higher rates of cohabitation. Men who father children outside of marriage are 1.5 times more likely to cohabit than comparable men who do not become unmarried fathers. These equations are estimated with Cox Proportional Hazards Regressions. Such methods estimate the risk of an event—in this case, getting married, or starting to cohabit—as such risks are affected by other factors in the equation. For ease of understanding, the exponentiated regression

Table 2.1 Multivariate Cox Regression Results for Hazards Models Showing the Effects of Premarital Fatherhood on Risk of Union Formation of Black Men from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Age at First Marriage</th>
<th>Age at First Cohabitation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age at first nonmarital birth*</td>
<td>B = -.2657*</td>
<td>e^b = .7557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother highest educational level</td>
<td>B = .0071</td>
<td>e^b = 1.0072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man lived with two parents at age fourteen</td>
<td>B = .0085</td>
<td>e^b = 1.0085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban-rural residence this year^a</td>
<td>B = -.3167*</td>
<td>e^b = .7285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did child live with father this year?^a</td>
<td>B = .5860*</td>
<td>e^b = 1.7968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man’s education this year^a</td>
<td>B = .0047</td>
<td>e^b = 1.0047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks worked this year^a</td>
<td>B = .5473*</td>
<td>e^b = 1.7286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrested by age sixteen</td>
<td>B = -.0586</td>
<td>e^b = .9431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expelled or suspended from school by age sixteen</td>
<td>B = -.0463</td>
<td>e^b = .9547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious health problems by age sixteen</td>
<td>B = .0942</td>
<td>e^b = 1.0987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drank regularly as teen</td>
<td>B = -.1769</td>
<td>e^b = .8379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed forces qualifying test percentile</td>
<td>B = .0053*</td>
<td>e^b = 1.0053</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s compilation based on data from the NLSY, 1979 to 1993 waves.

*A time-varying covariate whose values may change in each year of the study.

N = 954

−2 log likelihood = 6234.774*

*p ≤ .05

N = 1,021

−2 log likelihood = 6559.160*

*p ≤ .05
coefficients ($e^B$) are also presented. Such coefficients indicate the change in risk associated with a unit change in the variable in question. For example, the first risk coefficient for marriage is .7557. This indicates that black men who had a child before marriage in the previous year have only about .76 the yearly risk of marriage of comparable black men who have not had a child. On the other hand, men who worked last year have higher chances of marriage as revealed by the coefficient for “weeks worked this year,” 1.7286. The interpretation of these two equations is straightforward. Black men who had children before marriage have lower chances of getting married, and higher chances of cohabiting.

**Premarital Fatherhood and Achievement**

To determine whether delayed or forgone marriage has predictable consequences for black men, four measures of adult achievement were analyzed to see how nonmarital fatherhood, marriage, and marital fatherhood affect each of them. These measures were total earnings in 1993, highest level of schooling obtained in 1993, weeks worked in 1992, and poverty status in 1993. The results are clear and convincing. The effects of nonmarital fatherhood on the measures of achievement in 1992 to 1993 are shown in table 2.2. These are average differences that have been adjusted for all the self-selection factors just mentioned.

**Table 2.2 Effects of Premarital Fatherhood on Adult Achievement: Results of Multivariate OLS and Logistic Regressions for Black Men from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fourteen to nineteen</td>
<td>-672</td>
<td>-.340*</td>
<td>-3.508*</td>
<td>1.615</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty to twenty-five</td>
<td>-1,678*</td>
<td>-.257*</td>
<td>-.897</td>
<td>1.389</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty-six to thirty-five</td>
<td>-2,553*</td>
<td>-.253</td>
<td>2.771</td>
<td>1.882*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author’s compilation based on data from the NLSY, 1979 to 1993 waves.
Note: N = 1,355 black males; ordinary least squares and logistic regression. See table 2.1 results for controls.
*p < .05
though married fatherhood has no additional effect on the chances of poverty. The consequences of marriage and childbearing are trivial or insignificant for educational attainment.

CONCLUSION

Conventional wisdom suggests that men are opposed to marriage, and that they marry only when a woman manages to convince them to. Perhaps this is so; perhaps not. Still, why would men avoid something that is so obviously beneficial?

In fact, men probably value and understand the benefits of marriage. Research shows that men fall in love faster and harder than women, that married men have better sex lives and are happier than bachelors, and that married men are healthier and live longer (Waite and Gallagher 2000). Are men unaware of such obvious benefits? Despite media portrayals of men as reluctant to marry, there is little evidence in support of such a view. Why do people believe that marriage is unwanted by men? Why do we continue to suggest that low marriage rates are a result of men’s unwillingness, or inability, to marry?

The answer, I believe, is that the institution of marriage is now being redefined in important and challenging ways. For the past four

Table 2.3 Consequences of Changes in Marital Status and First Marital Birth from Pooled Cross-Section Time Series with Fixed-Effects Models (Average Changes as a Result of Changes in Marital Status)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in marital status</th>
<th>Earnings Change</th>
<th>Education Change</th>
<th>Weeks Worked Change</th>
<th>Poverty Status Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>3,999*</td>
<td>.076*</td>
<td>2.394*</td>
<td>0.674*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>.184</td>
<td>−.599</td>
<td>1.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowhood</td>
<td>−240</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>−13.107*</td>
<td>2.444*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remarriage</td>
<td>−1,923</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>−3.485*</td>
<td>1.382*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First marital birth</td>
<td>1,146*</td>
<td>.421*</td>
<td>4.782*</td>
<td>0.973</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s compilation.

*aData from the NLSY, 1979 to 1993 waves. N = 1,610 black males; pooled, cross-section, time series with 18,729 person-years. All variables are time-varying covariates whose values may change yearly.

*bPooled, cross-section, time series with 3,229 married-person-years.

*p < .05.
Figure 3.1 Living Arrangements of Black Children Under Age Eighteen, 1960 to 1998


Figure 3.2 Percentage of Children Under Eighteen Living Below the Poverty Level, 1977 to 1997

Source: Authors’ configuration based on Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Census Current Population Reports (1977 to 1997).
households has increased, and in the short term this trend offsets declines attributable to marital dissolution or other types of single-parent household formations. In the longer term, any compensatory effects linked to cohabitation evaporate, because cohabiting unions are less stable than marital unions. Thus it is important to understand why marriage is in decline.

The sources of marital decline—an increase in the number of marriages that end in divorce, a higher number of widows and widowers, and an increase in the number of individuals who never marry—vary by race. The proportion of married African American men over age fifteen fell from 64 percent in 1950 to 41.6 percent in 1998—a decrease largely attributable to a growth in the numbers of those who never married and who divorced. In 1950, 28 percent of African American men never married, as compared with 46.2 percent in 1998 (see figure 3.3). The proportion of divorced African American males rose from 2 percent in 1950 to 9.1 percent in 1998. The slight declines in marriage among white males (67 percent were married in 1950, and 60 percent in 1998) are largely attributable to divorce (a rise from 2 percent in 1950 to 8.3 percent in 1998). The proportion of unmarried

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**Figure 3.3 Marital Status of American Men, 1950 to 1998**

![Marital Status of American Men, 1950 to 1998](chart.png)

white males increased only slightly, from 26 percent in 1950 to 29 percent in 1998.

There have been similar changes among black women (see figure 3.4).

The proportion of married African American women fell from 62 percent to 37 percent between 1950 and 1998, while the decline for white women was from 66 percent to 57 percent. Divorce trends have been comparable between the races, with the divorce rate increasing from 3 percent to 12 percent among black women and from 2 percent to 11 percent among white women. Between 1950 and 1998 the percentage of never-married black women doubled, from 21 percent to 41 percent, whereas the corresponding percentage among white women remained virtually flat, from 20 percent in 1950 to 22 percent by 1998.

Perhaps the most telling trends are those of increasing inequality across family types. Between 1960 and the late 1990s median family income grew by 27 percent for black families and 30 percent for white families (see figure 3.5).

Figure 3.4  Marital Status of American Women, 1950 to 1998

Married black couples, however, were responsible for much of the increase among blacks. Among married black couples median income grew by 73 percent, whereas it grew at a much more modest 37 percent for married white couples. This obviously had a strong impact on child poverty. In the 1990 census, only 9 percent of children in two-parent families lived below the poverty line, as compared with almost half of children in mother-only households (Farley 1998, 123) (for child poverty outcomes by race see figure 3.2).

Racial and ethnic variations in child living standards may also result from racial and ethnic differences in child-support payments. Elaine Sorensen (1995) has calculated that if all nonresident fathers nationwide paid Wisconsin’s standard child-support levels, they would generate $44 billion to $48 billion in child-support revenues versus the $14 billion to $15 billion currently collected. She also shows that almost two-thirds of nonresident white fathers, one-third of nonresident Hispanic fathers, and less than one-third of nonresident black fathers pay some child support (see figure 3.6). Given that earnings and employment rates exhibit a similar rank order by race, it is possible that variations in the child-support contributions of nonresident fathers simply reflect variations in ability to pay.

Marriage promotes child well-being, but children are dependent and cannot on their own secure the benefits of a married household. Does marriage offer enough advantages to adults to motivate them to
marry and remain married so that the interests of their children are also secured?

MARRIAGE AND ADULT WELL-BEING

Calculating how much a couple secures from marriage involves two separate calculations—a calculation of direct gains and a calculation of indirect gains. A married person benefits directly from marriage when he or she earns more than a cohabiting or single counterpart. A married person benefits indirectly from marriage when his or her earnings and his or her spouse’s earnings secure for him or her a household income greater than the household income of his or her cohabiting equivalent. In a single-earner couple, for example, the working partner might secure a higher direct gain (higher earnings than an unmarried peer) but a lower indirect gain (household income) than an unmarried peer in a two-earner cohabiting relationship. In another example, the nonworking partner in a single-earner household might secure a lower direct gain from marriage (no job, hence no earnings) than his or her unmarried (single) peer but a higher indirect gain (higher household income) than his or her unmarried counterpart. If a married woman has lower earnings than her cohabiting coun-

Figure 3.6 Percent of Nonresident Dads in Three Racial-Ethnic Groups Who Pay Child Support

Source: Authors’ calculations based on Survey of Income Program Participation (1990).
Cohen’s findings on the direct gains of marriage for women are mixed. For both black and white women, cohabitation brings greater gains than marriage. Cohabiting white women earn 5 percent more than their never-married counterparts, whereas married white women earn only 1 percent more than their never-married counterparts. Cohabiting black women earn almost 18 percent more than their never-married counterparts, whereas married black women earn 13 percent more than their never-married peers. In contrast, married Hispanic women earn 6 percent more than their never-married counterparts, but for Hispanic women the gains from cohabitation are negligible.

Findings on the indirect gains acquired through marriage vary by gender. Direct gains are positive for men of all racial and ethnic groups, so indirect gains are also positive for women of all race and ethnic groups. That is, married women live in households with higher incomes than cohabiting or never-married women, because the former benefit from their husband’s earnings premiums (Waite 2000;
Figure 3.8 Relative Earnings of Wife and Husband in Black Married Couples, 1976 to 1999

Source: Authors’ configuration based on March Current Population Surveys (1976 to 1999), with assistance from Philip Cohen.
Note: Non-Hispanic civilian couples with at least one earner (based on wife’s race).

Figure 3.9 Relative Earnings of Wife and Husband in White Married Couples, 1976 to 1999

Source: Authors’ configuration based on March Current Population Surveys (1976 to 1999) with assistance from Philip Cohen.
Note: Non-Hispanic civilian couples with at least one earner (based on wife’s race).
Figure 3.10 Fiscal Parity by Race and Education Among Dual-Earner Married Couples with Children

Source: Authors’ configuration based on data from the March Current Population Survey (1976 to 2001), prepared with assistance of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

Note: At 0 percent, a wife’s share equals a husband’s share. At less than 0 percent, a wife’s share is less than a husband’s share. At greater than 0 percent, a wife’s share is greater than a husband’s share.
Figure 3.11 Effect of Children on Wife’s Share of Family Earnings by Wife’s Education and Race (Dual-Earner Households)

Source: Authors’ configuration based on March Current Population Surveys (1976 to 2001), prepared with the assistance of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

Note: Each trend line is a ratio such that the share of family earnings for a wife with children is in the denominator, and the share of family earnings for a wife without children is in the numerator. As the ratio approaches zero, a wife with one or more children contributes as much to family earnings as a wife with no children, implying that the presence of children has had no effect on a wife’s earnings for that racial group at that education level.
the proportion of mother-only African American households would have always been high. But, as shown in figure 7.1, two-parent families were the rule among African Americans until after 1960. For slavery to be the cause of current black fatherlessness, slavery’s effect would have had to wait nearly one hundred years before it manifested itself. Marriage has been a prevalent trait in African American culture. At times, the marriage rate among African Americans has been higher than the rate for whites. Among women ages sixty-five years or older in 1973, only 4 percent of African Americans had never married, compared to 7 percent of whites (Burns and Scott 1994).

The Welfare-Dependency Argument

Another popular theory on the cause of the increase in black mother-only families has been the availability of welfare payments (Murray 1984), but several scholars (Wilson 1987, Garfinkel and

Figure 7.1 Percentage of U.S. Families with Two Parents, by Race, for Selected Years, 1890 to 1995

![Figure 7.1 Percentage of U.S. Families with Two Parents, by Race, for Selected Years, 1890 to 1995](chart.png)

*Source: Authors’ configuration based on U.S. Bureau of the Census (various years).*