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# THE TIES THAT BIND

## Perspectives on Marriage and Cohabitation

Linda J. Waite

Editor

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Aldine de Gruyter  
New York

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ALDINE DE GRUYTER

A division of Walter de Gruyter, Inc.  
200 Saw Mill River Road  
Hawthorne, New York 10532

This publication is printed on acid free paper ©

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The ties that bind : perspectives on marriage and cohabitation / edited by Linda J. Waite; co-edited by Christine Bachrach . . . [et al.]

P. cm. — (Social institutions and social change)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-202-30635-6 (cloth) — ISBN 0-202-30636-4 (pbk.)

1. Marriage. 2. Unmarried couples. 3. Domestic relations. I. Waite, Linda J. II. Bachrach, Christine. III. Series.

HQ734.T53 2000

306.81—dc21

99-059683

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## Contents

### Acknowledgments

ix

### Introduction

1

- 1 The Changing Shape of Ties That Bind:  
An Overview and Synthesis  
*Christine Bachrach, Michelle J. Hindin, and Elizabeth Thomson* 3

### I. Trends in Marriage and Cohabitation

- 2 Recent Trends and Differentials in Marriage and Cohabitation:  
The United States  
*R. Kelly Raley* 19

- 3 European Perspectives on Union Formation  
*Kathleen Kiernan* 40

- 4 Historical Trends in Marriage Formation:  
The United States 1850–1990  
*Catherine A. Fitch and Steven Ruggles* 59

### II. Perspectives on How Unions Are Formed

- 5 The Evolutionary Psychology of Marriage and Divorce  
*Martin Daly and Margo I. Wilson* 91

# 1

## The Changing Shape of Ties That Bind: An Overview and Synthesis

CHRISTINE BACHRACH, MICHELLE J. HINDIN,  
and ELIZABETH THOMSON

### INTRODUCTION

Intimate sexual unions in the western world used to follow a clearly defined normative sequence: a couple fell in love, married, and had children. Today, that picture has become vastly more complicated: couples cohabit before or instead of marrying and they have children in circumstances ranging from marriage to casual sexual partnerships. Those who do marry are doing so at historically late ages, often after having become parents.

In the United States, premarital cohabitation has become the norm: 56% of women who first married in the early 1990s cohabited before marriage. In 1995, nearly one-fifth of single women ages 19–44 were cohabiting with a partner (Bumpass and Lu, 1999). In many Western industrialized countries, similar scenarios are playing out, although variations from one country to another can be dramatic: in the early 1990s, all but 8% of first unions in Sweden were cohabitations or marriages preceded by cohabitation; in Italy, only 12% of first unions began as cohabitations (Kiernan, this volume).

At the same time, marriage is occurring later and less frequently than in the relatively recent past (Saluter and Lugaila, 1998). In the United States, age at marriage was at an historic low in 1950: half of all women married by age 20 and half of all men by about age 23. By 1996, the median age at marriage had increased to 24.8 years among women and 27.1 years among men, both historic highs. Declines in marriage have been most dramatic among African-American men and women (Fitch and Ruggles, this volume). Currently 61% of white women and 31% of black women marry by age 25; 80% and 45%, respectively, marry by age 30 (Raley, this volume, Figure 2.3). To some extent, cohabitation has become a substitute for mar-

riage; that is, the formation of an intimate coresident union has been delayed to a much lesser extent than the timing of marriage.

A third feature of changes in the ties that bind is the increasing separation of childbearing and marriage. In the United States, 95% of babies born in 1960 were born to married mothers. By the 1990s, only about two-thirds of births were occurring within marriage (Department of Health and Human Services, 1995; Ventura et al., 1999). This rapid increase in nonmarital childbearing resulted from two developments. First, birth rates to unmarried women increased dramatically, from 25 per 1000 women in 1975 to 45 per 1000 women in 1995 (Ventura et al., 1999). Second, the proportion of childbearing-age women who were unmarried (and thus at risk of having a nonmarital birth) also increased substantially, because women were waiting longer to marry and in some cases foregoing marriage altogether. Increased cohabitation has also been linked to the increasing separation of childbearing and marriage: births to cohabiting couples accounted for a substantial proportion of the increase in births to unmarried women during the late 1980s and early 1990s (Bumpass and Lu, 1999).

