

FAMILY INEQUALITY: DIVERGING PATTERNS IN MARRIAGE, COHABITATION, AND CHILDBEARING



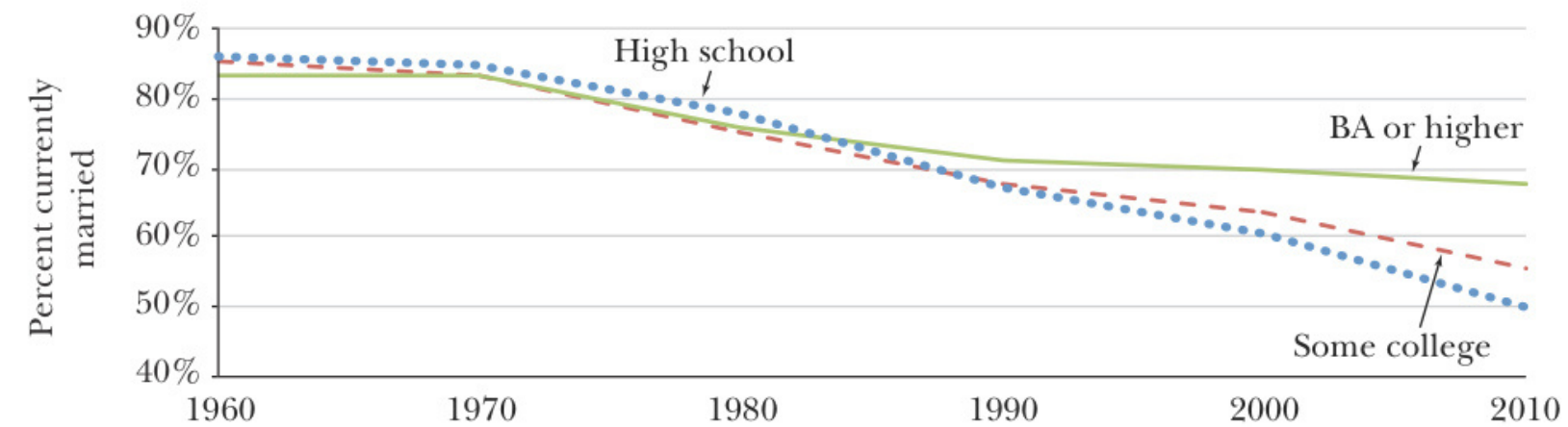
SHELLY LUNDBERG, ROBERT A. POLLAK,
AND JENNA STEARNS

Group 6



THE UNEVEN RETREAT FROM MARRIAGE

Figure 1
Percent of Population Aged 33–44 Currently Married, 1960–2010



Sources: 1960–2000 US Census; 2010 American Community Survey.



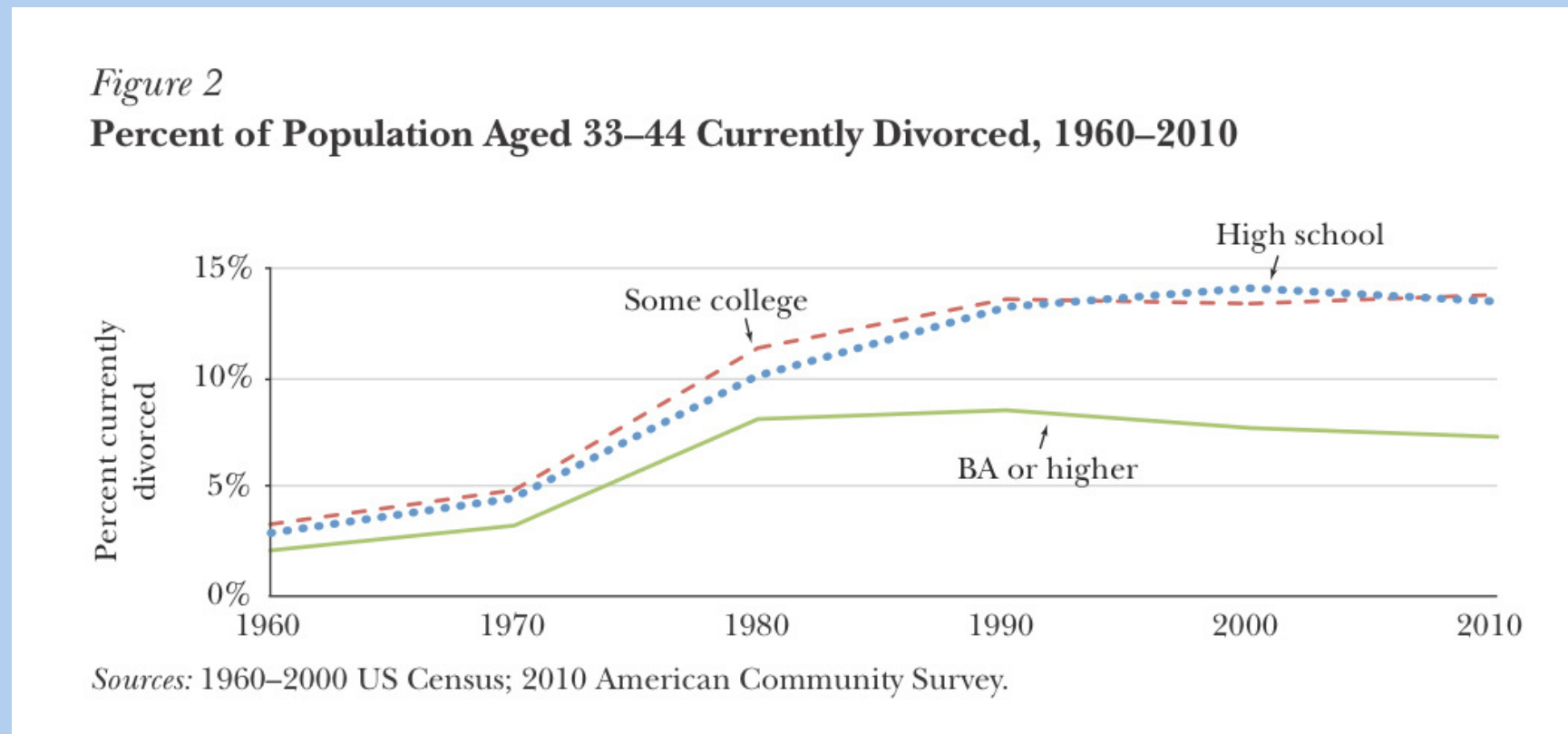
1960: Men and women married early and most remained married.

