The Development of Marriage Expectations, Attitudes, and Desires From Adolescence into Young Adulthood

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Abstract

We contribute to research on understanding changes in marital behavior by examining marriage attitudes among young people during the time when they first begin to formulate their expectations and desires for union formation during adolescence and the transition to adulthood. We use national data from Add Health and document how marriage attitudes vary by social groups defined by race, ethnicity, immigrant generation, socioeconomic status, family background, and parenthood status. We model theoretical-derived factors that play a role in the development of marital attitudes, focusing on sociocultural effects associated with socialization processes in the social contexts of adolescent life, such as family structure role models among friends, in school and the neighborhood, as well as experiences with abuse in childhood and in adolescent romantic relationships. Models also include economic opportunities that bear on marriage decisions. Preliminary findings indicate clear socioeconomic differences in attitudes regarding affective dimensions of marriage compared to economic dimensions.

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Dramatic changes in family formation have received widespread public and research attention as marriage rates plummeted in the late 1980s and nonmarital childbearing became more visible across all socioeconomic and racial groups in the U.S. (Waite 2000; Wu and Wolfe 2001). Reflecting a broader trend among industrialized countries, secular declines in rates of entry into marriage and parenthood coupled with rising rates of unmarried cohabitation have become key features of the second "demographic transition" (Lesthaeghe 1995). Only in the U.S., however, where debates over "family values" occupy political and social agendas, is marriage receiving so much attention. Marriage has taken central stage in the public policy arena, where states are implementing marriage promotion policies as part of welfare reform and 1.5 billion federal dollars earmarked in 2004 for programs to promote the institution of marriage.

The postponement of marriage and rapidly decreasing marriage rates have generated much scholarly research and public debate over the "retreat from marriage" (Lichter et al.1992; Waite 2000). The retreat has been dramatic; between 1970 and 1998, the percentage of women age 20-24 who were ever married declined from 64.2 to 29.7 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1998). Although marriage rates have always been lower among blacks, rising marriage age and declining marriage rates have been especially rapid in the black population. In 1970, 56.5 percent of black women aged 20-24 had ever been married; by 1998 that percentage had dropped to 14.9. Today the median age at first marriage in the U.S. is 25 for women and 27 for men, above the 1850 historical peaks of the median age at marriage (Fitch and Ruggles 2000; US Census Bureau 2001).

Nearly compensating for the decline in marital unions, cohabitation has increased dramatically. As a result, age patterns and prevalence of co-residential partnerships (including both marriage and cohabitation) have remained fairly stable over time (Bumpass and Lu 2000; Raley 2000). The rise in cohabitation, however, has generated speculation about its meaning in the progression of romantic relationships and its consequences for the stability and centrality of marriage in America (Seltzer 2000; Smock 2000).

Explanations for the Retreat from Marriage

Understanding the changes in marriage behavior has eluded social scientists for the most part (Waite 2000). Although various theories provide plausible explanations for the recent trends, there is little empirical support for such explanations (Sweeney 2002; Oppenheimer 1997). The explanation that has received the most research attention is the growing independence of women due to secular increases in female educational attainment and labor force participation. According to Becker's (1981) economic theory of marriage, the opportunity costs of marriage and motherhood are high for educated women because their potential earnings are foregone in the context of families with a traditional sex-based division of labor. Research examining the association between macro-level variables measuring economic opportunities for women and marriage rates finds a negative relationship (e.g., Blau et al. 2000; Lichter et al. 1991; Schultz 1994), but at the micro-level, little empirical support for the independence hypothesis exists (e.g., (Lichter et al. 1992; Qian and Preston 1993; Sweeney 2002).

Oppenheimer (1997, 2000) argues that it is men's economic opportunities that matter, not simply women's. Job instability and low economic status among less-educated and less-skilled men have made them less desirable marriage mates, and indeed marriage rates have declined steeply in the low income population (Oppenheimer 2000; Sweeney 2002). New qualitative research by Edin and

Kefalas (2005) tries to get at the heart of marital decisions among the low income population and does find support for the importance of men's economic status and ability to provide a secure, stable lifestyle as a requirement for marriage. They also find, however, that the issues are often more complex, reflecting the diversity of family formation and family life in America in the new millennium, including the presence of biological children with multiple partners, new social roles for parenting non-biological children, gender mistrust, and cultural shifts in the distribution of power within relationships.

Changing cultural values surely play a role in the retreat from marriage (Casper and Bianchi 2002). Ideational shifts toward secular individualism have reduced the desirability of more permanent commitments such as marriage (Cherlin 2004; Lesthaeghe 1995). Likewise, changing gender ideologies have made traditionally defined marriage especially unattractive to women (Clarkberg et al. 1995). The rise in individualism further promotes the idea that sexual activity, cohabitation, marriage and childbearing are matters of individual choice and fulfillment.

Research examining these explanations has primarily relied on contemporaneous macro-level data or data from an individual's very recent past to predict marriage behavior. Yet predispositions toward marriage and union formation are developed long before the years in which these behaviors typically occur (Gerson 1985; Oppenheimer 1997). Experiences during childhood and adolescence affect the development of expectations and attitudes towards future behavior related to union and family formation (Schulenberg et al. 1997). In addition, most research has focused on the economic factors related to marriage decisions, largely because theory and data are more readily available to study economic effects. Our research, however, focuses on sociocultural effects associated with socialization processes in the social contexts in which adolescents grow and develop.

We contribute to the research on understanding changes in marital behavior by examining marriage attitudes among young people during the time when they first begin to formulate their expectations and desires for marriage and union formation during adolescence and early in the transition to adulthood. We use recent data from Add Health and document how marriage attitudes vary by social groups defined by race, ethnicity, immigrant status, socioeconomic status, family background, and parenthood status. We then model the socialization factors that play a role in the development of marital expectations and attitudes.

Conceptual Model

We draw on theories of socialization and opportunity structures to identify the mechanisms that operate in the development of marriage expectations and attitudes. Socialization theory explains how various socializing agents in the family and in the community influence the development of children and adolescents (Maccoby 1992; Maccoby and Martin 1983). The main function of socialization is to expose or teach youth the values, attitudes, and norms of behavior most valued or adopted by the social group in which the agent is embedded and to prepare youth to assume adult roles that embody these values and norms. Socializing agents include parents and siblings in families and peers, neighbors and institutions in the community environment. As socializing agents, parents, neighbors, classmates, and friends serve as role models who shape the perceptions of adolescents and young adults regarding future roles and lifestyles they are likely to assume.

While the family structure in which children grow up is a primary socialization influence (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994), the prevalent family forms in adolescents' social environments among friends, in school, and in the neighborhood also transmit norms about acceptable union formation. Young people who live in neighborhoods where a large percentage of the families are

female-headed, who attend schools with a high percentage of children living in single-mother families, and who have many friends who live with one parent deduce that single-parent families are acceptable and that they too might eschew marriage and expect to form such families. The reverse socialization process occurs when two-parent married families are more prevalent in adolescents' schools, neighborhoods, friends' families, and their own family. We know of no research that has explored the socialization effects of these union type role models, nor of any data set that allows such exploration except Add Health.

The notion of "collective socialization" captures socialization processes that occur at the contextual level, in which role models in a context are crucial for a child's socialization (Jencks and Mayer 1990). Bandura (1969, 1986) argued that the larger the number of adults in a community who engage in a particular action, the greater the likelihood that children residing in that community will develop the attitude that such behavior is normative. He further argues that this is especially the case for same-sex adult acquaintances. Thus, collective socialization in the families of close friends, the families in the school, and in the neighborhood involves both role modeling of normative behavior for union formation and the monitoring of youth's lifestyle choices.

We include other socializing influences during childhood and adolescence that affect the development of marital attitudes. Research suggests, for example, that the experience of abuse and mistreatment during childhood is an important factor in trajectories into poverty, single motherhood, and welfare receipt (Cherlin et al. 2004). We expect sexual abuse during childhood, in particular, to influence attitudes about marriage and union formation. Religiosity is another socialization factor that previous research has shown to be associated with more traditional forms of union formation (i.e., marriage as opposed to cohabitation).

We also model opportunity structures in the social contexts of young people's lives, including labor force opportunities for women, economic opportunities for men, and the ratio of male to female unemployment. Controls for other structural effects that define sources of social stratification include race, ethnicity, immigrant status, family background and socioeconomic status, and neighborhood poverty.