#### WHAT IS MARRIAGE AND WHY DOES IT EXIST?

In this volume, we define marriage as a legally and socially recognized union, ideally life-long, that entails sexual, economic, and social rights and obligations for the partners. Cohabitation, by contrast, refers to an intimate sexual union between two unmarried partners who share the same living quarters for a sustained period of time. Cohabitation differs from marriage along many dimensions: it does not normally invoke specific legal rights and obligations and it is generally less permanent than marriage (Waite and Gallagher, 2000). Compared to married couples, cohabiters are less likely to pool financial resources (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983), are less sexually exclusive (Forste and Tanfer, 1996), and are more dependent on families of orientation (Rindfuss and VanDenHeuvel, 1990). Several chapters in this volume also consider forms of intimate relationships in which partners see each other regularly but do not coreside. Such unions encompass a broad range of involvement and commitment, shading into casual dating relationships at one end and perhaps leading to cohabitation or engagement to marry at the other.

Marriage and marriage-like relationships exhibit strong universalities across time and cultures, but also vary in significant ways. The universalities may emerge from "human nature"—those features of the human makeup that predispose us biologically to behave in particular ways, and even to create cultures and social systems that reinforce or modify our pre-

dispositions. Variations in marriage may arise from what we might loosely call "environmental" conditions, including political and social institutions, cultural norms, and economic systems.

What all humans have in common is their evolutionary history. A species evolves when certain traits are more successful than others in contributing to "fitness" or the production of young that survive to reproduce themselves. Humans have evolved to possess traits (e.g., sexuality, nurturance) that foster conception and the care of young children. In virtually all human societies, they have also generated social systems that regulate these functions. Unlike many other mammals, humans are oriented toward biparental care: both the mother and father participate in the rearing of young and both gain status through childbearing. Not coincidentally, humans tend to establish enduring intimate relationships with their sexual partners, cemented by love, companionship, and economic cooperation or exchange. Humans are "fairly" but not completely monogamous; even in Western societies where polygamy is outlawed, the serial monogamy of many individuals is a reminder that we are not completely "programmed" to remain faithful to one life-long mate. Evolutionary psychologists have noted apparent universalities in mate selection, such that females are more responsive to status and males to youth and attractiveness. They suggest that such criteria enable males to maximize the number of children they sire and females to ensure the presence of a reliable mate to help their offspring survive to adulthood (Daly and Wilson, this volume).

Of course, human nature did most of its evolving under conditions very different from those we experience today—in hunter-gatherer societies with relatively simple means of providing for the necessities of life. Luckily, evolution provided humans with the ability to adapt to environmental change. In recent centuries, the pace of environmental change has been accelerating. This is particularly true with respect to the means of production: technological advances have greatly transformed what it takes to provide for basic needs, expanding in the process the educational requirements for producing a successfully functioning adult and transforming as well the relations between the sexes. In the process our cultures have changed: in Western cultures individualism and materialism have gained ground while control of the group over individual behavior has diminished (Inglehart, 1997). Social institutions have become large and complex, and technology has brought virtually all the world's cultures into potential contact with each other.

Variation in marriage behavior is strongly associated with the varying environmental conditions within which sexuality and reproduction occur. No grand theory to fully account for such environmental variations has emerged, but most theories contain some common themes. One is the

importance of "rational choice" in decisions individuals make about partnership formation and dissolution. This theme is perhaps most evident in economic models (see Weiss, 1997; Pollak, this volume; Moffitt, this volume), but is also central to models in psychology (e.g., the theory of reasoned action, see Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) and sociology (exchange theory, see Homans, 1961). The basic idea is that in making any kind of choice or decision, individuals weigh the costs and benefits of alternative courses of action given a set of external opportunities and constraints. They choose the course that is most beneficial and least costly to them.