- **70%** of 30–44-year-old **female college graduates** currently married.
- **80%** of **female high school graduates** were currently married.
- **85%** of **males at all levels of education** were married.

2010: Both men's and women's marriage rates had fallen. The educational gradient of married women had reversed.

- **69%** of **college graduate women** were married.
- **56%** of **high school graduate women** were married.
- **70%** of **male college graduates** were married.
- **53%** of **male high school graduates** were married.

THE UNEVEN RETREAT FROM MARRIAGE



- **The share of the population aged 30–44 who are currently divorced are almost identical for some college and high school groups, but around 40% lower for college graduates.**
- Differences in age at first marriage account for some of the education gap.
- **College graduates** also have significantly **lower divorce rates than those with either some college or a high school education.**



THE UNEVEN RETREAT FROM MARRIAGE

Table 1

Family Outcomes by Education

	High school graduate, no college	Some college or associate's degree	College degree or higher
National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1979: Marriage outcomes by age 46, birth cohorts 1957–1964 (Aughinbaugh et al. 2013)			
Percent ever married	87.0	87.1	89.0
Among those who married:			
Percent ever divorced	49.1	48.5	29.8
Percent still in first marriage	48.6	48.9	69.0
National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health: Family structure by age 28–32, birth cohorts 1976–1984 (authors' tabulation)			
Percent currently married	45.0	45.8	48.2
Percent currently cohabiting	21.5	19.1	14.2
Percent 2+ co-residential unions	42.1	39.5	19.3
Percent unmarried mother	32.2	26.7	8.4
Percent unpartnered mother	17.8	16.4	5.8

Sources: For panel 1: Aughinbaugh, Robles, and Sun (2013). For panel 2: Authors' tabulation from National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health). Add Health is a program project directed by Kathleen Mullan Harris and designed by J. Richard Udry, Peter S. Bearman, and Kathleen Mullan Harris at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and funded by grant P01-HD31921 from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, with cooperative funding from 23 other federal agencies and foundations. Special acknowledgment is due Ronald R. Rindfuss and Barbara Entwisle for assistance in the original design. Information on how to obtain the Add Health data files is available on the Add Health website (<http://www.cpc.unc.edu/addhealth>). No direct support was received from grant P01-HD31921 for this analysis.

- **50% of high school and some college age groups** that ever got married **had divorced by the time they were 46.**
- **70% of college grads were still married** at that age.



THE UNEVEN RETREAT FROM MARRIAGE

- Over the past 25 years, **the percentage of women who have ever cohabited** has nearly **doubled**.
- The majority of women between the ages of 19 and 44 have experienced cohabitation at some point in their life.
- **More than 27%** of all couples who are **currently cohabiting** are **not legally married**.

(Manning 2013)

(based on the authors' calculations from the 2007–2013 Current Population Survey data)

Noted that since only recent cohorts of high-quality, population-representative data on unmarried couples are available, it is **challenging to track trends in cohabitation through time**.

- The majority of cohabitation estimates for earlier cohorts which are **based on inferences from household composition** are **unreliable**.
- Although, more accurate estimates from the Census presented in Fitch, Goeken, and Ruggles (2005) show that **there was very little (reported) cohabitation before 1970 on assumptions about household composition**.



The **age** at which **young couples start their first home** has stayed **largely consistent**, suggesting that **a large portion of the retreat from marriage has been a shift toward cohabitation**.

- The average age of first union (married or cohabiting) for **groups born in the 1960s and 1970s steadied at around 22.5 for women**.

(Manning, Brown, and Stykes 2015)

- The percentage of **births to non-marital mothers has doubled since 1980**, but this increase has primarily been driven by **a tripling of the percentage of births to cohabiting moms as opposed to unpartnered mothers**.

(Bailey, Guldi, and Hershbein 2014)

