



How do marriage market conditions affect entrance into cohabitation vs. marriage?

Karen Benjamin Guzzo*

*NRSA Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Sociology, University of Pennsylvania,
3718 Locust Walk, Philadelphia, PA 19104, USA*

Available online 7 July 2004

Abstract

Widening gaps in marriage rates have received a great deal of attention in recent years, focusing on the availability of marriageable men in the local marriage market. At the same time, cohabitation has increased in prevalence, playing a role in declining marriage rates. This paper extends marriage market arguments to the formation of both cohabiting and marital unions, using contextual data at the Labor Market Area (LMA) level linked to the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG). Findings indicate that as the sex ratio increases, the odds of marriage over either remaining single or cohabiting increases, suggesting the cohabitation and marriage are not substitutable. However, the sex ratio does little to explain black–white differences in union formation.

© 2004 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Marriage market; Cohabitation; Marriage

1. Introduction

There has been extensive investigation into group differences in marriage rates based on local marriage markets, with the decline in marriage among minority and low-income populations linked to changes in the numeric availability and the

* Fax: 1-215-573-2081.

E-mail address: kguzzo@sas.upenn.edu.

social and economic acceptability of potential mates (Bennett et al., 1989; Brien, 1997; Fossett and Kiecolt, 1991, 1993; Lichter et al., 1991, 1992; Lloyd and South, 1996; Raley, 1996; Schoen and Weinick, 1993; South and Lloyd, 1992a; Spanier and Glick, 1980; Teachman et al., 1987; Wilson and Neckerman, 1986; Wood, 1995). The shortage of men, especially economically stable men, is thought to play a significant role in widening racial and socioeconomic differences in marriage rates and family structure.

However, we can no longer study marriage without considering cohabitation (Bumpass, 1995, 1998; Bumpass and Lu, 2000; Bumpass and Sweet, 1989). Marriages are increasingly preceded by cohabitation, though fewer cohabitations are ending in marriage. Cohabitation has also played a role in the rising age at first marriage, delaying it for both men and women (Wu, 1999). On the whole, though marriage rates have declined, cohabitation reduces the magnitude of the overall decline in unions, especially among young adults (Bumpass et al., 1991; Qian and Preston, 1993). The complex relationship between cohabitation and marriage has, for the most part, been examined from a straightforward demographic approach (i.e., the prevalence of cohabitation and marriage, characteristics of cohabitators compared to married individuals, which cohabitations transition into marriage). Most previous marriage market research addressing the decline of marriage and group differences in marriage has generally ignored the role of cohabitation and the potential impact of marriage market characteristics on cohabitation, which is a major oversight. I argue here for the application of marriage market arguments to both cohabitation and marriage, as well as the choice between union types. Individuals have more than the choice to marry or not when making union formation decisions; an important option that has arisen is cohabitation, though it remains to be seen whether factors influence cohabitation in the same manner as marriage. Under different marriage market circumstances, individuals may be forced to adjust their union formation preferences and behaviors, perhaps spurred to choose one union type over another. This paper thus provides an important contribution by bridging marriage market and cohabitation research.

2. Marriage market theories

Marriage market arguments have essentially followed one of two lines: a demographic approach based on the sex ratio of men to women (Becker, 1981; Guttentag and Secord, 1983; Oppenheimer, 1988) and an economic approach based on the 'marriageability' of males (Wilson, 1987; Wilson and Neckerman, 1986). In general, there are two main explanations that fall under the demographic approach. One explanation focuses on *marital search models* (Becker, 1981; Oppenheimer, 1988), where individuals search for suitable mates in a defined area. Although Becker grounds his marital search model in rational choice theory and Oppenheimer grounds her model in job search theory, both assert that the probability of marriage is highest when the number of potential mates is greatest. There are different theoretical backgrounds in these models, but each has common predictions for how

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات