (Bumpass 1994). Thus, although a sizable proportion of adults have cohabited, cohabitation appears to be a relatively short-lived stage in the life cycle for most.



SOURCE: Bumpass (1994)

Figure 3. Percentages of All Adults Currently Cohabiting, National Survey of Families and Households



SOURCE: Bumpass (1994)  
 Figure 4. Percentages of Unmarried Adults Currently Cohabiting, National Survey of Families and Households

**Does It Matter?**

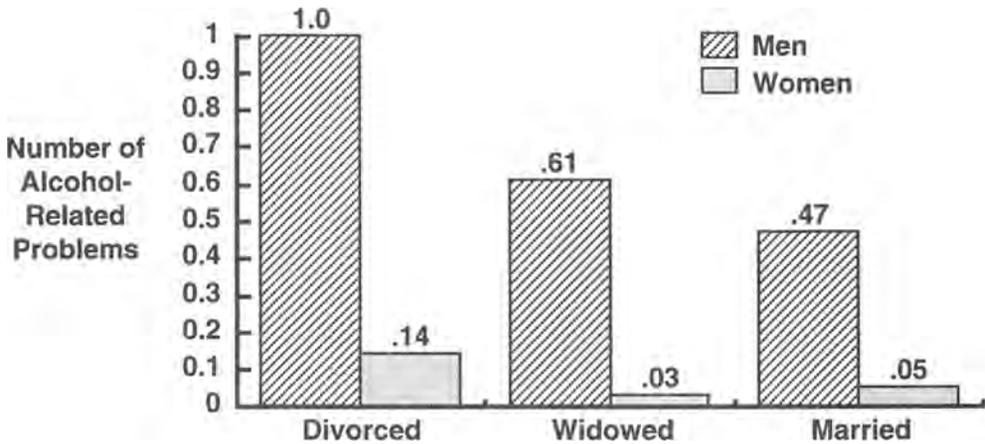
What are the implications, for individuals, of these increases in nonmarriage? If we think of marriage as an insurance policy—which it is, in some respects—does it matter if more people are uninsured or are insured with a term rather than a whole-life policy? I argue that it does matter, because marriage typically provides important and substantial benefits. In this paper I focus on benefits to individuals, although marriage also provides important benefits to society.

**BENEFITS OF MARRIAGE**

**Healthy Behaviors**

I present, first, evidence on the relationship between marital status and health-related behaviors. Figure 5 shows reports of problem drinking during the past year for divorced, widowed, and married men and women, taken from Umberson (1987). Problem drinking is measured by a scale that includes responses to the following three items on drinking during the past year: “. . . did you often end up drinking more than you planned to drink?”; “. . . did you fail to do some of the things you should have done because of drinking?”; “. . . have you thought, or has someone told you, that your drinking was probably hurting your health?” This figure shows two things: much lower rates of problem drinking for married than for unmarried men, and extremely low reports of this problem for women regardless of marital status. Recent evidence suggests that excessive drinking is a particularly male pattern of social pathology; for example, marital conflict is associated with problem drinking for men and with depression for women (Horwitz and White 1991; Robbins and Martin 1993; Waldron 1988).

Figure 6, however, shows reports of “risk-taking behavior.” Risk taking is measured on a scale composed of five items: “I sometimes get careless and have accidents around the house, driving, on the job, etc.”; “I sometimes take risks I shouldn’t such as driving too fast

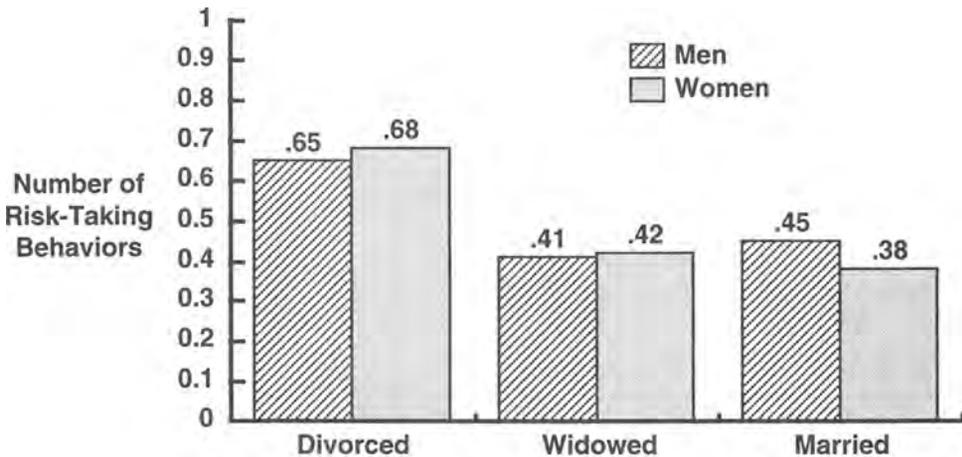


SOURCE: Umberson (1987)

Figure 5. Reports of Problem Drinking in the Past Year, by Marital Status and Sex

or other things that might endanger others”; “I’ve had serious arguments or fights at home during the past year”; “I’ve had serious arguments or fights outside the home during the past year”; “When I’m really upset or have serious problems, I get into arguments with others.” On this measure of negative health behaviors we find virtually no difference between men and women, but still see much lower levels of unhealthy behaviors among the married—and the widowed—than among the divorced. Umberson (1987) examines a series of negative health behaviors in addition to those shown here, including marijuana use, drinking and driving, substance abuse, and the failure to maintain an orderly lifestyle. She concludes,

On every dependent variable except marijuana use, the divorced and widowed are more likely than the married to engage in negative health behaviors and less likely to experience an orderly life style (1987:313).



SOURCE: Umberson (1987)

Figure 6. Reports of Risk-Taking Behavior in the Past Year, by Marital Status and Sex

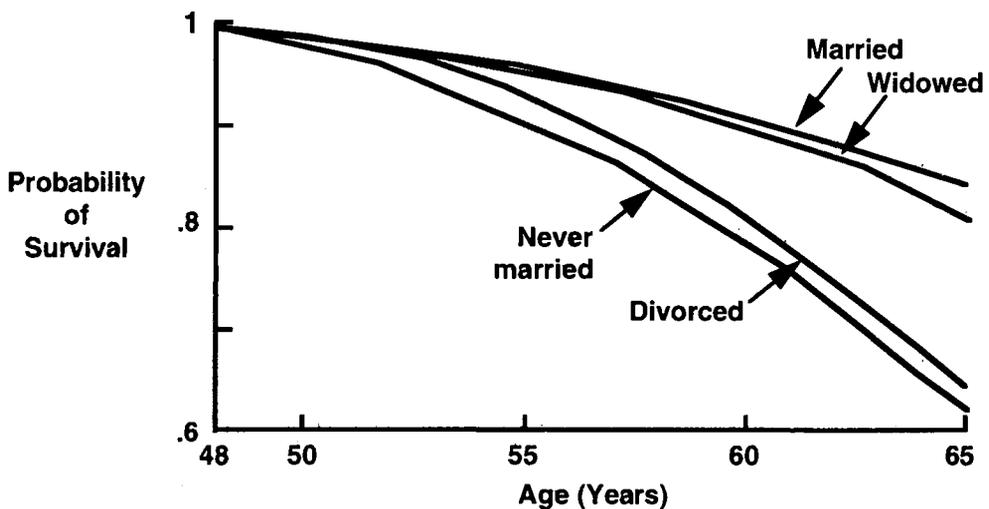
Marital disruption appears to substantially increase stress (Booth and Amato 1991; McLanahan 1983) and decrease subjective well-being (Mastekaasa 1994), and thus may result in negative health behaviors. Umberson (1992) finds that the end of marriage increases men's cigarette and alcohol consumption, lowers body weight for both men and women at the lower end of the weight distribution, and reduces hours of sleep for women. The transition from unmarried to married, however, shows few effects on health behaviors except a decline in women's alcohol consumption. Umberson concludes that some of these changes result from the stress associated with the end of marriage, but that others appear to be more permanent consequences of being unmarried.

How does marriage affect healthy behaviors? Researchers in this area argue that marriage provides individuals—especially men—with someone who monitors their health and health-related behaviors and who encourages self-regulation (Ross 1995; Umberson 1987, 1992). In addition, social support by a spouse may help individuals deal with stressful situations. Also, marriage may provide individuals with a sense of meaning in their lives and a sense of obligation to others, thus inhibiting risky behaviors and encouraging healthy ones (Gove 1973; Umberson 1987).

### MORTALITY

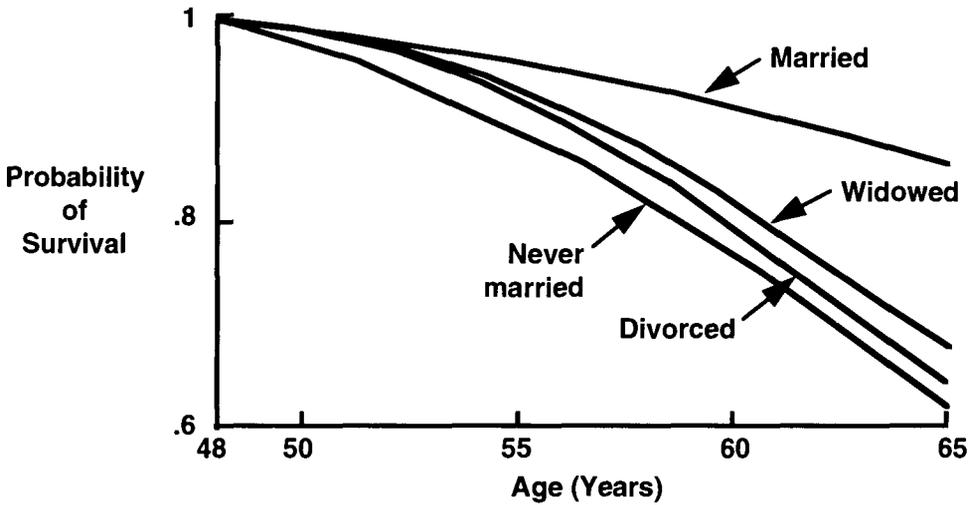
Married men and women exhibit lower levels of negative health behaviors than the unmarried. Perhaps as a result, a good deal of research evidence suggests that married men and women face lower risks of dying at any point than those who have never married or whose previous marriage has ended.

These figures show survival curves for women and for men, estimated from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. These curves show simulations of results from Lillard and Waite (1995).<sup>1</sup> Figure 7 shows the proportions of females alive at age 48 who survive to age 65, for those married, divorced, widowed, and never married for the entire period. Figure 8 presents comparable proportions for males. These figures show that once we take other



SOURCE: Lillard and Waite (1995)

Figure 7. Probability of Survival to Age 65, by Marital Status, Women



SOURCE: Lillard and Waite (1995)

Figure 8. Probability of Survival to Age 65, by Marital Status, Men

factors into account, for both men and women, the married show the highest probability of survival and, of course, the lowest chances of dying. Widowed women are much better off than divorced women or those who have never married, although they are still disadvantaged when compared with married women. But *all* men who are not currently married face higher risks of dying than married men, regardless of their marital history. Hu and Goldman (1990) report similar differentials in death rates for the unmarried across a number of countries, and Zick and Smith (1991) find that recent marital transitions increase risk of dying only for men.

How does marriage reduce the risk of dying and lengthen life? First, marriage appears to reduce risky and unhealthy behaviors, as I pointed out above. Second, as we will see below, marriage increases material well-being—income, assets, and wealth. These can be used to purchase better medical care, better diet, and safer surroundings, which lengthen life. This material improvement seems to be especially important for women. Third, marriage provides individuals with a network of help and support, with others who rely on them and on whom they can rely; this seems to be especially important for men. Marriage also provides adults with an on-site, readily available sex partner.

### Partnered Sex

Figure 9 presents results from the National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSL), a national probability sample of 3,432 adults, conducted by NORC in 1991. Respondents were asked about their frequency of “partnered sex” in the past year. This question asked “During the last 12 months about how often did you have sex with (PARTNER)? Was it . . . once a day or more; 3 to 6 times a week; once or twice a week; 2 to 3 times a month; once a month or less?” This question was asked about all sex partners in the past 12 months, but all analyses presented here refer to the person whom the respondent reports as the primary sex partner. The sample for the analyses of frequency of sexual activity uses all



SOURCE: National Health and Social Life Survey

Figure 9. number of Times Respondent had Sex with Primary Partner in the Past Month, by Marital and Cohabital Status and Sex

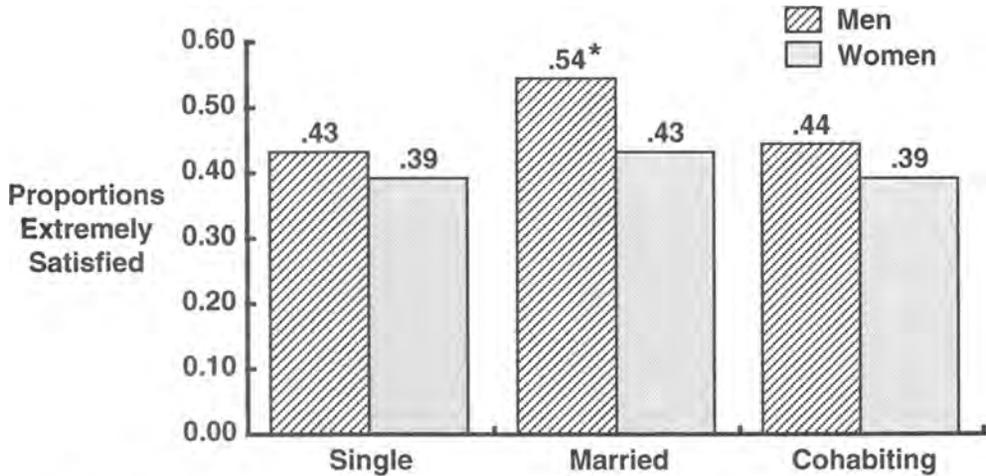
respondents to the NHSLs; analyses are presented in Appendix Tables A1-A5. For ease of presentation, I transformed frequency of sexual activity into number of times in the past month.