Data

Data come from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), an ongoing nationally representative, school-based study of adolescents in grades 7 to 12 that began in 1994 who have been followed with multiple interview waves into young adulthood. Add Health was designed to explore the causes of health-related behaviors, with an emphasis on the influence of social context. In 1994-95 Add Health administered an In-School Questionnaire to every student attending school from a nationally representative sample of schools. A sample of 80 high schools and 52 middle schools from the U.S. was selected using a stratified cluster design. Incorporating systematic sampling methods and implicit stratification into the Add Health study design ensured this sample is representative of U.S. schools with respect to region of country, urbanicity, school type, ethnicity, and school size. Over 70% of the schools originally selected for the survey participated.

Using the school rosters of selected schools, a random sample was selected for in-home interviews with adolescents and a parent in 1995, constituting Wave I data. A number of special samples, including oversamples of various ethnic groups, were also selected on the basis of in-school responses. As a result of high immigration to the US during the 1990s and the Add Health design that oversampled relatively rare ethnic groups (e.g., Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Chinese), Add Health contains a large number of adolescents in immigrant families—one out of four adolescents lived in an

immigrant family (first and second generation). Of the adolescents selected for the in-home interviews, 79% participated in Wave I resulting in a sample size of 20,745 adolescents aged 11-19.

All adolescents in grades 7 through 11 in Wave I were followed up one year later for the Wave II in-home interview in 1996, with a response rate of 88.2%. In 2001-02 a third in-home interview was conducted with the original respondents from Wave I as they were now aged 18-28 and experiencing the transition to adulthood. Over 15,000 Add Health respondents were re-interviewed at Wave III (77.4% response rate) with longitudinal data over the various waves of interviews. Contextual data containing information on the characteristics of the neighborhoods and communities in which Add Health sample members lived in Waves I and II have been linked to individual-level records. See Harris et al. (2003) for more details on the Add Health design and longitudinal data.

We limit our analysis to never-married respondents at Wave III with individual, family background, school and neighborhood data from Wave I In-Home and Parent Questionnaires (N=10,266). Only 18 percent of the Add Health cohort had ever married by Wave III (N=2,434), so we are excluding those who marry early (and who are likely to have different attitudes than those who marry later). We will, however, retain this group and compare their marital attitudes with the never married to document differences (Table 1). Because our goal is to understand the development of attitudes about marriage during the life stage of adolescence and into the transition to adulthood, such attitudes no doubt change when individuals actually marry, and thus married individuals are excluded from most analysis.

Marriage Attitudes

We explore seven measures of expectations and attitudes towards marriage obtained in both adolescence (Wave I) and early adulthood (Wave II). Marriage expectations were asked of adolescents at Wave I using the following question: [1]"What do you think are the chances that you will be married by age 25?" The response options were, '1' almost no chance; '2' some chance, but probably not; '3' a 50-50 chance; '4' a good chance; and '5' almost certain. These responses were transformed to represent probabilities to obtain an interval-scaled measure with 0, 25, 50, 75 and 100% chance assigned to responses 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively.

A series of questions concerning attitudes and desires for marriage were asked of the young adults aged 18-26 at Wave III. The respondent was asked, "Using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means not important at all and 10 means extremely important, how important do you think each of the following elements is for a successful marriage or serious committed relationship?" The elements were [2] "love"; [3] "being faithful—that is, not cheating on your partner by seeing other people"; [4] "making a life-long commitment"; and [5] "having enough money." We retain the continuous distribution of responses with a range from 1 to 10 for each separate element for a successful marriage.

Marital desire measures were taken from two questions asked in the Wave III Questionnaire. The first question asked the respondent, [6] "How much do you agree or disagree with the statement 'I would like to be married now'?" The response options were 1 strongly agree; 2 agree somewhat; 3 neither agree nor disagree; 4 disagree somewhat; and 5 strongly disagree. The second question asked, [7] "How important is it to you to be married (again) someday?" The response options were 1 very important; 2 somewhat important; 3 not very important; and 4 not at all important. Responses for both questions were reverse coded so that higher scores indicated more positive attitudes towards marriage.

Independent Variables

Sources of social stratification that will differentiate marriage attitudes include sex, race and ethnicity, immigrant status, socioeconomic status (parental education, welfare receipt during childhood, income in adolescence), and parenthood status. Race/ethnicity is self-reported at Wave I and is classified into five race and ethnic groups: non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, Hispanic, Asian, or other racial/ethnic group. We defined immigrant generation with a three-category variable signifying that the adolescent is foreign-born to foreign-born parents (1st generation), U.S.-born to foreign-born parents (2nd generation) and U.S.-born to U.S-born parents (3rd+generation or native) (Harris 1999).

Using data from the Wave I Parent Questionnaire, parents' education is measured as the higher of either mother's or father's education and is represented as three categories: less than high school; high school diploma or GED and some college, college or post-graduate schooling. Using reports from the Wave I In-Home Questionnaire, Wave I Parent Questionnaire and Wave III Questionnaire, respondents are classified as receiving public assistance before the age of 18 if they reported that either parent was receiving public assistance in Wave I, if their parent reported that they or their spouse or partner was receiving public assistance in Wave I or if the respondent reported in Wave III that someone in their household received public assistance prior to the age of 18.

Family income is measured at Wave I during adolescence reported in the parent questionnaire. We categorize income into five categories because we do not expect there to be a linear relationship with attitudes and the dummy variables allow us to include an indicator for missing data: < $16,000 (or poverty level); $16,000-$31,999; $32,000-$54,999; > $55,000; and missing. Using data reported in the pregnancy history collected at Wave III, parenthood status is coded as 1 if any pregnancy results in a live birth.

Socialization measures include family structure role model variables of the family of origin, families of the adolescent's circle of best friends, families in the adolescent's school community, and families in the adolescent's neighborhood. We exploit Add Health's unique contextual design in constructing these measures of family structure role modeling in the social environment of adolescents' lives. There is rich detail on family of origin living arrangements, classifying adolescents who live with two biological or adoptive parents, a biological mother and step father, a biological father and step mother, single mother, single father, and surrogate or foster parents (including grandparents, aunts and uncles, other adult relatives, or nonrelative adults). We will explore whether living with parent figures who are married is what differentiates attitudes by combining the two biological-parent and step-parent families.

Friends' measures are obtained from the in-school interview where adolescent respondents nominate their 5 best male and 5 best female friends from the school roster. Because the in-school survey was administered to all students in the school, the majority of nominated friends also took the in-school interview and their responses can be linked to the adolescent who nominated them as friends to create friendship measures. Therefore, friends' family structure is measured as the percentage of friends who live in a two-parent family, a single-parent family, and other (with no parent or some other parent figure).

School-level family structure is created by aggregating the census of in-school responses to questions about family structure to create the percentage of adolescents in the school who live with two parents, a single parent, or in an other family form. Note that the family structure measure for friends and

school contexts is based on the in-school survey and is not as rich as the family structure measure of the family of origin which comes from the Wave I in-home adolescent interview.

Finally, neighborhood family structure comes from census data that is attached to the adolescent's home address at Wave I. We have chosen the census tract as the spatial unit most appropriate for the concept of neighborhood, and use the measures, percentage of households in the census tract that are married couples and the percentage of households in the census tract that are female-headed.

For our contextual measures of family structure modeling, we have created four categories for the range in proportions to simplify our interpretation and to examine possible threshold effects. Rather than arbitrarily selecting quartiles of the range, we examined each distribution on the family structure modeling measure, and created categories according to clustering within this range. So, for example, for the percentage of friends who live with two parents, our measure is categorized into < 50%; 50-74%; 75-99%; and 100%. The interpretation of the first category is that less than half of the adolescent's friends live with two parents; while the interpretation of the last category (100%) is that all of the adolescent's friends live with two parents. Thus, movement from the first category to the last category indicates an increasing proportion of the adolescent's friends live with two parents. We use a similar approach for the school-level and neighborhood-level measures of family structure prevalence.

Abuse and mistreatment are measured using reports from Wave III Questionnaire. Respondents are classified as being physically abused if they reported that their parent or other adult caregivers had "slapped, hit, or kicked" them. Respondents are classified as being sexually abused if they reported that their parent or other adult caregivers had "touched [them] in a sexual way, forced [them] to touch [their parent or caregiver] in a sexual way, or forced [them] to have sexual relations." We then construct an overall indicator of any mistreatment if respondents reported that their parent or other adult caregivers had physically or sexually abused them, had neglected or "not taken care of [their] basic needs, such as keeping [them] clean or providing them with food or clothing," or if they reported that Social Services investigated how they were taken care of, tried to take them out or did take them out of their living situation.

Similarly, we expect that the experience of abuse in romantic relationships will have an impact on subsequent attitudes about marriage and we therefore include indicators for ever experiencing verbal abuse, physical abuse, and either type of abuse in a romantic relationship during adolescence. These data come from reports on up to three romantic relationships during adolescence at Wave I and again at Wave II.

Religiosity is measured as an index that represents the average response to three questions on church attendance (ranging from 0 for never attend to 4 for attend once a week or more); the importance of religion (ranges from 0 for not important at all to 4 for very important), and the frequency of prayer (ranges from 0 for never to 5 for at least once a day). Those who are missing on religion are given a value of -1 on each of these measures, and are assigned a 1 on a missing religion variable. High values indicate higher levels of "religiosity."

Measures for the opportunity structure of the local community come from the Add Health contextual database. We will explore economic opportunities for men and women such as the labor market opportunity index for women, male unemployment rates, and female unemployment rates in the neighborhood (i.e., census tract) in which respondents live during adolescence. Educational opportunities will be measured by the proportion of adults in the neighborhood who have a college

degree. Socioeconomic structure is captured by the proportion of households in the neighborhood that are below the poverty line. Because we argue that it is during adolescence that young people begin to formulate their expectations and desires for future union formation, this is also the time that they look to their future opportunities in the labor market and think about the trade-offs involved with education, work, marriage and family formation.

Analysis Plan

We first contrast marriage expectations, attitudes and desires by fundamental social stratification indicators in America to provide some perspective on variations across social groups using the national data from Add Health. Much of the research on marriage and marital attitudes is limited by focusing on selected populations, such as Non-Hispanic whites, or low-income individuals. We define social groups according to sex, race and ethnicity, immigrant status, socioeconomic status (parental education, welfare receipt during childhood, income in adolescence), and parenthood status. We provide preliminary results of this descriptive analysis below.

We then model variations in marriage attitudes by incorporating theory-based predictors of the development of marriage attitudes, including the socialization effects of the prevalence of union types in the social contexts of adolescent life including family forms in the family of origin, among friends, in the school, and in the neighborhood, as well as religiosity, childhood experiences with abuse and mistreatment, and experiences of abuse in adolescent romantic relationships. Models also include macro-level effects of educational and economic opportunities and structural constraints, as well as the controls examined in the descriptive analysis above (sex, race, ethnicity, immigrant status, and socioeconomic status). We will test for whether analysis should be conducted separately by sex.

To develop more parsimony in the measurement of the dependent variable on marriage attitudes, we will conduct exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis to explore the creation of one or more constructs capturing marital attitudes. The results of this analysis will determine the estimation technique we use, but assuming we are able to develop interval-level scales of attitudes (either based on a factor score, or weighted additive scale), we will use OLS regression (or possibly tobit regression if we are concerned about censoring at either end of the scale).

Preliminary Results

Tables 1-6 show preliminary descriptive results on our marriage expectations, attitudes, and desires for selected subgroups. We begin by contrasting marriage attitudes by marital status at Wave III. Results in the first row validate the association between expectations and behavior by showing that respondents who eventually married (currently married and previously married) between Wave I and Wave III did express higher expectations at Wave I that they would marry by age 25, reporting a 61-62% chance compared to a 55% chance among those still unmarried at Wave III.

The remaining measures were taken at Wave III in early adulthood. Here we see that those who are currently married are different from those previously married or never married. The currently married place greater importance on love, being faithful, and making a lifelong commitment in marriage, and place less importance on having enough money in marriage than either the previously married or never married. Ratings along these dimensions are much closer among the previously married and never married group, which seems to indicate that marriage attitudes differ more by whether one remains married than by whether one ever married. All of these differences are statistically significant.

