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Recent trends in divorce and remarriage have created great diversity in the family life course. Only a third of recent first marriages are likely to stay together until widowhood (Castro and Bumpass, 1989), and of the two-thirds experiencing marital disruption, about three-quarters will remarry. Indeed, remarriage has become as common as first marriage—half of all recent marriages involved at least one previously married partner.

Nonetheless, remarriage receives much less attention in the literature than first marriage. Part of the reason for this is simply that our ways of thinking about age patterns of marriage, marriage markets, and mate selection processes developed over a period where the vast majority of marriages were first marriages. First marriage is seen as an important marker in the process of becoming an adult, and as representing a major transition in the establishment of an independent household with long term commitments (and legal obligations) to another person. In contrast, remarriage has often been viewed as simply the restoration of these aspects of adult status after a brief transition period following widowhood or marital disruption.

Discussions of remarriage have most often emphasized that most divorced persons remarry, and interpreted this as an indication of the strong preference for the married state—even among those whose first marriage was highly unsatisfactory (Thornton, 1977; Spanier and Glick, 1980). This perspective obviously has considerable validity, but we have tended to ignore the theoretical and social importance of VARIATION in remarriage, and in the duration after marital dissolution for those who do remarry. When viewed from

this perspective, remarriage represents a life course transition very similar in implications to first marriage. Though the definition of "adult" status is not at issue, there is considerable normative ambiguity about the status of previously married persons (Cherlin, 1978)--with on the one hand, the expectation that this status will be short term, and with, on the other, some uneasiness among married acquaintances about having a friend in the marriage market. For those who do not remarry, marital dissolution represents entry into a lifetime single status. For women, this status is usually associated with markedly reduced economic wellbeing, especially during the remaining period with children in the household (Garfinkel and McLanahan, 1986). Obviously, similar economic and social support issues are experienced by those in the previously married state for long durations, whether or not they ultimately remarry.

Finally, we may tend to orient our analyses toward first marriages because the structure of marriage markets, and marriage rates, is conceptually much more complicated for remarriages than for first marriages. A population at risk of first marriage can be defined in terms of those who have never married, and its attrition through age-specific marriage rates cleanly described. The population at risk of remarriage is harder to think about. We know well that many married persons are in the market to trade for a new spouse. To the extent that search behavior begins prior to marital disruption, the previously married population only approximates the population at risk. Further, though vital statistics rates are based on the divorced population, the timing of divorce is often a legal artifact or conditional on a remarriage opportunity. Entry to risk is better represented by the date a couple stops living together than it is by the date of divorce (Sweet and Bumpass, 1971; McCarthy, 1978), and even that measure is something of an approximation. And finally, the duration of exposure to risk is not a simple age function as it is for first marriage, though age

clearly conditions risk.

After briefly reviewing recent trends in remarriage rates, the present analysis focuses on the variation in these rates as measured in the 1980 and 1985 June Current Population Surveys. For data quality reasons, we focus on rates observed in the five years before each of these surveys. We begin by discussing the demographic composition of separation cohorts as a factor affecting remarriage rates and ultimately the structure of remarriages. We next examine proportional hazard estimates of differentials in remarriage rates. Finally, using life-table procedures, we draw out some of the important implications of differing remarriage rates by estimating expected proportions who will ever remarry.

Trend

The figures in Table 1 underscore the importance of the demographic composition of the population at risk of remarriage. The 12 percent increase between 1965 and 1984 in the rate per 1000 previously married persons is an artifact of changing composition with respect to age and widowhood. Because of marked increases in divorce (and some decline in mortality), widows constituted a declining proportion of the population at risk. This resulted in a younger age structure for the total risk population—with the observed consequence of an increase in the total rate of remarriage. In contrast to the observed 12 percent increase in this total rate, remarriage rates declined over this period by about 40 percent for widows and by about one-third for the divorced.