THE UNEVEN RETREAT FROM MARRIAGE

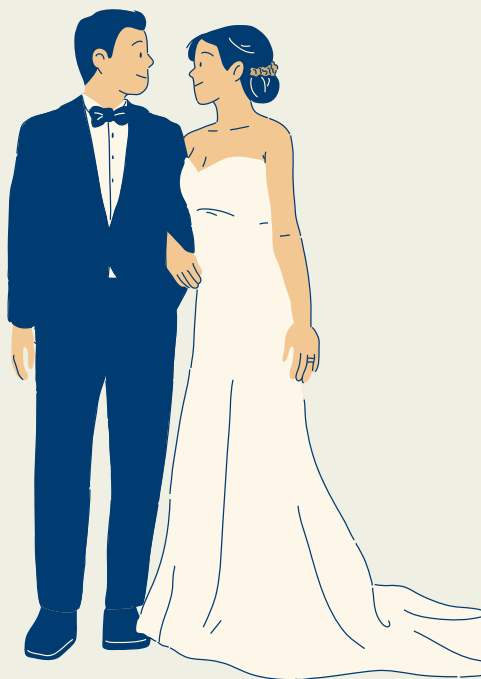
Table 1
Family Outcomes by Education

	High school graduate, no college	Some college or associate's degree	College degree or higher
National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1979: Marriage outcomes by age 46, birth cohorts 1957–1964 (Aughinbaugh et al. 2013)			
Percent ever married	87.0	87.1	89.0
Among those who married:			
Percent ever divorced	49.1	48.5	29.8
Percent still in first marriage	48.6	48.9	69.0
National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health: Family structure by age 28–32, birth cohorts 1976–1984 (authors' tabulation)			
Percent currently married	45.0	45.8	48.2
Percent currently cohabiting	21.5	19.1	14.2
Percent 2+ co-residential unions	42.1	39.5	19.3
Percent unmarried mother	32.2	26.7	8.4
Percent unpartnered mother	17.8	16.4	5.8

Sources: For panel 1: Aughinbaugh, Robles, and Sun (2013). For panel 2: Authors' tabulation from National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health). Add Health is a program project directed by Kathleen Mullan Harris and designed by J. Richard Udry, Peter S. Bearman, and Kathleen Mullan Harris at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and funded by grant P01-HD31921 from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, with cooperative funding from 23 other federal agencies and foundations. Special acknowledgment is due Ronald R. Rindfuss and Barbara Entwisle for assistance in the original design. Information on how to obtain the Add Health data files is available on the Add Health website (<http://www.cpc.unc.edu/addhealth>). No direct support was received from grant P01-HD31921 for this analysis.

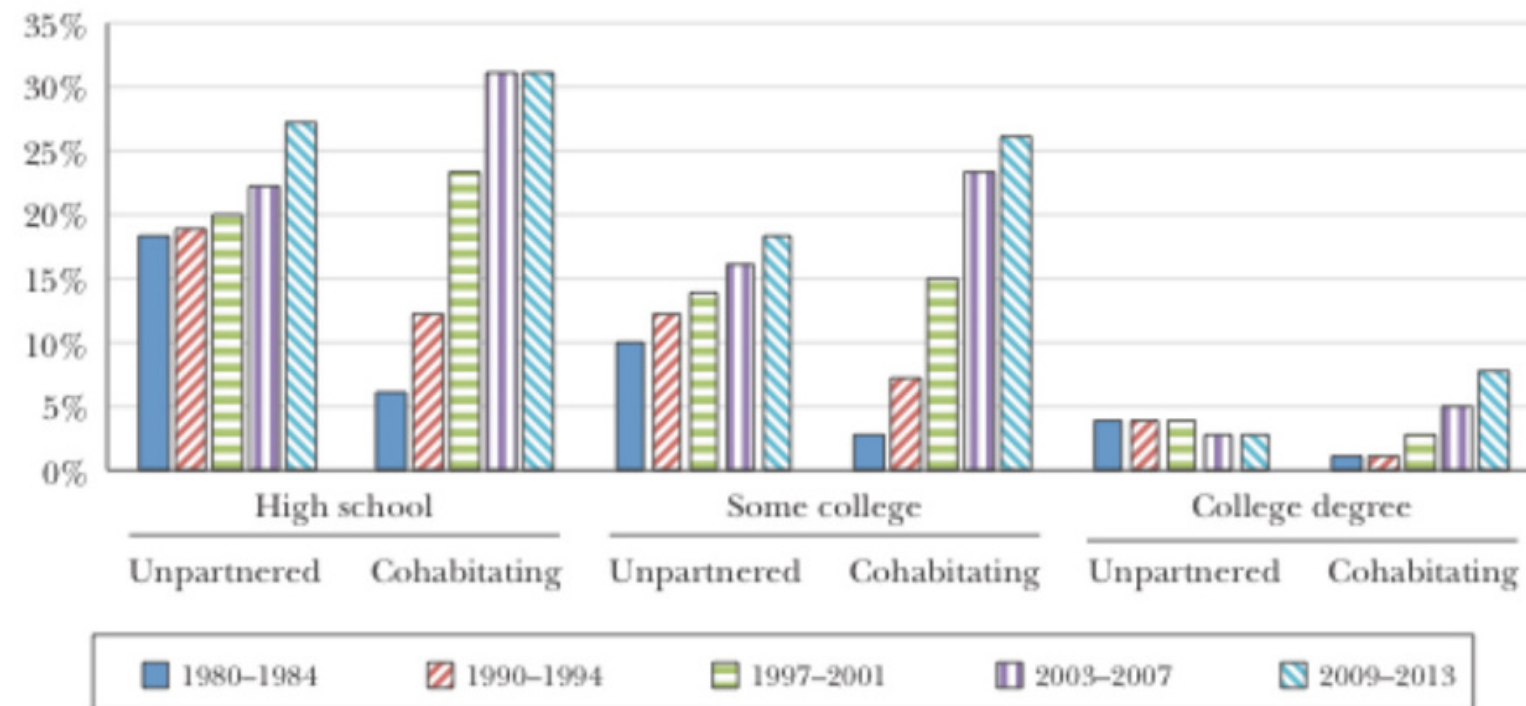
Cohabitation and nonmarital childbearing follow the same significant education gradient as is seen in marriage and divorce.

- Patterns of marriage, cohabitation, and childbearing are strikingly **different for those with only a high school education and those with a college degree** but quite comparable for those with some college.
- **Less educated people are less likely to be in a partnership**, and their partnerships tend to be **less durable** and they also **comprise a higher percentage of nonmarital partnerships**.
- It is around **five times more likely for a young woman to be a cohabiting or single mother without a college degree than it is for a college graduate**.