Another common theme arises from the fact that marriage or the formation of any union requires the agreement of at least two people, each of whom has alternatives to consider. That is, the condition of the "marriage market," including the availability and characteristics of potential mates and the costs of searching (England and Farkas, 1986), may determine whether, when, and whom an individual marries. Matching and search theories indicate the processes by which each individual evaluates the attractiveness of a potential match and decides whether to make the match or to continue searching. Bargaining theory indicates the process by which individuals negotiate an agreement to marry or not marry, using their resources (e.g., attractiveness, social status, and alternative matches) as bargaining chips (Pollak, this volume; Cherlin, this volume). These same resources influence which partner has more power in bargaining after a marriage occurs (Blood and Wolfe, 1960).

A third theme in theories of marriage focuses on the fact that individual choices and dyadic interactions unfold in specific social and cultural contexts (see chapters by Axinn, Lehrer, Oropesa, Moors, and others, this volume). These contexts may vary dramatically along a variety of dimensions: the extent to which social, religious, and legal institutions promote or support marriage or define the characteristics of desirable mates, the norms concerning acceptable behavior for men and women inside and outside of marriage, and the economic and social conditions that structure opportunities and barriers to supporting a family. The selection of a particular mate and the maintenance of relationships may depend on structural factors such as propinquity, similarity, and social supports (Surra and Gray, this volume).

Shared cultural norms, meanings, and values evolve as a result of a constant interplay between individual behaviors and social responses. When a husband and wife strike a bargain over the division of household tasks in the United States today, most often they do so in a cultural context that associates homemaking with femininity. As Shelton and England (this volume) point out, this helps to explain why the wife, even when she holds all the economic bargaining chips, still does most of the household work. Similarly, the strong normative expectation that a man must be able to sup-

port his family in order to marry helps us understand why a couple might not marry if their pooled earnings, but not the male's individual earnings, are sufficient and secure enough to provide support for the new family.

#### WHY HAS MARRIAGE CHANGED?

The chapters in this volume indicate several sets of changes thought to be related to the dramatic changes in marriage and union formation during the last half century within most of the world's economically developed countries. Marriage has become less affordable at early ages as the educational requirements for making a good living have been extended and those not obtaining a college education have had increased difficulty establishing themselves in careers. Gendered expectations within marriage have not caught up with the demands for wives' economic contributions to households, reinforcing the barriers that joblessness and low earnings create for men's marriage and increasing the costs of marriage to women. Normative changes have reduced the costs of not marrying by greatly increasing tolerance for pursuing sexual activity, intimate coresident relationships, and parenthood while single. New contraceptive methods reduced the risks of becoming pregnant as a result of nonmarital sex. High divorce rates have reduced the returns to marriage by undermining its permanence. Each of these changes has helped to set the stage for delayed marriage, increased nonmarriage, and the emergence of alternative forms of intimate unions such as nonmarital cohabitation.

*Economic Opportunities for Men.* Research has consistently demonstrated that whether and when a man marries is closely tied to the adequacy and stability of his earnings. There are two major reasons for this. One is the normative imperative that a man should be able to support his family. The second is that decisions about marriage depend on the prospective partner's ability to judge whether a man is likely to satisfy this imperative in the long run (Oppenheimer, this volume). Thus, it is not surprising that marriage tends to occur after the completion of education (Kieman, this volume) and often years after. One of the best predictors of whether a man will marry is whether he has a job (Goldscheider and Waite, 1986). Further, the difficulty that young men have in achieving and sustaining full-time, year-round employment and earnings above the poverty level is strongly related to the timing of marriage (Oppenheimer, this volume). We do not know whether the difficulty of achieving career and earnings stability has increased over time. We do know, however, that men with a high school education or less have experienced declines in real earnings over recent decades (Oppenheimer, 1994) and that increases in

cohabitation have occurred disproportionately in this group (Bumpass and Lu, 1999; Lehrer, this volume). Taken together, these two trends suggest that cohabitation does not place the same requirement on men, that they be able to assume the primary breadwinner role, as does marriage (Cherlin, this volume).