It is possible that the aging of the widowed population, because of mortality improvements, accounts for some of the decline in their marriage rates. However, it is important to recognize that widowhood is not solely a transition of old age. Though widowhood rates are low during the young and middle ages, effects cumulate over the 40 or so years of exposure between first marriage and retirement age. Our calculations from the June 1985 CPS indicate that a third of all women in 1985 who had ever been widowed were under age 50 when their husband died.¹ Consequently, it is also likely that social and economic factors that affect the remarriage rates of divorced women also are relevant to many widowed women. Nonetheless, because widowhood occurs at disproportionately older ages where remarriage rates are very low, the remainder of this paper will focus on remarriage rates of the separated or divorced population.

The rate of remarriage has declined among divorced women of all ages, though the declines were greatest among women under age 25 at the time of divorce--56% between 1965 and 1980. The slight recovery since 1980 may well reflect the changing age structure of divorced women under age 25 produced by the radical drop in first marriage rates of women under age 25. Increasing cohabitation over the last two decades may also have played some role in declining remarriage rates. In a preliminary analysis of measures from the National Survey of Families and Households, we found for first marriages that the decline in first marriage rates of young women in the early 1970s was partially offset by the increase in cohabitation (Bumpass and Sweet, 1988). So also, divorced (and separated) women may have lived in residential unions at a higher rate recently than is suggested by the declines in the remarriage rate.

¹This proportion is much higher than the proportion of all that will occur to a cohort because it is based on the experience of the population in cross section.

For the moment we can only note that cohabitation introduces an ambiguity into the measurement of when a remarriage begins, just as it does for first marriages. Work is underway on this topic with data from the National Survey of Families and Households and will be reported in a later paper.

The Current Population Survey Data

This analysis is based on the marital histories from the June 1980 and June 1985 Current Population Surveys. These data have a clear advantage over vital statistics data because they permit the use of separation instead of divorce dates to identify the timing of marital disruption, and because they allow individual-level analysis of a number of related factors while holding constant differences in the duration of risk exposure. Separation is a more meaningful definition of disruption than divorce because of the dependence of the latter on variations in the legal process, and because subgroup variations in the timing and probability of divorce given separation can make divorce a very misleading indicator of marital disruption (Sweet and Bumpass, 1971; McCarthy, 1978). Except for attempts to replicate vital statistics estimates, the present analysis will condition remarriage on time since separation rather than divorce.

We limit our analysis to the data for women (because of the considerably lower quality of the marriage history data for males, Cherlin and McCarthy, 1983). The variables we can examine are limited by the questions included in the CPS, nonetheless, we can examine differences by race, education, region, age and number of children at separation, age at first marriage and duration of first marriage.

Vital statistics data provide no information on whether the marked decline in remarriage rates was experienced equally throughout the population.

Hence, we had originally hoped to analyze trends for various subgroups. Unfortunately, we concluded that the data were not up to this task.² This problem has also been reported by Thornton and Rodgers (1983). The difficulty is simply that we cannot replicate the decline reported in vital statistics when remarriage estimates are compared for either separation or divorce cohorts within the June 1985 CPS. Estimated rates are flat over the period when substantial declines were recorded. Consistent with this, attempts to replicate remarriage rates from the vital statistics for divorced women 25-44 do progressively less well for periods more removed from the date of survey. For example our CPS estimates are 13 percent lower than the vital statistics rate for 3 years before survey, but 27 percent lower for 13 years before survey.

Because of this difficulty of within data documentation of trends, we have taken the strategy of focusing on 1975-79 period with the June 1980 CPS and on 1980-84 with the June 1985 CPS. This focus is not as restrictive as it might seem since most remarriages occur rather quickly after marital disruption. Even when measured from the date of separation (as opposed to divorce), rates of the early 1980s imply that over half (57 percent) of those who remarry do so within 5 years. (We obtained very similar estimates for our predictor variables using the entire period since 1970.)