Figure 9 compares the married with those who are living with someone in a sexual relationship and those who are not living with a partner. The low levels of “single” persons’ activity reflect the substantial minority of this group who report no sexual activity in the past year, combined with a small minority who report very high levels of sex—and numerous partners. This figure shows that the married respondents report mean levels of sexual activity about twice as high as the single, even after we take into account other characteristics that might affect this behavior. Married men report a mean frequency of sexual activity of 6.84 per month and single men a mean of 3.63 times per month, over the last year. Married women report a mean of 6.11 times per month and single women a mean of 3.23 times per month, over the last year. Cohabiting men and women also report very high rates of sexual activity—7.43 and 7.20 times per month over the past year, which suggests that on this dimension, cohabitation equals marriage in its benefits to the individuals involved. The difference between cohabiting and married men and women is not statistically significant.

These figures reflect reports of sexual activity with the primary partner. Insofar as single and cohabiting men and/or women are more likely than married persons to have multiple partners, the difference between these groups in aggregate level of sexual activity with all partners may be different than reported here. This issue deserves further scrutiny.

So marriage and cohabitation mean more sex, at least with the primary partner, but are single individuals more satisfied with their sex lives? This could be the case, for example, if each act of partnered sex was more passionate or more satisfying, and would be in keeping with the perception that married sex—or even sex with the same partner again and again—becomes boring and unsatisfying. The evidence suggests the opposite, however.

Figure 10 displays reported levels of physical satisfaction with the primary partner for men and for women in ongoing relationships. These analyses use responses to a question that asked “How physically pleasurable did you find your relationship with (PARTNER) to be: extremely pleasurable; very pleasurable; moderately pleasurable; slightly pleasurable; or not at all pleasurable?” The sample includes those in ongoing sexual relationships only; it



\*Statistically significant difference.

SOURCE: National Health and Social Life Survey

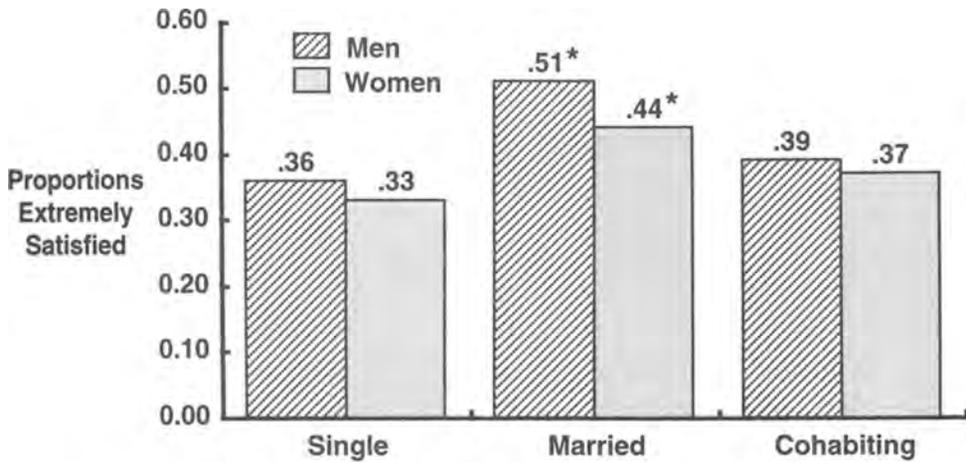
Figure 10. Proportions Extremely Satisfied Physically with Sex with Primary Partner, by Marital and Cohabital Status and Sex

excludes those whose most recent relationship has ended and those who are not sexually experienced. I define an ongoing sexual relationship as one in which the respondent expects to have sex with this partner again. Asterisks denote statistically significant differences. Levels of physical satisfaction are somewhat higher for men than for women, but married men report significantly higher levels of physical satisfaction with their sex lives than either single or cohabiting men. For women, physical satisfaction does not differ by marital status.

Figure 11 shows reports of *emotional* satisfaction with the primary partner, again for those in ongoing sexual relationships. Here, both married men and married women report more emotional satisfaction with their sex lives than do those who are single or cohabiting, net of duration of the relationship and other characteristics that might affect satisfaction. Although cohabitators report levels of sexual activity as high as the married, both cohabiting men and women report lower levels of satisfaction with this activity. In all comparisons where we see a difference, the married are favored over the unmarried.

How does marriage improve one's sex life? Marriage and cohabitation provide individuals with a readily available sexual partner with whom to have an established, ongoing sexual relationship. This reduces the costs—in some sense—of any particular sexual contact, thus leading to higher levels of sexual activity. Laumann et al. (1994) state that the greater the commitment to a sex partner (defined as a long time horizon for the relationship and for its sexual exclusivity), the greater the incentive to invest in skills that are “partner-specific,” including those which enhance the enjoyment of sex with that particular partner. Then sex with the partner who knows what one likes and how to provide it becomes more satisfying than sex with a partner who lacks such skills.

I would argue that more than “skills” are at issue here. The long-term contract implicit in marriage facilitates *emotional* investment in the relationship, which should affect both frequency of and satisfaction with sex. So the wife or husband who knows what the spouse wants sexually is also highly motivated to provide it, both because sexual satisfaction of one's partner brings similar rewards to oneself and because the emotional commitment to the partner makes satisfying him or her important in itself. Greeley (1994) believes that sex



\*Statistically significant difference.

SOURCE: National Health and Social Life Survey

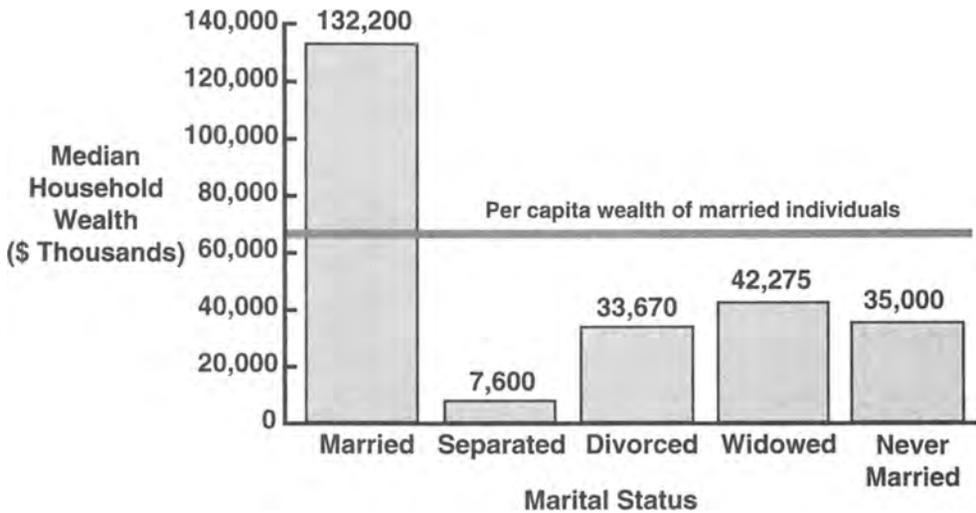
Figure 11. Proportions Extremely Satisfied Emotionally with Sex with Primary Partner, by Marital and Cohabitational Status and Sex

helps keep marriages healthy; it bring couples closer emotionally and helps them weather the inevitable strains of life with another person.

Cohabitation differs from marriage, especially in provision of sexual satisfaction, in important ways. First, although this is not a generally important motivator, some individuals choose to cohabit because it requires less sexual faithfulness than marriage (Bumpass, Sweet, and Cherlin 1991). Laumann et al. (1994) argue that sexual nonmonogamy leads to a less satisfying sexual relationship with any one partner. In addition, partners in cohabitation frequently bring different levels of commitment to the relationship, with different expectations for its future (Bumpass et al. 1991). Both the lower levels of commitment—including emotional commitment—and differences in commitment between partners may affect the sexual satisfaction of those in cohabitations.

### Assets and Wealth

In addition to having more sex, the married have more money. Figure 12 shows median household wealth—estimated by Smith (1994) from the Health and Retirement Survey—for married couples, the separated, the divorced, the widowed, and the never married. This measure of wealth includes pension and Social Security wealth as well as real assets, financial assets, and the value of the primary residence. The horizontal line shows per capita wealth for married-couple households (which by definition have two adults) and allows us to compare the per capita wealth level for married-couple households with those of other households. Any level falling below this line marks the disadvantage of unmarried persons relative to married individuals. This figure shows the tremendous disparity between married-couple and single-person households. Smith (1994) finds that the wealth advantage of married couples remains substantial even after taking into account other characteristics that affect savings. Also, although married couples have higher incomes than others, this



SOURCE: Smith (1994)

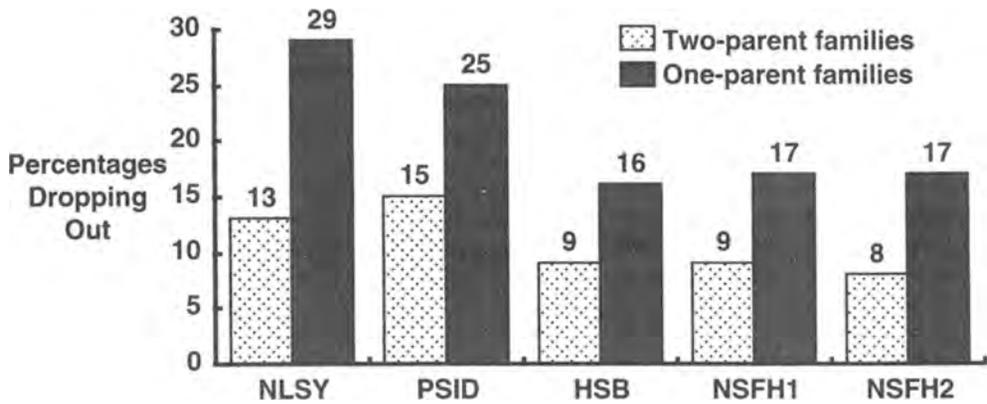
Figure 12. Median Household Wealth, by Marital Status (Ages 51-61)

fact accounts for only 28% of the savings disparity between married-couple households and other households.

How does marriage increase wealth? First, economies of scale mean that two can live as cheaply as one—or maybe one and a half. Married couples can share many household goods and services, such as TV and heat, so the cost to each individual is lower than if each one purchased and used the same items individually. Thus, the married spend less than would the same individuals for the same style of life if they lived separately. Second, because of specialization of spouses in marriage, married people produce more than would the same individuals if single. Each spouse can develop some skills and neglect others, because each can count on the other to take responsibility for some of the household work. The resulting specialization increases efficiency. Below, we see that this specialization leads to higher wages for men. Becker (1981) made these points a number of years ago. Granted, married couples could spend the extra money generated by being married and (say) take expensive vacations or buy more clothes, but the reverse seems to be the case: married couples save more at the same level of income than do the single. The desire to provide for one’s spouse and to leave bequests for children may encourage saving by the married, but I think that the requirements and expectations of married (versus single) life encourage people to buy a house, save for children’s education, and acquire cars, furniture, and other assets (Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel 1990).

### Children’s Well-Being

To this point we have focused on the consequences of marriage for adults—the men and women who choose to marry (and stay married) or not. But such choices have consequences for the children borne by these adults. Figure 13 (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994:41) shows one of these consequences—the risk of dropping out of high school for children from one-parent and two-parent families. (One-parent families could result either from disruption of a marriage or from unmarried childbearing.) This figure uses five data sets to present estimates of the impact of childhood family structure on high school

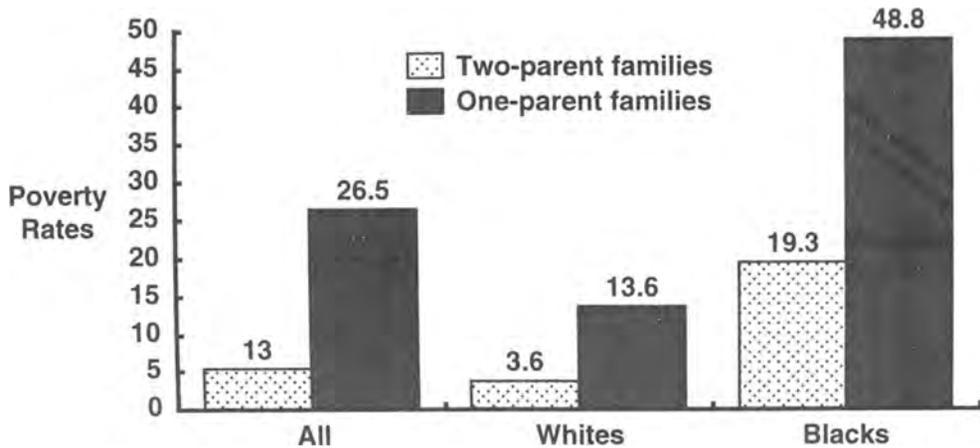


SOURCE: McLanahan and Sandefur (1994:41)

Figure 13. Percentages of Adult Children Who Did Not Complete High School, by Childhood Family Structure

graduation. The results consistently show that about twice as many children from one-parent families as from two-parent families drop out of high school, and these figures take into account differences in a number of characteristics that affect educational attainment. Children raised in one-parent families are also more likely to have a birth themselves while teenagers, and to be “idle”—both out of school and out of the labor force—as young adults (McLanahan and Bumpass 1988; McLanahan and Sandefur 1994). They are also more likely to be poor as children.

Figure 14 shows poverty rates for two-parent families (the gray bars) and for single-parent families (the white bars) (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994:82). Note the very high rates of poverty for single-parent families, especially among blacks. Hernandez (1993) estimates that the rise in mother-only families since 1959 is an important cause of increases in poverty among children. Clearly, poverty, in and of itself, is a bad outcome for children (McLeod and Shanahan 1993). In addition, however, McLanahan and Sandefur estimate that the lower incomes of single-parent families account for about half of the worse



SOURCE: McLanahan and Sandefur (1994:82)

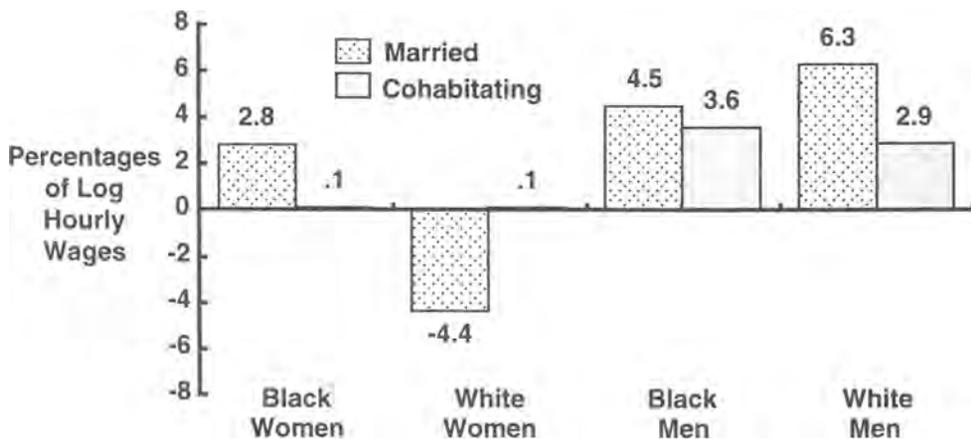
Figure 14. Percentages of Children in Poverty at Age 16, by Race and Family Structure

outcomes of children in these families. The other half comes from children’s access—or lack of access—to the time and attention of two adults in two-parent families. The presence of two parents potentially means more parental supervision, more parental time helping with homework, another parental shoulder to cry on after a hard day. Children in one-parent families spend less time with their fathers (this is not surprising because they don’t live with them), but they also spend less time with their mothers than children in two-parent families. Also, the high levels of residential mobility among one-parent families and among stepfamilies disadvantages children in these families (Astone and McLanahan 1994). Finally, children who spend part of their childhood in a single-parent family, either because they were born to an unmarried mother or because their parents divorced, report significantly lower-quality relationships with their parents as adults and have less frequent contact with them (Lye et al. 1995).

### Labor Force and Career

As the last consequence of marriage for individuals, I present evidence on labor market outcomes. Figure 15, taken from work by Daniel (1994, forthcoming), shows the impact of marriage and cohabitation on the log hourly wages of young men and women, estimated from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. These estimates show the difference in wages between married, cohabiting, and single individuals, net of other characteristics that might affect wages, and take into account selection into marriage. Daniel labels the remaining difference a “wage premium” for marriage. Figure 15 shows that both black and white men receive a wage premium if they are married: 4.5% for black men and 6.3% for white men. Black women receive a marriage premium of almost 3%. White women, however, pay a marriage penalty, in hourly wages, of over 4%. Men appear to receive some of the benefit of marriage if they cohabit, although Figure 15 shows that cohabitation more nearly resembles marriage—at least in this regard—for black than for white men. According to Daniel’s estimates, women receive no wage benefits and pay no wage penalty for cohabiting in comparison to remaining single.

For women, Daniel (1994) finds that marriage and presence of children *together* seem



SOURCE: Daniel (1995)

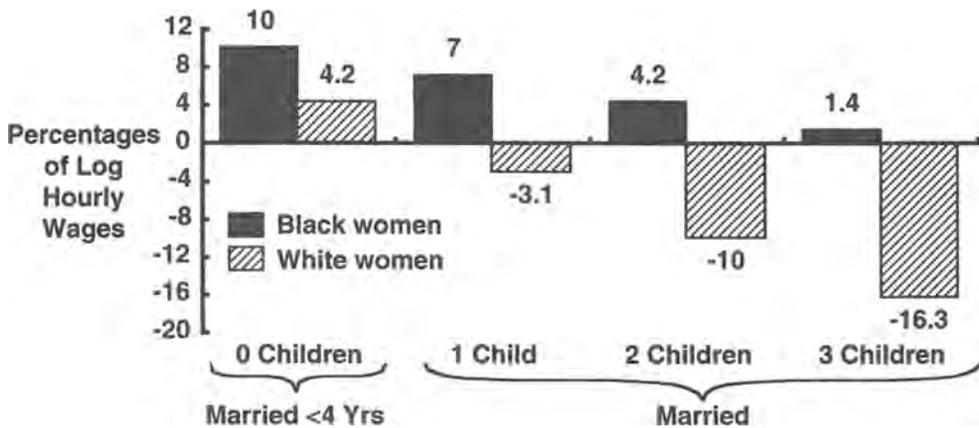
Figure 15. Increase (Decrease) in Log Hourly Wages with Marriage and Cohabitation, by Race and Sex

to affect wages; the effects depend on the woman's race. Figure 16 shows the combined effect of marriage and children on young women's wages. Black and white single women with children, by Daniel's estimates, pay no marriage penalty. Black married women (shown by the white bars) receive a sizable bonus if married and childless; this bonus diminishes with the number of children. Among white women (the gray bars), only the childless receive a marriage premium. Having any children makes the effect of marriage on white women's wages negative, with very large negative effects for those with two children or more. Daniel finds that the negative effect of children on married women's wages disappears for white women when he takes hours of work into account, but children continue to reduce wages for black married women.

Why should marriage increase men's wages? Daniel (1994, forthcoming) argues that marriage makes men more productive at work, thus leading to higher wages. Wives may assist husbands directly with their work, offer advice or support, or take over household tasks, freeing husbands' time and energy for work. Also, as I mentioned earlier, being married reduces negative health behaviors such as drinking and substance abuse, which may affect productivity. Finally, marriage increases men's incentives to perform well at work, so as to meet obligations to family members.

Why do black men benefit less from marriage than white men? Because the male-female wage gap is smaller for blacks than for whites, black women tend to receive smaller returns from investing in their spouses' earning power. In addition, the lower marriage rates and the higher divorce and separation rates for blacks than for whites reduce the payoff of investments in marriage in general.

To this point, all the consequences of marriage for the individuals involved have been unambiguously positive—better health, longer life, more sex and more satisfaction with it, more wealth, and higher earnings. But the effects of marriage and children on white women's wages are mixed at best. Marriage and cohabitation clearly increase women's time spent in housework (South and Spitze 1994); married motherhood reduces their time in the labor force and lowers their wages. Although the family as a unit might be better off with this allocation of women's time, women generally share their husbands' market earnings only when they are married. Financial well-being declines dramatically for women and their children after divorce or widowhood; women whose marriages have ended are often quite disadvantaged financially by their investment in their husbands and children rather than in



SOURCE: Daniel (1995)

Figure 16. Increase (Decrease) in Women's Log Hourly Wages with Marriage and Children, by Race

their own earning power. Recent changes in divorce law seem to have exacerbated this situation, even while increases in women's education and work experience have moderated it (Bianchi 1994).

## DISCUSSION

### Does Marriage Cause These Outcomes?

The obvious question, when one looks at all these "benefits" of marriage, is whether marriage is responsible for these differences. If all, or almost all, of the benefits of marriage arise because those who enjoy better health, live longer, or earn higher wages *anyway* are more likely to marry, then the effects of marriage simply may be due to selectivity (see, for example, Goldman 1994 on this issue in regard to health). In such a case, we as a society and we as individuals could remain neutral about each person's decision to marry or not, to divorce or remain married. Although we do not have evidence on the impact of selectivity for *all* of the outcomes I have presented here, we have some. I will review that evidence briefly here.

Many scholars have argued that selection of the healthiest individuals into marriage may account for the lower mortality rates of the married (see Goldman 1993 for a summary of these arguments). Mastekaasa (1992), for example, finds that single young adults who are initially in the best psychological health are more likely to have married two to four years later.

In recent work, Lillard and Panis (1995) estimate the effect of marital status on men's mortality, taking into account potential selectivity both into and out of marriage. They argue that men in poor health may seek marriage, with its attendant mortality benefits, which leads to selection of the least healthy into marriage. They find evidence of this adverse selection of men into marriage on the basis of health; men in good health tend to marry later or to postpone remarriage. Yet men who tend to be in good health, for unobserved reasons such as lifestyle or preferences, are selected positively into marriage. These two effects differ over age groups and balance each other out differently at older and younger ages. Thus Lillard and Panis find that positive selection on the basis of unobservables dominates for never-married men and leads to an overstatement of the protective effects of marriage; adverse selection on the basis of health dominates for older divorced men, camouflaging the health advantage of the married for this group. The authors find that never-married and widowed men experience higher mortality than married men for reasons other than health, but that divorced men's mortality disadvantage is explained by their poorer health.

Daniel's (1994, forthcoming) findings on men's and women's wages use individual fixed effects to take into account selection into marriage. When he does not account for selectivity, he finds a 12 to 15% marriage premium for men. Thus selectivity accounts for about half of men's marriage premium; Daniel concludes that the other half is causal.

McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) estimate a bivariate probit model, which allows for correlation between the error terms in a model of family disruption and children's outcomes, and still find significant effects of family structure on most outcomes. In a recent article in *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Ross states:

The positive effect of marriage on well-being is strong and consistent, and the selection of the psychologically healthy into marriage or the psychologically unhealthy out of marriage cannot explain the effect (1995:129).

I think that perhaps we have been too quick to assign *all* the responsibility to selectivity

here, and not quick enough to consider the possibility that marriage *causes* some of the better outcomes we see for the married.

### The Institution of Marriage

What is it about marriage that causes some portion of the outcomes I outlined above? I think that four factors are the key. First, the institution of marriage assumes a long-term contract, which allows the partners to make choices that carry immediate costs but eventually bring benefits. The long time horizon implied by marriage makes it sensible—rational choice is at work here—for individuals to develop *some* skills and to neglect others because they count on their spouse to fill in where they are weak. Thus married couples benefit from specialization and an exchange of what Grossbard-Shechtman (1993) calls “spousal labor.” The institution of marriage helps individuals honor this long-term contract by providing social support for the couple as a couple and by imposing social and economic costs on those who dissolve their union.

Second, marriage assumes sharing of economic and social resources and what we can think of as co-insurance. Spouses act as a sort of small insurance pool against life’s uncertainties, reducing their need to protect themselves *by themselves* from unexpected events.

Third, married couples benefit—as do cohabiting couples—from economies of scale.

Fourth, marriage connects people to other individuals, to other social groups (such as their in-laws), and to other social institutions which are themselves a source of benefits (Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite 1995). It provides individuals with a sense of obligation to others, which gives life meaning beyond oneself. It may change the psychological dynamics of the relationship in ways that bring benefits. Some consensus exists that marriage improves women’s material well-being and men’s emotional well-being, in comparison with being single.

### The (Incompletely Institutionalized) Institution of Cohabitation

Cohabitation has some but not all of the characteristics of marriage, and so carries some but not all of the benefits. Cohabitation does not generally imply a lifetime commitment to stay together; as I pointed out earlier, a substantial minority of cohabiting couples disagree on the future of their relationship (Bumpass et al. 1991). Cohabitants seem to bring different, more individualistic values to the union than do those who marry (Clarkberg, Stolzenberg, and Waite forthcoming). Goldscheider and Kaufman (1994:3) believe that the shift to cohabitation from marriage signals “declining commitment within unions, of men and women to each other and to their relationship as an enduring unit, in exchange for more freedom, primarily for men.” Perhaps as a result, some scholars view cohabitation as an especially poor bargain for women; Jones concludes:

The increasing trend toward consensual partnering in the West, seen by many as an emancipation from rigid concepts of marriage, may represent a new enslavement rather than freedom for women (1994:900).