*Economic Opportunities for Women.* One of the most striking behavioral and normative shifts during recent decades has been the wholesale movement of women, including married women and mothers, into the labor force. In 1950, 24% of married women and 51% of single women worked for pay; by 1994 labor force participation had grown to 61 and 67%, respectively (Teachman et al., 1999). This movement is associated with changes in opportunities, in particular the growth of service-sector and professional jobs attractive to women, changes in normative beliefs about married women's employment, economic necessity in the face of rising standards of living and declining or stagnant real wages, women's increasing concern about the possibility of divorce, and a growing desire among women for activities that fit their interests and training and that are valued by others (Spain and Bianchi, 1996). As women's employment levels approached those of men, so did their wages (Oppenheimer, 1994); increasing wage parity may, however, have been due more to the increasing inequality in men's wages than to growth in women's wages (Bernhardt et al., 1995).

The implications for marriage of the increased economic power of women are widely debated. In traditional economic models of marriage, the benefit of marriage (and hence the motivation to marry) is seen as deriving from specialization (Becker, 1991). Men put all their effort in paid employment, where they have the relative advantage, while women focus on home production, where their relative advantage is greater. The wife's investments in the home are seen as making the man more productive in his work, producing what has come to be known as the "marriage premium"—married men are paid more than unmarried men (Gray and Vanderhart, this volume). The husband's concentration on work allows the wife to produce a quality home environment. According to these specialization models, the larger the wage gap between men and women, the greater the gains to marriage and the more likely marriage will occur. Conversely, the decline in marriage can be linked to the improvement in women's economic position relative to men (Moffitt, this volume; Gray and Vanderhart, this volume). When both marital partners are employed, the gains to specialization and the incentive to marry are reduced.

Others argue to the contrary that women's earnings power now facilitates marriage rather than discouraging it. In recent studies, the earnings of females have been *positively* associated with the propensity to marry,

parallel to earlier and continuing effects of men's earnings (Goldscheider and Waite, 1986). Symmetric rather than specialization models of gains to marriage may be more consistent with today's marriage patterns (see Oppenheimer, this volume; Cherlin, this volume). In symmetric marriages, both spouses are engaged in breadwinning and both tend the home, although not necessarily in equal proportions. Such symmetry provides insurance against the loss or incapacity of a single breadwinner (Oppenheimer, this volume) and may be more efficient in the long run than an arrangement in which each spouse is totally specialized.

*Gendered Roles within the Family.* Another often-cited reason for declining marriage rates and increasing cohabitation is the "second shift" (Hochschild, 1989). The substantial increase in the time women spend in paid employment has not been matched by a proportional shift in the time their husbands spend in homemaking (Shelton, this volume). Women may be reluctant to marry because they recognize that they will have to shoulder the primary responsibility for household work in addition to working outside the home. Some scholars have suggested that the future of marriage depends on achieving a more equitable division of household labor between men and women (Goldscheider and Waite, 1991). Cherlin (this volume) suggests that one of the "latent functions" of cohabitation is to allow women to assess the willingness and ability of a potential husband to contribute to work inside the home.

A related aspect of gender relations within marriage is the power differential between men and women. The male power advantage in marriage derives from traditional gender roles, the male earnings advantage, and, occasionally, the threat of physical violence. Its influence is evident in household negotiations: husbands' attitudes about the division of household labor have a stronger influence than do wives' attitudes on the work the husband and wife perform in the home (Shelton, this volume). As England (this volume) points out, however, women's power disadvantage may not be a realistic deterrent to marriage: male dominance affects single women as well as married women. The heavy load of paid work plus homemaking may be more of a problem for women who remain single, particularly if they want children. Marriage provides some help with household chores, and access to the (on average) higher earnings of a man.