These two sources are consistent with each other in estimating the same proportion remarrying within 5 years (41 and 42 percent respectively) for the 1975-1979 separation cohort. Further, when we examine a trend variable in a pooled analysis of the 1980 and 1985 data, a hazards model indicates a 16 percent decline between the two periods, closely replicating the 17 percent

²In earlier analyses of marriage histories from June CPS's, we found that replication across data sources was less satisfactory for remarriages than for first marriages (Bumpass, 1984). This problem has also been reported by Thornton and Rodgers (1983).

decline in vital statistics between 1978 and 1983. Since we found that the effects of two of our variables changed over this time period, we have kept the 1980 and 1985 estimates separate for ease of presentation.

Characteristics of Recent Separation Cohorts

Remarriage must be seen as embedded in a chain of life-course transitions including first marriage, fertility, marital separation, and divorce. The composition of the population exposed to the risk of remarriage is an outcome of differing birth cohort sizes and characteristics, and subgroup differences in rates of first marriage, fertility, and marital disruption. Populations with higher first marriage rates and/or higher rates of marital disruption will be overrepresented in the population at risk of remarriage. The first two columns in Table 2 represent the distribution of first marital disruptions in the late 1970s and early 1980s on the characteristics considered in this analysis.

We tend to think of marital disruption as an event well into the life cycle. However more than half of recent marital disruptions occurred before age 30, about a third before age 25. (There was a slight decline over these two cohorts in the youngest age group, reflecting declines in first marriage rates of women in their early 20s.) Only 15 percent of recent marital disruptions occurred to women over the age of 40. These age distributions are primarily influenced by the higher disruption rate of young marriages. We see in a lower panel of this table that almost half of the recent first-marriage disruptions were to teenage marriages, one-sixth to women under age 18 at first marriage. These distributions have a major impact on the characteristics of remarriages. As we noted in a prior analysis (Castro and Bumpass, 1987), two-thirds of recent remarriages were to women who first married as teenagers, and the average age at remarriage is 33.

Rates of marital disruption are highest in the early years of marriage, with the result that forty percent of recent separations had been married less than 5 years and only one-third had been married 10 years or more. Nonetheless, this first-marriage duration is sufficient for most to have borne children, though of course some entered first marriage as mothers, perhaps 1 of 7 (Sweet and Bumpass, 1987). Seventy percent of recently separated women had at least one child before their separation, and one-fifth had 3 or more. However, there was some increase in childlessness over these two cohorts, and some decrease in the proportion with 3 or more children.

Despite lower first marriage rates, the higher marital disruption rates of blacks means that they are slightly overrepresented in the separating population.

Differential Rates of Remarriage

The last four columns in Table 2 present differential effects on remarriage rates, estimated from a proportional hazards model. These effects (the exponent of the coefficient minus 1 * 100) represent the percent change in the rate associated with a category of a predictor variable relative to the omitted category.

Age at separation:

Just as age is a major factor affecting marriage, and age at marriage a major factor affecting marital disruption (Bumpass and Sweet, 1972; Teachman, 1983), age at separation is the most important individual characteristic with respect to remarriage rates. This negative effect, especially strong for women, has been reported in numerous studies (Sweet, 1973; Becker, Landes and Michael, 1977; Thornton, 1977; Koo and Suchindran, 1980; Grady, 1980; Teachman and

Heckert, 1985). The availability of unmarried potential partners within the desirable age range decreases progressively as the person ages, at the same time that age decreases his/her "market position" (Dean and Gurak, 1978). Remarriage rates are about a quarter lower among women in their 30s at separation than among those in their 20s, and are much lower (two-thirds) among women over age 40.

Duration of first marriage:

Though closely related to age at separation, duration of first marriage is expected by some to have an independent effect on remarriage behavior. Women whose first marriage lasted relatively long may be more "marriage oriented" and thus remarry sooner (Becker et al., 1977). Further, they may have invested more in home production skills which are less valuable when single, but which can be transferred to a new marriage. In more sociological terms, individuals with long first marriages have had most of their adult experience in married life and this may influence their capacity to adapt to single life (Sweet, 1973). On the other hand, Koo and colleagues (1984) hypothesize that those women whose first marriages lasted longer may remarry more slowly because they have been outside of the marriage market longer, and thus may have fewer relevant skills for finding a new mate.