THE UNEVEN RETREAT FROM MARRIAGE

Figure 3
The Share of Births to Unpartnered and Cohabiting Mothers under Age 40 by Educational Attainment in Different Periods



Source: Manning, Brown, and Stykes (2015).

Notes: For each educational group, the bars show the share of births to unpartnered and to cohabiting mothers under age 40, with the remaining share being to married mothers within that educational group. For instance, for high school women in 2009-2013, 27 percent of births are to unpartnered mothers, 31 percent are to cohabiting mothers, and the rest are to married mothers.

Since 1980, nonmarital childbirth has significantly grown across all levels of schooling.

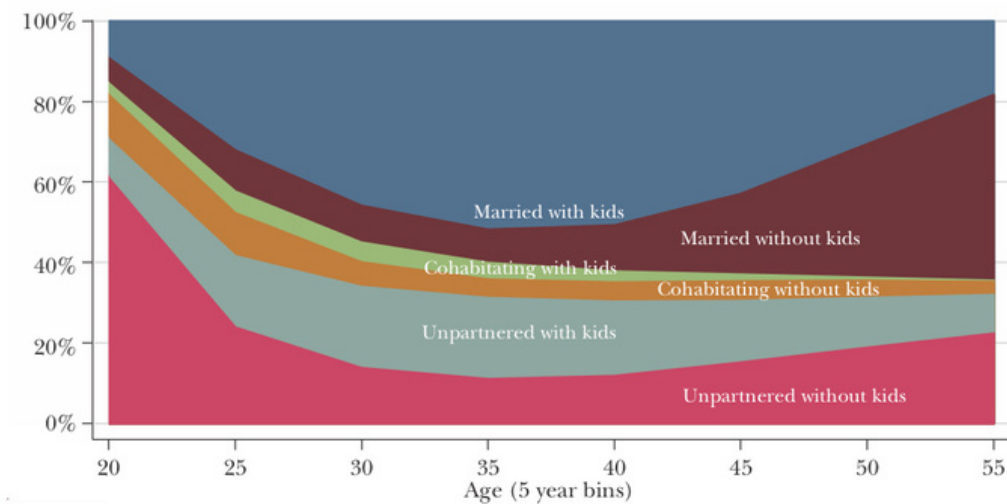
- The rates have remained relatively **low among college graduates**.
- The proportion of nonmarital births to both **high school graduates** and **women with some college education** has **dramatically grown**.
- The majority of this rise is attributable to **the increased frequency of births in cohabiting unions**.
- Within each race and ethnic group, the gap in nonmarital childbirth between college graduates and those with some education is wide, yet the total rates vary significantly.
- **The variations in educational achievement are not the only explanation for the variations in racial and ethnic groups.**



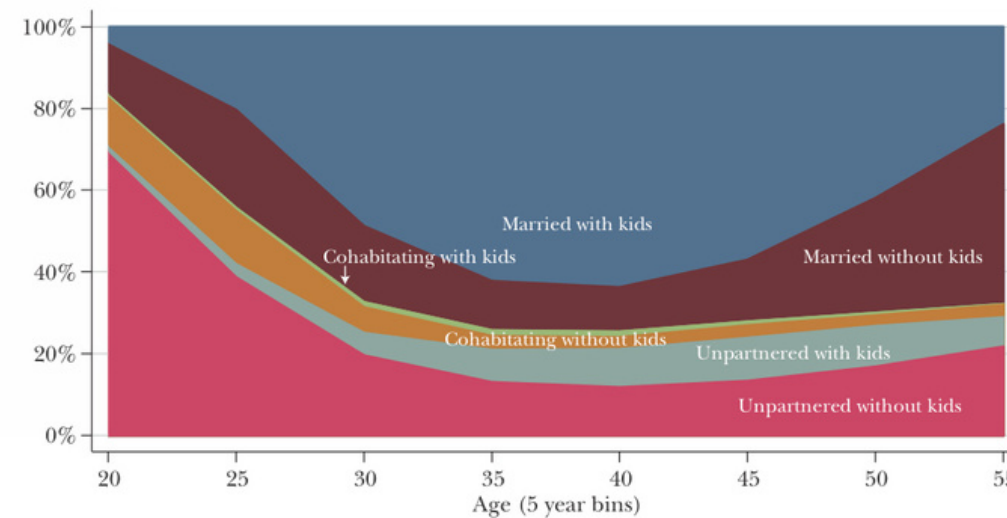
THE UNEVEN RETREAT FROM MARRIAGE

Figure 4
Household Type by Age of Woman and Educational Status

A: Women with High School or Some College



B: Women with College Degrees



Source: 2007–2013 Current Population Survey.

Note: For a given age, the vertical height of each category represents the share of women in that household type.

- After the **mid-20s**, **women with college degrees** are significantly **more likely than women with less education to be in a union**.
- **College graduates** are also **more likely to be married than cohabiting** if they are in a union.
- There is a **clear educational gradient in the housing situations of single moms**.
- Compared to women without children who have less education, **college-educated mothers are far more likely to live with a partner than they are to live alone or with family**.