*Family Norms, Values, and Attitudes.* The constellation of norms, values, and attitudes concerning behaviors related to sexuality and the family has been transformed over recent decades. The changes we have seen are fundamentally intertwined with the transformation in marriage behaviors. Scholars disagree about the causal effects of normative change on behavior. On the one hand, societal disapproval of a behavior tends to

reduce the chances it will occur by raising the social costs of engaging in it; on the other hand, shifts in the prevalence of behaviors can influence attitudes toward them. Guy Moors (this volume) demonstrates that on the individual level, values and attitudes are predictive of the family formation choices people make, while at the same time choices made—whether to cohabit, marry, live separately from parents, or have a child—have the effect of reinforcing or negating earlier-held attitudes.

It is also common for both ideational change and behavioral change to arise simultaneously from other changes in the environment, such as changes in technology and economic conditions that make new behaviors possible and even adaptive. Akerlof et al. (1996) argue that the development of oral contraceptives and legal access to abortion triggered changes in norms and behavior by making it less possible for women to say no to sex outside of marriage. However, this view is also overly simple, because ideational and behavioral change can also influence the direction of technological development. Childcare centers developed in response to women's movement into the workforce; the development of birth control technologies responded to an increased demand for control over reproduction. It seems most productive to view norms, values, and attitudes as interdependent and mutually influential with other factors driving changes in marriage (Axinn and Thornton, this volume).

Ideational factors can influence behavior at several levels. A broadly held cultural norm (e.g., that a man must be able to support his family in order to marry) creates a context that defines the relations between economic opportunities and marriage behavior. If the norm changes, these relationships may also change as specific behaviors take on new meaning. Shared norms, values, and meanings also factor into the calculus of "rational choice" by influencing the social costs and rewards for engaging in particular behaviors. Interaction of individuals at the dyadic, group, and institutional levels can contribute to the evolution of attitudes and values at the individual and social levels and lead to behavioral change.

In recent decades, attitudes toward family issues have changed dramatically in some domains and remained relatively stable in others. Among the most significant change has been a steady increase in tolerance toward sexual behavior outside of marriage. In the United States, disapproval of nonmarital sex, cohabitation, and childbearing declined steadily during the 1970s and 1980s, and remained low in the 1990s (Axinn and Thornton, this volume). These changes have reduced the social costs of enjoying intimate relationships and parenthood outside of marriage, and thus have reduced the incentives to marry. In doing so they have made the delay of marriage and the choice of nonmarriage more feasible.

In other domains, changes have been mixed. Disagreement with the idea that "men should achieve in the workplace while women care for home and family" has increased steadily (Axinn and Thornton, this vol-

ume). On the other hand, as noted above, the attitude toward the male breadwinner role in marriage seems to have remained unchanged. Gendered expectations of female behavior have changed more, but primarily in terms of increased tolerance for a variety of roles: homemaking and nurturing of the young are still firmly linked to a female identity, and even in couples with egalitarian attitudes women still do most of the household chores (Shelton, this volume). Expectations of gendered relations in marriage have changed, but still tend toward traditional models when compared to the more egalitarian expectations that define cohabitation. Finally, despite the dramatic change in marriage behavior, Americans have continued to value marriage strongly. Since the 1970s, there has been virtually no change in the proportion of young people who see married people as happier than unmarried people (Axinn and Thornton, this volume), and the proportion of high school seniors who claim that a good marriage is "quite or extremely important" to them has held steady at over 90% for women and over 85% for men (Thornton, 1989).