Though we observe substantially lower remarriage rates for women whose first marriage lasted longer, these effects are completely eliminated when other variables, in particular age at separation, are controlled. (This result is not shown in Table 2 because we preferred the model controlling age at separation and age at first marriage--and, of course, did not want to include all three measures since each is fully determined by the other two.) Thus it seems that age factors are what matters for remarriage, and not experience or habits

associated with first marriage duration.

Age at first marriage:

Some of the considerations related to possible effects of first-marriage duration might also be relevant to age at first marriage. For example, the earlier a woman marries, the less experience she can accumulate outside of family life, with the consequence that she may have a lower taste for nonfamily living (Waite et al., 1987). At the same time, early marriers are likely selective of persons with a more traditional family orientation.

In any event, we do find a substantial effect of age at first marriage on remarriage rates: Women who married for the first time after age 22 have a 38 percent lower remarriage rate, after other variables including age at separation are controlled.

Education:

Although higher socioeconomic status is reported as positively associated with the probability of remarriage for men (Wolf and McDonald, 1979), it is inversely associated for women. White (1979) suggests that remarriage tends to select those women less capable of supporting themselves (and their children). Another way of stating this is that consistent with the "independence" hypothesis often raised in the context of marital disruption, we might expect that women who are more able to support themselves can be more selective in the remarriage market. Hence we might expect an inverse relationship between education and rates of remarriage for women. Further, the higher a woman's education, the more limited is the market supply of more highly educated unmarried men (Goldman, Westoff, and Hammerslough, 1984). On the other hand, it could be argued that education as a resource (for family income as well

as more generally) might enhance a woman's market position.

There may well be countervailing forces associated with woman's education, but these data indicate very little association between education and remarriage even before other variables are controlled, and none at all net of these other variables. Despite the lack of a significant effect in either year, we do find however, that there was a significant interaction between education and year represented in the change from a 13 percent lower rate to a 14 percent higher rate among college educated women. Thus it appears that the decline in remarriage rates over this period was experienced least by women who had attended college. That there has been a trend away from a negative education effect is consistent with the contrast between our finding of no effect and the strong negative effect reported for whites by Teachman and Heckert (1985) from the 1973 NSFG.

Prior fertility:

Children from previous marriages have traditionally been considered an obstacle to remarriage (Spanier and Glick, 1980). Within Becker's framework (1977), children are "capital" specific to a particular marriage that may deter remarriage by increasing the costs for the potential new partner. These costs include both financial costs and the complexities of a remarried family. Children may interfere in the courtship process, and they may be reluctant to accept a "surrogate" parent (Sweet, 1973). At the same time, separated women with more children may feel more economic need to remarry, increasing their search effort, and may be less inclined to cohabit.

The empirical evidence is mixed. Becker et al. (1977) and Thornton (1977) found that children reduce the chances of remarriage of their mothers. However, Grady (1980) found no significant effect of the number of children.

Koo and Suchindran (1980) found a negative effect of children for younger divorced women and a positive effect for older women (see also, Koo, Suchindran and Griffith, 1984 and Teachman and Heckert, 1985).

We do not find any significant or interpretable interaction between mother's age and the presence of children. However, we do find that remarriage is approximately a quarter lower among women with children than among childless women (even though some of the unadjusted difference is a product of differences in age at separation).

Race:

Remarriage is much less common among blacks than among whites (Thornton, 1977; Grady, 1980; Cherlin, 1981), and remarriage rates have been declining disproportionately among blacks over the last two decades (Espenshade, 1985). In conjunction with lower rates of first marriage and higher rates of marital disruption and of nonmarital childbearing, this results in a much smaller proportion of the lifecourse being spent in conventional two-parent families among blacks than among whites—with many more years spent in female-headed households both in childhood and for women as adults.