Not surprisingly, the importance of being married someday is rated as more important among the never married group since the previously married group has already been there, done that. Evidently

the previous married group prefers to still be married, for they rate wanting to be married now more highly than the never married group. Clearly, those who marry and are able to maintain a stable marriage express much more positive attitudes about marriage. This is likely a result of their success in marriage. We therefore drop this group from further analysis, especially since this group causes the least concern among policymakers and the public alike. We also drop the previously married group from further analysis because 1) the experience of already entering marriage is likely to bias responses, and 2) they are a small number.

In Table 2 we show differences in marriage expectations, attitudes and desires by race and ethnicity. During adolescence, whites and Asians have higher expectations for marriage by age 25, with blacks the lowest expectations, consistent with behavioral trends. The low expectations among Hispanics may reflect the fact that Hispanics marry earlier than the other groups, and once we drop the ever married from the sample, Hispanics remaining are those most likely to marry later. Whites stand out as rating the importance of love and being faithful in marriage more highly than the other groups, while blacks have the lowest ratings of these marital qualities. Yet, on the importance of having enough money in marriage, blacks rate this aspect much more highly than the other groups, and whites have the lowest ratings. Apparently the intimacy and trust dimensions of marriage are more important to whites, while the economic dimension is more important to blacks, consistent with Edin and Kefalas's (2005) recent research. Whites, comfortable in more privileged strata of society, do not consider money to be as essential as aspect of marriage as love and trust. Minority groups, in more economically vulnerable social strata, place much greater importance on economic security in marriage, especially blacks. It is also interesting that blacks have less desire to be married now, or to ever marry someday, than the other ethnic groups, with whites the second least desires.

Although marriage expectations during adolescence do not differ by sex, results in Table 3 indicate that females place more importance on love, faithfulness, and commitment in marriage than males. There are no sex differences in the importance of money, and unsurprisingly, females also have stronger desires to be married now and to marry someday.

Family structure of the family of origin significantly distinguishes marriage attitudes in Table 4. Although adolescents who live with two biological parents tend to have higher expectations for marriage and place more importance on love, faithfulness and commitment in marriage, the family structure that stands out is the "other family" form, with lower expectations and less importance placed on these aspects of marriage. Adolescents who live in an "other" family form are those who do not live with any biological parent, but live in foster homes, with relatives, or with other adults. These adolescents have probably experienced the most turmoil in their family living arrangements. It is possible that such turmoil is associated with their low rankings on love, faithfulness, and commitment, and their high ranking on having enough money in marriage. Adolescents living with a single mother also emphasize the importance of having enough money in marriage compared to the other qualities of marriage.

Parental education distinguishes marital attitudes among young people along the lines of socioeconomic status (Table 5). We see a similar pattern where higher socioeconomic status represented by higher parental education is associated with higher adolescent expectations for marriage by age 25, and less importance placed on having enough money in marriage. Moreover, young people whose parents were more highly educated have less desire to be married in early adulthood, but place more importance on being married someday compared to adolescents who have less educated parents, probably reflecting their own investments in education and career in delaying marriage. We see similar patterns according to socioeconomic status in Table 6 where we contrast attitudes by welfare receipt during childhood.

Summary

Remaining analyses will examine attitudinal differences by family income, immigrant status, and parenthood status, followed by modeling of attitudes with our theory-based socialization and opportunity structure measures described above. At this point, there seems to be consistent evidence that high socioeconomic status affords an attitudinal emphasis on the affective qualities of marriage, such as love, trust, and commitment, with less concern about the economic security of marriage. For minorities and those of lower socioeconomic status, attitudes show the opposite; that is, less importance is placed on love, trust, and commitment, and more on having enough money in marriage. This suggests that attitudes may develop among young people as they observe their social surroundings and the threats to marital stability brought about by economic insecurity despite levels of love, trust, and commitment in the relationship.

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Table 1. Mean Differences in Marital Attitudes, Desires and Expectations by Marital Status, Weighted Add Health data (N= 12,900).

	Currently Married N=2,381	**Previously Married[1] N=220**	**Never Married N=10,299**	**Significance**
Wave I Expectation to marry by age 25 (Scale 0 to 100% Chance)	61.38	62.24	55.21	*
Wave III Measures				
Importance of love in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.82	9.64	9.63	*
Importance of being faithful in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.87	9.70	9.70	*
Importance of making a lifelong commitment in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.78	9.23	9.20	*
Importance of having enough money in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	5.82	6.36	6.32	*
Agreement with wanting to be married now (Scale 1-5)	----	2.63	2.40	NS
Importance of being married (again) someday (Scale 1-4)	----	2.93	3.30	***

Notes:
[1] Includes previously married individuals who are currently unmarried.
Significance level for descriptive statistics:
* $p<0.05$
** $p<0.01$
*** $p<0.001$

Table 2. Mean Differences in Marital Attitudes, Desires, and Expectations by Race, Never Married Sample N= 10,299.