*Increasing Divorce Rates.* Another factor that may contribute to increases in delayed or foregone marriage is the substantial increase in divorce that occurred during the 1970s and 1980s. Today, young brides or grooms in the United States face at best an even chance that their marriage will last "until death do us part." As Waite and Gallagher (2000) suggest, it is the permanence of marriage that gives individuals confidence to invest in their marriages and to reap gains from marriage. Economic specialization and joint investment—whether in houses, cars, children, friends, or simply deep emotional attachments to each other—are risky strategies for relationships that may not last. Increasing divorce rates reduce the returns to marriage by making it riskier for individuals to invest in marriage. The lower the returns to marriage, the more likely are individuals to defer marriage and perhaps to forego it entirely.

Another consequence of high divorce rates is the large numbers of children who experience a parental divorce. These children, it turns out, are more likely to choose cohabitation before marriage, and are more likely to divorce themselves (Arnato and Booth, 1997). Increasing divorce rates in one generation thus set off an echo in the next, fed by individuals whose first-hand experience teaches them to be wary of the permanence of marriage.

## WHY DOES MARRIAGE VARY ACROSS GROUPS?

Focusing on trends in marriage and cohabitation can obscure the great variability within our society and across societies in the timing, prevalence, and meaning of marriage. Understanding group differences at a

given point in time can provide perspectives on the importance of changing economic, cultural, and institutional factors that support marriage.

Education plays a crucial role in influencing union formation. Men who end their education at or before high school graduation tend to marry at earlier ages than men who attend college. College-educated men marry at high rates during the late twenties but by age 30 are still less likely than high school graduates or high school dropouts to have married (Raley, this volume). As Moffitt (this volume) demonstrates, different educational groups within the United States have experienced significant differences in the growth of male and female wages in recent decades, leading to increasing economic inequality within our population. He suggests that declining marriage rates for the more highly educated are a story of increasing female wages, whereas declining rates for the less educated are a story of decreasing male wages.

Belinda Tucker's (this volume) analysis of ethnic and racial differences in attitudes relating to marriage underscores the joint influence of norms and economic opportunities. Tucker finds that black, Hispanic, and white urban Americans value marriage equally; however, marriage has declined most precipitously in the black population. Large economic disparities between the races explain a large part of this difference, as do the lower availability of marriageable black men (because of higher mortality and incarceration rates) and lower levels of educational attainment. However, Tucker also finds that economic concerns loom larger in blacks' expectations and values about marriage. African-Americans are more likely to emphasize economic security and a promising earnings trajectory as a criterion for male marriageability, and this magnifies the effect of economic disadvantage on marriage.

Hispanic populations are also economically disadvantaged but have much higher rates of marriage than do African-Americans (Raley, this volume). Oropesa and Gorman (this volume) stress the importance of examining the cultural values brought by various immigrant groups to our country. Groups of Hispanic origin tend to have strong promariage and profamily values (including an emphasis on male dominance within marriage). Asians also hold more traditional, profamily values, whereas immigrants of European origin are more similar to (but still more traditional than) native-born Americans. Among Hispanic and European immigrants, increasing exposure to American mainstream culture tends to weaken family values.

Religious institutions influence the marriage and cohabitation behavior of individuals by shaping and reinforcing norms and values (Lehrer, this volume). Among religious groups, Mormons and Fundamentalist Protestants marry earliest and are least likely to preface marriage with cohabitation. Jews are most likely to delay marriage and to cohabit before

marrying. Closely associated with these differences in union formation are differences among religious communities in the importance placed on higher education and in values concerning nonmarital sex, marriage, divorce, gender roles, and childbearing.

Governments also influence union formation through their policies. Marriage penalties embedded in the tax system may discourage marriage (Waite and Gallagher, 2000), as may welfare programs that restrict eligibility to the unmarried. Women's marriage rates are lower, and cohabitation higher, in states with more generous benefits under Aid to Families with Dependent Children (Lichter et al., 1991; Moffitt et al., 1998).