(Manning, Brown, and Stykes 2015)

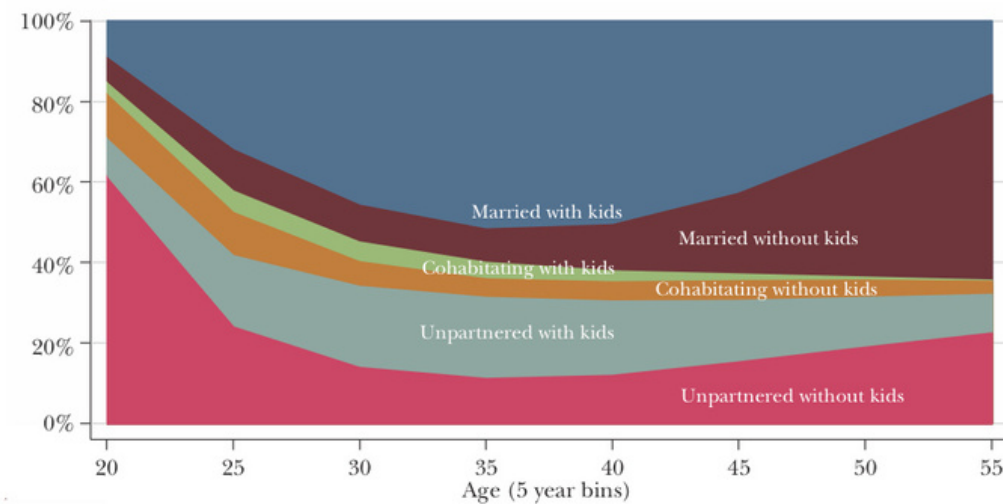


THE UNEVEN RETREAT FROM MARRIAGE

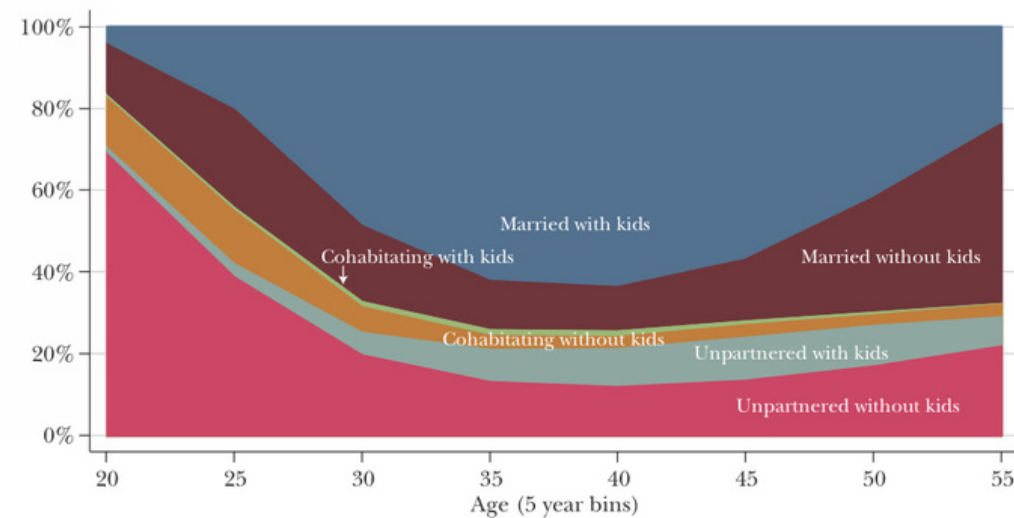
Figure 4

Household Type by Age of Woman and Educational Status

A: Women with High School or Some College



B: Women with College Degrees



Source: 2007–2013 Current Population Survey.

Note: For a given age, the vertical height of each category represents the share of women in that household type.

For all educational levels, **cohabiting couples** are typically **far less stable than marriages**. Between educational groups, there are **differences in the prevalence and role of cohabitation**.

- **Childbearing during cohabitation** is quite **uncommon among college-educated women**, and **when it does happen**, cohabiting relationships are likely to soon **transition into marriage**.
- Cohabitation among **those with less education** has **postponed marriage but not childbirth**.
- **Women with a college degree who got pregnant while living together** have a **double the likelihood of getting married** within a year **as women with less education**



(Copen, Daniels, and Mosher 2013)

THE UNEVEN RETREAT FROM MARRIAGE

- The **decoupling of marriage and childbearing** is significantly **more common among those without college degrees**.
- **Traditional patterns of married childbearing** have been much **more persistent** among **highly educated Americans**.
- **Increased cohabitation among college graduates** is part of a trend of **postponing marriage and starting a family** to allow **for a longer period of education**.
- This trend has been made possible by **advancements in birth control and shifting social attitudes toward premarital sex**.

(Goldin and Katz 2002)

Others could **view cohabitation as a more direct alternative to marriage**.

- These distinctions in the function of cohabitation have significant effects on how children are raised.
- **Children in cohabiting households** are **more likely to experience changes in living situations, parental roles, and household finances**.
- These **major discrepancies in investments in children and child outcomes** are **related to these variations in family stability and father presence**.

CHANGING GENDER ROLES, MARITAL SURPLUS, AND INVESTMENTS IN CHILDREN

- The **productivity of female workers increased** more than that of male workers due to changes in production technology and demand structure, **enhancing women's relative incomes and job prospects**
(Galor and Weil 1996)
- The **potential benefits of a sexual division of labor in the home were decreased** by the narrowing gender wage difference
- **Investments in education** reinforced these shifts as **women's long-term engagement to the work force grew.**
- With rising female income and a rise in the chance of divorce, **the opportunity costs of raising children increased.**