In Table 2, black rates of remarriage are only one quarter those of white nonhispanics, and this difference is not at all attributable to composition differences on the other variables. Hispanics are also less likely to remarry, with rates about half those of white nonhispanics, even after the other variables are controlled.

Region:

Finally, we find large regional differences reflecting primarily the lower rate of remarriage in the Northeast. Rates in the Northcentral and West

are over two-thirds higher than those in the Northeast, remarriage rates in the South are twice as high.

Remarriage Distribution and Estimated Proportions Remarrying

Table 3 presents three sets of estimates. The first three columns indicate the quartiles of the distribution of remarriages based on all separated women. The next three columns provide the same estimates, but are limited to women who remarry. The latter estimates are based on time since divorce (the measure available in vital statistics), and it is clear that both levels and differentials are very markedly biased when those who do not remarry are ignored. The final column of Table 3 is the cumulative proportions expected to remarry within 20 years of marital disruption (essentially ever).

These estimates are computed using information from the last separation cohort to complete a given year of duration since separation by June 1, 1985. Thus we observe the risk of remarriage at each duration (conditional on being separated at the start of that duration) for each year between separation and the 20th anniversary. These duration-specific rates are then combined using life-table logic to estimate the expected cumulative proportion surviving to specific durations, given recent experience. The subtraction of this expected cumulative survival from 100 percent yields the reported expected percent ever remarriage.

Looking at the figure in the right hand bottom corner, recent rates imply that 72 percent of recently separated women will ultimately remarry. This is a bit lower than previous estimates, both because of the decline in remarriage rates and because it is based on separation rather than divorce. (We have previously estimated that about 6 percent of separated women will remain separated without ever divorcing (Castro and Bumpass, 1989). Contrasting the

medians for the total illustrates the consequence of ignoring non-remarriage in estimating remarriage distributions. Half of all women who remarry have done so within 4.3 years, whereas it is 7 years before half of all women experiencing a separation have remarried.

As we would expect from the results we have already seen, the major differences in expected remarriage depend on age at separation and race. The common emphasis in the literature on the average proportion who remarry ignores this variation. While it is the case that almost 90 percent remarry among women whose marriages terminate while they are under age 25, this proportion declines sharply with age to about 60 percent for women in their 30s, and to only about a third for women over age 40. These differences are sharply reflected in the quartiles of the distribution for all separating women (the first three columns), with a first quartile of 11 years for women age 40 and over compared to 4 years for those 30-39, and a median of 12 years for those 30-39 compared 6 years for those 25-29 at separation. At the same time, the timing of remarriage for those who remarry shows little variation.

Similarly, although three-quarters of separating white women are likely to remarry, less than half of separating black women are likely to do so. One-quarter remarry within 2.8 years among white women, whereas it is 8.2 years before one-quarter of the black women have remarried. Again we note that these differences disappear when limited to women who remarry.

We saw earlier that difference in remarriage by number of children at separation are partially the result of age differences. They nonetheless characterize an important aspect of the remarriage process as it impact children. About a quarter of separated mothers with 1 or 2 children will never remarry, two-fifths of those with three or more children. Further, it is 7 years before half of the mothers with 1 or 2 children at separation have

remarried, and it is almost 14 years for those with three or more children. Even when remarriage occurs, the median time to remarriage is about 5 years.

CONCLUSION

We conclude simply by returning to our earlier observations on the importance of remarriage as a lifecourse transition which sets the conditions for subsequent experience, and by re-emphasizing that for several subgroups of the population, remarriage is substantially delayed or does not occur at all. In future work, we need to devote more attention to the determinants and consequences of various durations in the separated or divorced state.