Cohabitants are much less likely than married couples to pool financial resources, more likely to assume that each partner is responsible for supporting himself or herself financially, more likely to spend free time separately, and less likely to agree on the future of the relationship (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983). This uncertainty makes both investment in the relationship and specialization with this partner much riskier than in marriage, and so reduces them. Whereas marriage connects individuals to other important social institutions,

such as organized religion, cohabitation seems to distance them from these institutions (Stolzenberg et al. 1995; Thornton, Axinn, and Hill 1992).

## Warnings

Some warnings are in order. First, for most outcomes, I have presented information only on the *average* benefits of marriage. Also, discussing a typical cohabiting couple may be even less useful than discussing an “average” marriage. Clearly, some marriages produce substantially higher (and others substantially lower) benefits for those involved. Some marriages produce *no* benefits and even cause harm to the men, women, and children involved; that fact needs to be recognized.

On average, however, marriage seems to produce substantial benefits for men and women in the form of better health, longer life, more and better sex, greater earnings (at least for men), greater wealth, and better outcomes for children.

## Why Has Marriage Declined?

If marriage produces all these benefits for individuals, why has it declined? Although this issue remains a subject of much research and speculation, a number of factors have been mentioned as contributing. First, because of increases in women’s employment, there is less specialization by spouses now than in the past; thus the benefits to marriage are reduced (McLanahan and Casper 1995). Clearly, employed wives have less time and energy to focus on their husbands, and are less financially and emotionally dependent on marriage, than wives who work only in the home. In addition, high divorce rates decrease people’s certainty about the long-run stability of *their* marriage, and thus may reduce their willingness to invest in it (Lillard and Waite 1993). Also, changes in divorce laws have shifted much of the financial burden for the breakup of the marriage to women, making investment in marriage a riskier proposition for them (Regan 1993). Men, in turn, may find marriage and parenthood less attractive when divorce is common, because they face the loss of contact with their children if their marriage dissolves. Further, women’s increased earnings and young men’s declining financial well-being have made women less dependent on men’s financial support and have made young men less able to provide it (Oppenheimer 1994). Finally, public policies that support single mothers and changing attitudes toward sex outside marriage, toward unmarried childbearing, and toward divorce have all been implicated in the decline in marriage (McLanahan and Casper 1995). This brief list does not exhaust the possibilities, but merely mentions some of them.

## What Should We Do?

Most of the research results that I have reported here are fairly well known, especially to researchers working on the topics I have discussed. But I think they are *not* well known outside the research community, and I think we have not put the pieces together into a larger picture. I think that persuasive, even compelling, evidence exists for the picture I have tried to sketch here—a picture of the benefits, to individuals, of the social institution of marriage. Now that we have painted this picture, what should we do with it?

In my view, social scientists have a responsibility to weigh the evidence on the consequences of social behaviors in the same way as medical researchers evaluate the evidence on the consequences of (say) cigarette smoking or exercise. As evidence

accumulates and is communicated to individuals, *some* people will change their behavior as a result. Some will make different choices than they would otherwise have made because of their understanding of the costs and benefits, to them, of the choices involved. To continue with the example of medical issues such as smoking or exercise, we have seen behaviors change substantially because research findings on these behaviors have been communicated to the public. In addition, we have seen changes in attitudes toward behaviors shown to have negative consequences, especially when those consequences affect others, as in the case of smoking. These attitude changes then raise the social cost of the newly stigmatized behaviors. HMOs and religious organizations develop programs to help people achieve the desired behavior; support groups spring up.

In addition, we as a society can pull some policy levers to encourage or discourage behaviors. Public policies that include asset tests (Medicaid is a good example) act to exclude the married, as do AFDC programs in most states. The "marriage penalty" in the tax code is another example. Also, in the state of Illinois, young women under age 18 who have already become mothers must have their parents' permission to marry. Sometimes this leads to a situation in which young couples are able to have children but cannot marry even if they want to do so. These and other public policies can reinforce or undermine the institution of marriage.

I think social scientists have an obligation to point out the benefits of marriage beyond the mostly emotional ones, which tend to push people toward marriage but may not sustain them when the honeymoon is over. We have an equally strong obligation to make policy makers aware of the stakes when they pull the policy levers that discourage marriage.

Appendix Table A1. Variable Definitions, Means, and Standard Deviations: NHLSL Cross-Section

Variable	Men (N = 1,330)		Women (N = 1,664)		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<b>Dependent Variable</b>					
SEXFREQ1	Frequency of partnered sex last year	70.52	70.58	64.49	68.76
SEXFREQ4	Frequency of partnered sex last year	77.37	72.22	71.01	70.62
SEXFREQ5	Frequency of partnered sex last year	5.56	5.12	5.09	5.02
<b>Independent Variable</b>					
AGE1824	1 equals age 18-24, 0 else	.16	.37	.16	.37
AGE2529	1 equals age 25-29	.16	.36	.13	.34
AGE3034	1 equals age 30-34	.16	.37	.17	.38
AGE3539	1 equals age 35-39	.14	.35	.15	.36
AGE4044	1 equals age 40-44	.13	.34	.13	.34
AGE4549	1 equals age 45-49	.09	.29	.10	.30
AGE5054	1 equals age 50-54	.08	.27	.08	.27
AGE5559	1 equals age 55-59	.07	.25	.08	.26
MARRIED	1 equals currently married	.52	.50	.54	.50
SINGLE	1 equals currently single	.40	.49	.37	.48
COHAB	1 equals currently cohabiting	.07	.26	.08	.26
EDLTHS	1 equals less than high school degree	.14	.34	.14	.35
EDHS	1 equals high school degree	.28	.45	.29	.45
EDLTB	1 equals some college or vocational	.32	.47	.34	.47
EDB	1 equals college degree	.17	.37	.16	.36
EDAD	1 equals advanced degree	.09	.28	.06	.24
NONE	1 equals no religion	.14	.34	.09	.28
FUNDAM	1 equals type 2 Protestant	.29	.45	.34	.47
CATHOLIC	1 equals Catholic	.27	.44	.27	.44
OTHREL	1 equals other religion	.28	.45	.28	.45
WHITE	1 equals white non-Hispanic	.82	.39	.79	.41
BLACK	1 equals black non-Hispanic	.11	.32	.14	.35
HISPANIC	1 equals Hispanic	.07	.26	.08	.26

Respondents with responses of don't know, refusal, or missing are not included in these analyses.