CHANGING GENDER ROLES, MARITAL SURPLUS, AND INVESTMENTS IN CHILDREN

- **The costs of divorce** are significantly **higher for marriage than for cohabitation**, according to economic models of marriage and cohabitation.
(Brien, Lillard, and Stern 2006; Matouschek and Rasul 2008)
- When a marriage ends, **legal procedures must be followed** to distribute assets and debts and, if children are involved, to determine custody, visitation, and support obligations.
- States began enacting no-fault or unilateral divorce laws in the 1970s, which **reduced the expense of divorce, but it is still a time-consuming, uncertain, and frequently expensive process.**

- **Cohabiting relationships** can be **dissolved** swiftly and easily **outside of the court system.**
- **Divorce is more socially** (and even mentally) **devastating** for people **because of the cultural significance of marriage.**
- To unmarried mothers, **cohabitation is preferred to marriage** because of their **fear of divorce.**

(Edin and Kefalas, 2005)



CHANGING GENDER ROLES, MARITAL SURPLUS, AND INVESTMENTS IN CHILDREN

- The line between marriage and cohabitation in terms of **parental rights and obligations** has become **less clear**.
- Since there is **no** longer much of a **distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children**.
- There is evidence that the **decline in joint family investments was influenced by the "divorce revolution"**—the transition to no-fault or unilateral divorce—which **lessened marriage exit costs and diminished the usefulness of marriage as a commitment tool**.
- The **decline of marital surplus** has been a primary factor in the decline in marriage rates.
- The underlying factors that lead to a **fall in the demand for long-term commitment**, such as a **decline in gender specialization** and a switch from a production-based to a **consumption-based marital surplus**, however, seem to be the same for all couples at all level of education.

(Stevenson 2007)



RISING INEQUALITY, MARRIAGEABLE MEN, AND GENDER NORMS

Economic View:

- Due to a combination of low skills, labor market discrimination, criminal records, and substance misuse, **some men's economic prospects are so dire that they cannot contribute positively to a household.**
(Edin and Nelson 2013)
- The **declining marriage rate among men and women with some college education cannot be explained** by a purely economic version of the marriageable men theory.

To explain the broad retreat from marriage in terms of the **shortage of marriageable men** requires a powerful **role for norms defining gender roles.**

(Brines 1994; Atkinson, Greenstein, and Lang 2005; Cooke 2006)



RISING INEQUALITY, MARRIAGEABLE MEN, AND GENDER NORMS

- The idea that couples in which the wife earns more than the husband go against the traditional idea that **the husband should be the main provider**.
- The stress of deviating from "**gender identity**" standards as the driving force behind the apparent impacts of **relative spousal wages on marriage prevalence, women's labor supply, and relationship stability**.
(Bertrand, Kamenica, and Pan, 2015)
- Because **conventional gender standards tend to be significantly degrading with education**, a loss in the worth of marriage when the wife earns more than the husband as a result of **violating these gender identity norms** may be **particularly pronounced for lower-educated households**
(Davis and Greenstein, 2009)

According to Becker's specialization-and-exchange theory of marriage,

- **Couples stand to benefit most** from getting married and engaging in marital specialization **when the gender wage disparity is substantial**.
- It suggests that **the potential surplus from specialization within marriage may have dropped less** in recent decades **for college graduates than for those with less education**, using the ratio of female/male mean full-time wages as an imperfect indicator of the gender wage difference.

RISING INEQUALITY, MARRIAGEABLE MEN, AND GENDER NORMS



Table 2
Mean Annual Wage Earnings of Full-time Workers by Education
(2010 dollars)

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Full-time male workers						
High school	43,333	54,129	52,010	46,223	45,950	40,967
Some college	49,382	62,332	55,842	54,579	56,039	50,501
College or more	60,094	80,490	72,553	81,366	92,226	89,187
Full-time female workers						
High school	23,653	28,598	28,983	30,059	31,755	30,288
Some college	26,078	32,762	32,853	36,398	39,160	37,413
College or more	33,898	44,169	41,389	50,973	59,133	60,902
Ratio of mean female/male earnings						
High school	0.546	0.528	0.557	0.650	0.691	0.739
Some college	0.528	0.526	0.588	0.667	0.699	0.741
College or more	0.564	0.549	0.570	0.626	0.641	0.683

Sources: Authors' calculations based on the 1960–2000 Census and 2010 American Community Survey. The sample is restricted to full-time workers (who usually work at least 35 hours per week in 1980–2010 or worked at least 35 hours last week in 1960–1970) ages 25–54. Earnings are measured by annual wage and salary income converted to 2010 dollars. Although income in the Census data is top-coded, the majority of workers whose income exceeds the top code are college educated. This issue only affects a small share of workers, but if anything, the difference between the college-educated and some college groups is slightly understated as a result.

- In 1960,
 - For **workers with a college degree** or above, the **gender earnings ratio** was **56%**.
 - **53%** for **those with some college**
 - **54%** for **those with high school diploma**
- These earnings ratios **diverged after 1980**, though, when the real **earnings of men with less education started to decline**.
- In 2010,
 - The ratio of female to male earnings was **68% for those with a college degree**.
 - **74%** for **those with a high school diploma or less**

RISING INEQUALITY, MARRIAGEABLE MEN, AND GENDER NORMS

- An alternative explanation for the decline in marriage as a result of the gender wage gap is that
 - **Contracting issues prevent couples from realizing potential marital surpluses**; in other words, issues with renegotiating the distribution of marital surplus may discourage couples from getting married or cause them to divorce when they are unable to respond to shocks effectively.
 - Contracting issues can be a reflection of challenges in **reaching legally binding agreements to carry out those divisions or in negotiating mutually agreeable divisions of marital excess with incomplete information.**
- When the **income gap closes** in the face of peer pressure that supports **more traditional gender roles**, it could be **challenging for couples to commit to sharing childcare and other household duties.**

(Sevilla-Sanz 2005)

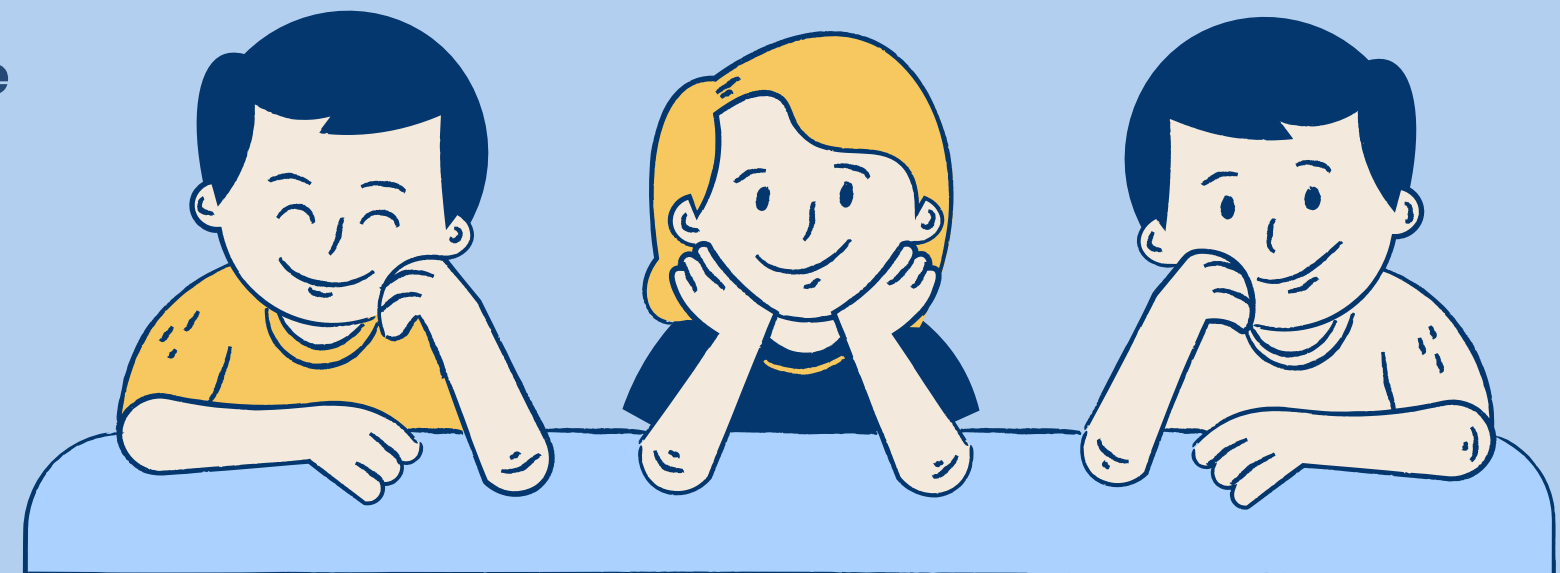
(Peters, 1986), (Lundberg and Pollak 2003)



DIVERGING INVESTMENTS IN CHILDREN

- **Children** may have a **crucial role in the socioeconomic variations in marriage behavior.**
- Since most men and women with all levels of education eventually get married, the main difference between the family histories of college graduates and others is not whether they marry or not; rather, it **is the timing and length of the marriage**, as well as **how it relates to childbearing and childrearing.**
- Given the brief average duration of these relationships, **mothers with less education are far more likely to become pregnant while cohabiting** and are also **more likely to raise their children alone or with a new partner.**

- Different approaches to investing in children are the focus of a different explanation for the unequal retreat from marriage that provides a better justification for the decoupling of marriage and reproduction by parents who are not college graduates.



DIVERGING INVESTMENTS IN CHILDREN

- Marriage can serve as **a commitment tool for the collaborative joint effort of raising** economically successful **children, especially for parents with college degrees**, and partly because it is **more expensive to leave** than cohabitation.

- **For college graduates**, who are more likely to make these investments, higher returns on human capital and on intensive children investments, may have maintained **high levels of marital surplus**.

- **College graduates** typically marry later and **put off starting a family until marriage because long-term commitment allows for this shared investment**.

(Lundberg and Pollak 2014, 2015)

- Parents with **higher and lower levels of education** may **invest in their children differently**.
 - According to ethnographic research, **poor and working-class parents tend to prioritize safety and survival over achievement in their parenting hopes and aims**.

(Lareau 2003; Edin and Kefalas 2005)



DIVERGING INVESTMENTS IN CHILDREN

Why might the incentives to invest in children have diverged across education groups?

- **All parents should invest more** if there is an **increase in the returns on human capital**.
 - Parents have **spent more time with their kids** across **all educational levels**.
 - **The resources and capacities of parents vary**.
 - **Higher-educated parents** will make their time with kids **more productive**.
 - They also seem to **know more** about how children learn and interact with them in **more developmentally appropriate ways**.

(Kalil, Ryan, and Corey 2012)

- Numerous empirical studies show that **childcare time increases with education**, despite the fact that the theoretical impact of **parental productivity on time spent investing in children is unclear**.

(Guryan, Hurst, and Kearney 2008)
- The **dynamic complementarities** in the development of children's talents will **strengthen these benefits**.

(Heckman 2000; Todd and Wolpin 2007; Aizer and Cunha 2012)
- If "skill begets skill," then **children who have early cognitive and health advantages** will **benefit more from parental investments and formal education**.
- This suggests that **parents with limited finances and uncertain futures** may **expect lower returns on their investments for their children** than better-educated parents with bigger and more stable investing capacities.