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Table 1. Remarriage Rates (per 1000/year) from Vital Statistics

	1965	1970	1975	1980	1984
Total	34	37	40	38	38
Widowed	10	10	8	7	6
Divorced	130	123	117	91	87
14-24	535	413	320	236	260
25-44	176	180	159	123	130
45-64	48	43	40	30	31

Table 2. Distribution of Recent Separation Cohorts^a on Selected Variables and the Effects of These Variables on Remarriage Rates

	Percent		Effects ^b			
	Distribution		Unadjusted		Net	
	75-79	80-84	75-79	80-84	75-79	80-84
Age at separation						
Under 24	38	31				
25-29	24	25	-23	-8*	-3*	12*
30-39	23	29	-45	-46	-24	-26
40+	15	15	-68	-74	-56	-63
Education						
> 12 years	24	20				
12 years	48	46	20	22#	9*	6*
13+ years	28	33	-11*	19#	-13*	14*
Race/ethnicity						
White	78	76				
Black	13	15	-76	-77	-76	-73
Hispanic	7	8	-30	-61	-31	-55
Children before sep.						
0	26	29				
1-2	49	50	-18	-32	-14#	-22
3+	25	20	-50	-56	-23	-24
Region						
Northeast	19	17				
Northcentral	23	23	50	99	36	75
South	37	38	71	110	38	103
West	22	22	82	83	42	64
Age at first marriage						
Under 18	22	17				
18-19	32	30	-20	5*	-22	10*
20-22	29	29	-44	-22	-38	-11*
23+	17	23	-57	-58	-42	-38
Duration first marriage						
0-1	17	17				
2-4	24	23	-20	-11*		
5-9	25	24	-25	-8*		
10+	35	36	-54	-47		
Number of cases	3064	2682				

^a Separations 1975-79 from June 1980 Current Population Survey and separations 1980-84 from June 1985 Current Population Survey.

^b From proportional hazards model, (Exponent Coefficient - 1 * 100).

* Coefficient is less than 1.5 its standard error.

Coefficient is 1.5-1.9 its standard error.

Table 3. Life-table Estimates of Quartiles of Remarriage Distribution and of Expected Proportion Ever Remarrying after Separation: Experience Centering on 1982.

	Quartiles of Remarriage Distribution (years)						Percent Ever Remarrying
	1	2	3	1	2	3	
Age at separation							
Under 25	2.3	4.6	9.7	2.1	4.0	7.4	89
25-29	2.8	5.8	15.0	2.4	4.0	7.8	79
30-39	4.0	12.0	-	2.4	5.0	9.0	59
40+	11.0	-	-	2.4	4.5	8.0	31
Education							
> 12 years	3.1	8.5	-	2.3	4.3	8.5	67
12 years	2.9	6.4	20.0	2.3	4.3	7.6	75
13+	3.2	7.4	-	2.4	4.6	8.3	72
Race							
White Nonhispanic	2.8	6.0	18.0	2.2	4.0	7.2	76
Black	8.2	-	-	3.8	7.5	11.9	46
Children at separation							
0	2.5	4.7	12.0	2.1	3.7	7.0	81
1-2	3.2	7.0	-	2.4	4.6	8.7	73
3+	4.2	13.7	-	2.5	5.0	10.0	57
Region							
Northeast	4.5	10.0	-	3.0	5.3	8.0	60
Northcentral	2.7	7.0	-	2.0	3.9	7.4	70
South	2.7	5.8	17.0	2.2	3.9	7.5	77
West	3.4	7.2	18.0	2.9	4.8	9.5	78
Age at First Marriage							
14-17	2.6	5.0	11.7	2.3	4.2	7.8	84
18-19	2.6	5.8	17.0	2.1	4.2	7.7	79
20-22	3.2	8.0	-	2.2	4.3	8.0	67
23+	4.4	16.0	-	2.8	4.8	8.0	51
Duration First Marriage							
0-1	2.3	4.4	9.3	2.1	3.8	7.3	89
2-4	2.8	5.5	14.0	2.4	4.3	8.0	82
5-9	3.0	6.6	18.0	2.4	4.5	8.3	76
10+	4.2	18.0	-	2.3	4.3	8.0	52
Total	3.0	7.0	-	2.3	4.3	7.8	72

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