Appendix Table A2. Variable Definitions, Means, and Standard Deviations: NHSLS Cross-Section

Variable		Men (N = 994)		Women (N = 1,234)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Dependent Variable					
PHYS	Physical satisfaction with current partner	4.37	.73	4.25	.78
EMOT	Emotional satisfaction with current partner	4.30	.78	4.17	.87
Independent Variable					
DURAT	Duration of sexual partnership	10.54	10.13	11.52	10.20
AGE1824	1 equals age 18-24, 0 else	.13	.34	.15	.36
AGE2529	1 equals age 25-29	.15	.36	.15	.36
AGE3034	1 equals age 30-34	.16	.37	.17	.38
AGE3539	1 equals age 35-39	.15	.36	.16	.37
AGE4044	1 equals age 40-44	.14	.35	.13	.34
AGE4549	1 equals age 45-49	.10	.30	.10	.30
AGE5054	1 equals age 50-54	.09	.29	.08	.27
AGE5559	1 equals age 55-59	.07	.26	.06	.24
MARRIED	1 equals married partnership	.69	.46	.71	.45
PARTNER	1 equals primary partnership	.22	.41	.18	.38
COHAB	1 equals cohabiting partnership	.10	.30	.10	.31
EDLTHS	1 equals less than high school degree	.12	.32	.14	.34
EDHS	1 equals high school degree	.28	.45	.30	.46
EDLTB	1 equals some college or vocational	.32	.47	.33	.47
EDB	1 equals college degree	.18	.38	.16	.37
EDAD	1 equals advanced degree	.09	.29	.06	.24
NONE	1 equals no religion	.13	.33	.09	.28
FUNDAM	1 equals type 2 Protestant	.28	.45	.34	.47
CATHOLIC	1 equals Catholic	.27	.45	.27	.45
OTHREL	1 equals other religion	.29	.45	.28	.45
WHITE	1 equals white non-Hispanic	.83	.37	.80	.40
BLACK	1 equals black non-Hispanic	.10	.30	.12	.33
HISPANIC	1 equals Hispanic	.07	.25	.08	.27

For currently married/cohabiting respondents, analyses refer to satisfaction with married/cohabiting partners.

For single respondents, analyses refer to satisfaction with primary partners if respondent expects to continue having sex with them. Respondents with responses of don't know, refusal, or missing are not included in these analyses.

Appendix Table A3. OLS Coefficients for the Effects of Independent Variables on Frequency of Partnered Sex, Genders Combined

Variable	(N = 2,994)	
	Coefficient	Standard Error
Independent Variable		
AGE2529	-0.2200	4.4870
AGE3034	-13.8960	4.3802**
AGE3539	-20.0094	4.5356***
AGE4044	-30.1978	4.6706***
AGE4549	-30.8042	5.1149***
AGE5054	-41.8229	5.4369***
AGE5559	-60.5501	5.6396***
MARRIED	41.9657	2.7000***
COHAB	55.0831	4.9262***
EDLTHS	-5.9338	4.0165
EDLTB	-2.3703	3.1050
EDB	-3.3717	3.8436
EDAD	-8.8040	5.1611#
NONE	1.4090	4.3266
FUNDAM	4.1178	3.2390
CATHOLIC	-0.3090	3.3339
BLACK	2.0481	3.9076
HISPANIC	12.2416	4.8752*
GENDER	-7.2039	2.4621**
Intercept	71.5890	4.4757***
R <sup>2</sup>	.138	

The dependent variable (SEXFREQ4) is the frequency of partnered sex; here I use the more generous estimates of frequency.

\*  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Appendix Table A4. Log Odds for the Effects of Independent Variables on Physical Satisfaction with Primary Partner (Extremely)

Variable	Men (N = 994)		Women (N = 1,234)	
	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
<b>Independent Variable</b>				
DURAT	-.0241	.0106*	-.0320	.0092***
AGE2529	.1622	.2519	-.2586	.2198
AGE3034	-.3160	.2522	-.0690	.2166
AGE3539	-.0847	.2599	-.1314	.2239
AGE4044	.1083	.2720	.3232	.2419
AGE4549	-.3533	.3128	-.1095	.2741
AGE5054	.0446	.3331	-.0497	.3068
AGE5559	.7087	.3861#	-.2455	.3486
MARRIED	.4509	.1977*	.1991	.1849
COHAB	.0672	.2509	-.0046	.2286
EDLTHS	-.0174	.2252	-.2026	.1967
EDLTB	-.0622	.1664	.0447	.1482
EDB	-.1585	.1984	-.1494	.1855
EDAD	-.0981	.2469	.2458	.2653
NONE	-.1547	.2155	-.1871	.2322
FUNDAM	.0658	.1726	.2023	.1571
CATHOLIC	-.1905	.1731	-.0956	.1604
BLACK	-.2385	.2231	.1294	.1943
HISPANIC	.2930	.2721	.0158	.2286
Intercept	.0744	.2420	-.0556	.2310
Chi-Square (df)	26.216(19)		40.006(19)	

# p &lt; .10; \* p &lt; .05; \*\* p &lt; .01; \*\*\* p &lt; .001.

Appendix Table A5. Log Odds for the Effects of Independent Variables on Emotional Satisfaction with Primary Partner (Extremely)

Variable	Men (N = 994)		Women (N = 1,234)	
	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
<b>Independent Variable</b>				
DURAT	-.0113	.0105	-.0229	.0092*
AGE2529	-.0464	.2529	-.1793	.2209
AGE3034	-.6755	.2563**	-.2096	.2185
AGE3539	-.4903	.2627#	-.2494	.2261
AGE4044	-.5740	.2757*	.1275	.2430
AGE4549	-.6376	.3148*	-.0461	.2740
AGE5054	-.1585	.3337	-.1643	.3079
AGE5559	.1188	.3797	-.6560	.3584#
MARRIED	.5899	.2009**	.4885	.1878**
COHAB	.1338	.2551	.1876	.2318
EDLTHS	-.0521	.2262	-.4102	.2005
EDLTB	-.0408	.1671	.0248	.1480
EDB	-.1414	.2000	-.0360	.1840
EDAD	-.0369	.2477	.3376	.2653
NONE	-.1728	.2183	-.4269	.2366#
FUNDAM	.2027	.1730	.0005	.1572
CATHOLIC	-.0196	.1739	-.0903	.1596
BLACK	-.2645	.2265	.3244	.1952#
HISPANIC	-.0565	.2720	.1309	.2283
Intercept	-.0527	.2433***	-.2675	.2324
Chi-Square (df)	31.781(19)		37.592(19)	

\* p < .10; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> These simulations use as a baseline males or females who are white high school graduates born in 1920, with mean levels of income, city size, and region, living either alone (if not currently married) or with spouse only (if currently married).

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