IMPLICATIONS OF GROWING FAMILY INEQUALITY FOR CHILDREN, WOMEN, AND MEN



- When compared to college graduates, those with less education are more likely to have children outside of marriage, which has **ramifications for both the well-being** of men and women **as well as the generational transfer of assets and skills.**
- It would be **inappropriate to treat these outcomes as though they were the results of family change itself rather than of the underlying economic and social forces that have changed American families.**
- This is because the **diverging patterns of partnering and parenting across education groups reflect changes in the incentives to invest in children and in relationship-specific capital.**

CHILDREN: DIVERGING DESTINIES

- **Children of women without college degrees are far more likely** than children of college graduates to **be born to an unmarried or cohabiting mother**, to **have a father leave home**, and to **grow up in a complex family**.
- **Children of college graduates will experience a childhood with**, on average, **more volatility** and **limited father participation**.
- According to McLanahan (2004), these tendencies have contributed to the "**diverging fates**" of children from privileged and underprivileged homes, with the **top group benefiting from access to the time and resources of two highly educated parents** while many in the bottom group do not.

- Family structure indicators, such as the number of **years a parent has been single**.
(McLanahan and Sandefur 1994)
- Family transitions have substantial and consistent relationships with **child outcomes** like **educational attainment, crime, and mental health**.
(Fomby and Cherlin 2007)
- **Parental cohabitation** (as opposed to marriage) is significantly **linked to poor results for kids and teenagers**.
(Brown 2004)

Noted that parental traits that go unnoticed may have a significant role in determining family structure, family transitions, and child outcomes.



WOMEN: INDEPENDENT AND AT RISK

- The **burden of raising children has grown** for women with or without college degrees due to **rising family instability**.
- Women with high school diplomas and some college are **more likely to live in poverty than women with college degrees**, and part of this disparity might be attributed to **the possibility that women with less education will be single mothers raising children on their own**.
- **Unmarried women with children experience significantly greater poverty rates** than married women with children **across all educational levels**.
- **87% of children who live with one parent are housed with their mother**.

(Payne 2013)

- Women now have **more flexibility to reject marriages** as well as to **leave risky or unsatisfying relationships** as cohabitation, nonmarital childrearing, and **divorce become more socially acceptable**.
- A result of the divorce revolution, which **decreased the expense of ending a marriage**, was a notable **decline in domestic violence and female suicide**.
(Stevenson and Wolfers 2006)
- Although **unmarried women** generally have **less financial security than married women**, a significant **benefit of the decline in marriage** may be a **decrease in the occurrence of unhealthy or unhappy relationships**.



MEN: UNBURDENED AND UNMOORED

- Both cohabitation and marriage are associated with **declines in men's risky behavior**, such as binge drinking and drug use, although **the decreases connected to marriage are greater and more dependable than those connected to cohabitation.**

(Duncan, Wilkerson, and England 2006)

- **Men** put in **longer hours at work** and **make more money** when **they are married.**
- According to Akerlof (1998), marriage has a **causal effect on social pathology**
- The "**shotgun marriage**" occurs when an **unexpected pregnancy** happens. Men are responsible for co-residence with children. He contends that the adjustment to marriage is a milestone marked by **a shift in obligations that changes men's tastes** and causes them to spend more time engaging in domestic tasks.

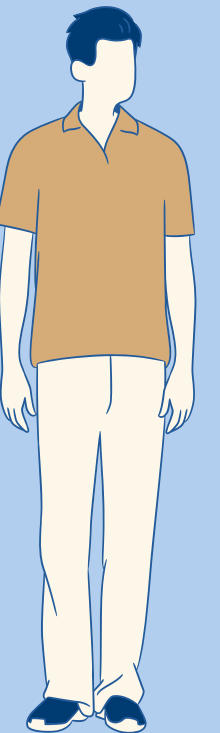
- There is a **condition of their marriage agreements** with their wives.

- The destiny of **elderly men without spouses** or devoted children is a **major concern among demographers and gerontologists.**

- The assumption that **aging fathers who did not consistently co-reside with their children** as they grew up **receive less support from their adult children** is supported by data on intergenerational transfers.

- **Time and money transfers from children** are **less common for fathers who never wed or are divorced** from the mothers of their children, but **not for mothers who never wed or are divorced.**

(Pezzin, Pollak, and Schone 2008; Astone, Peters, and Gelatt 2015; Wiemers, Seltzer, Schoeni, Hotz, and Bianchi 2015)



CONCLUSION

- In the past 60 years, **American family** structures have gotten **increasingly diversified and transient**.
- **Premarital cohabitation has been a common occurrence for men and women of all educational levels** as the **average age for first marriage has increased**.
- For all demographic categories, **divorce rates are still significantly higher** than they were prior to the divorce revolution.
- **Children of parents with lower levels of education are more likely to encounter instability** in the family.
- **The shrinking gender wage gap has decreased the marital surplus** from specialization and exchange.
- Because of **strict gender norms** that restrict men to **the role of a primary breadwinner or the decline or stagnation in the real earnings of less educated men**, this gap has narrowed more for the high school and some college groups.
- **High-resource men and women may use marriage as a commitment tool** that promotes **childrearing as a cooperative investment** project in response to **rising returns on human capital**.
- The **less educated** may be **deterred** from doing so by their **unclear economic prospects**.
- Despite the majority of the data supporting a negative association between family instability and child well-being, researchers are still **unable to determine the causal impacts of family structure patterns and trajectories on child outcomes**. But there is a lot of evidence to suggest that **future inequality will be made worse by the disparity in child investments** between wealthy and poor families.





THANK YOU