	NH White	NH Black	NH Asian	Hispanic	Significance
Wave 1 Expectation to marry by age 25 (Scale 0 to 100% Chance)	57.39	45.39	56.14	47.16	**
Wave III Measures					
Importance of love in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.70	9.42	9.49	9.55	*
Importance of being faithful in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.76	9.49	9.65	9.65	*
Importance of making a lifelong commitment in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.22	9.16	9.23	9.48	NS
Importance of having enough money in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	5.91	7.60	6.62	6.69	*
Agreement with wanting to be married now (Scale 1-5)	3.35	3.14	3.44	3.43	*
Importance of being married (again) someday (Scale 1-4)	2.80	2.66	3.37	3.14	*

Table 3. Mean Differences in Marital Attitudes, Desires, and Expectations by Sex, Never Married Sample N= 10,299.

	Male	Female	Significance
Wave 1 Expectation to marry by age 25 (Scale 0 to 100% Chance)	55.16	55.48	NS
Wave III Measures			
Importance of love in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.53	9.76	*
Importance of being faithful in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.59	9.83	***
Importance of making a lifelong commitment in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.01	9.42	***
Importance of having enough money in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	6.26	6.39	NS
Agreement with wanting to be married now (Scale 1-5)	2.24	2.58	***
Importance of being married (again) someday (Scale 1-4)	3.26	3.35	**

Table 4. Mean Differences in Marital Attitudes, Desires, and Expectations by Family Structure, Never Married Sample N= 10,299.

	Two bio/adoptive parents	Mom only	Dad only	Step family	Other family	Significance
Wave 1 Expectation to marry by age 25 (Scale 0 to 100% Chance)	58.19	50.93	51.10	52.24	47.35	*
Wave III Measures						
Importance of love in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.67	9.58	9.60	9.63	9.46	*
Importance of being faithful in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.75	9.62	9.58	9.69	9.58	*
Importance of making a lifelong commitment in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.25	9.10	9.10	9.19	9.09	*
Importance of having enough money in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	6.17	6.72	6.21	6.30	6.92	*
Agreement with wanting to be married now (Scale 1-5)	2.35	2.49	2.30	2.46	2.63	*
Importance of being married (again) someday (Scale 1-4)	3.36	3.16	3.21	3.30	3.05	*

Table 5. Mean Differences in Marital Attitudes, Desires and Expectations by Parent Education, Never Married Sample N= 10,299.

	Less than high school	High school graduate	Some college or more	Significance
Wave 1 Expectation to marry by age 25 (Scale 0 to 100% Chance)	53.37	53.31	57.16	*
Wave III Measures				
Importance of love in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.56	9.63	9.67	NS
Importance of being faithful in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.60	9.71	9.71	NS
Importance of making a lifelong commitment in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.17	9.23	9.17	NS
Importance of having enough money in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	6.89	6.44	6.03	**
Agreement with wanting to be married now (Scale 1-5)	2.78	2.50	2.18	***
Importance of being married (again) someday (Scale 1-4)	3.18	3.25	3.41	**

Table 6. Mean Differences in Marital Attitudes, Desires, and Expectations by Welfare Receipt during Childhood, Never Married Sample N= 10,299.

	No Welfare	Welfare	Significance
Wave 1 Expectation to marry by age 25 (Scale 0 to 100% Chance)	56.32	52.00	***
Wave III Measures			
Importance of love in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.67	9.54	**
Importance of being faithful in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.71	9.67	NS
Importance of making a lifelong commitment in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	9.24	9.08	*
Importance of having enough money in marriage or serious committed relationship (Scale 1-10)	6.24	6.62	**
Agreement with wanting to be married now (Scale 1-5)	2.35	2.57	***
Importance of being married (again) someday (Scale 1-4)	3.35	3.14	***