Cross-national variation in marriage patterns is likely to be linked to national religious and other cultural traditions. Such traditions often support national policies and programs that directly or indirectly influence marriage behavior. But those policies and programs may have independent effects on family formation choices. The relatively low levels of cohabitation, nonmarital fertility, and divorce in southern European countries, together with low marriage and marital fertility rates, have been attributed to the lack of state support for employed parents (see Kiernan, this volume).

## ORGANIZATION OF THE VOLUME

The four parts of this volume provide a sampling of research describing and explaining how the formation of intimate sexual unions has changed over time and how it varies across populations and groups. Part I focuses on demographic trends and population differences. R. Kelly Raley describes recent trends and differentials in marriage, cohabitation, and other intimate unions in the United States; Kathleen Kiernan provides an international perspective on the variations in trends among industrialized nations; and Catherine Fitch and Steven Ruggles examine historical trends and differentials in patterns of marriage in the United States since 1850.

In Part II, three papers provide theoretical perspectives on marriage and union formation. Martin Daly and Margo Wilson discuss insights from evolutionary psychology; Robert Pollak discusses the development of economic theories of marriage; and Andrew Cherlin suggests new approaches to understanding patterns of marriage and cohabitation, synthesizing themes from sociological and economic theory.

The six papers in Part III focus on norms, attitudes, and values related to marriage and cohabitation, and the process of relationship commitment. William G. Axinn and Arland Thornton describe changes in attitudes about marriage, family, and sexuality over recent decades in the United States. M. Belinda Tucker reports on values and expectations among black, white, and Hispanic urban Americans. R. S. Oropesa and

Bridget K. Gorman discuss the values of immigrant groups to the United States and the impact of assimilation on values. Guy Moors examines the ways in which individuals' family values and behavioral choices influence each other over time. Evelyn Lehrer analyzes and interprets differences in the United States among religious groups in marriage and cohabitation. Finally, Catherine A. Surra and Christine R. Gray identify the ways couples develop personal commitment in their relationships, focusing on social support and interpersonal perceptions.

Papers in Part IV examine the underlying bargain made in marriage and the extent to which it is constrained by external economic factors or changing norms within marriage. Valerie Kinrade Oppenheimer discusses the effect of young men's difficulty in establishing career maturity on their marriage prospects, and Robert A. Moffitt evaluates the consistency of traditional microeconomic theories of marriage with recent trends and differentials in male and female wages and marriage rates. Paula England asks whether, given the female disadvantage in marriage, women still benefit by choosing to marry over remaining single. Beth Ann Shelton examines explanations for the gender gap in household work, which results in the "second shift" noted above. Jeffrey S. Gray and Michel J. Van derhart examine the sources of the "marriage premium" in men's wages and the reasons underlying recent declines in this wage advantage. Finally, Linda J. Waite demonstrates the continuing robustness of other advantages in marriage: married men and women remain more highly satisfied with various aspects of their lives than singles, and these differences have not diminished over time.

The scientists contributing these papers represent a range of disciplines: sociology, demography, economics, history, social psychology, and evolutionary psychology. Their collective message is that there have been powerful forces reshaping marriage and intimate unions in recent years. Although scientists usually focus on the impact of one or another causal factor, it is most likely the confluence, interaction, and mutual reinforcement of changes in many domains—economic, technological, cultural and social—that have brought us to where we are today.

What is perhaps most remarkable, in the face of all these changes, is that marriage continues to be highly valued, indeed viewed as the most desirable form of intimate relationship (Axinn and Thornton, this volume; Cherlin, this volume). A future challenge for research is to "unpack" the meaning and benefits of marriage so as to understand this better. How does marriage provide for the needs of individuals and families in ways that other union forms do not? What are the social, cultural, and institutional forces supporting the value of marriage in the face of so much change? Another challenge for research is to improve our understanding of the social, economic, and cultural barriers to the formation of satisfying

and enduring intimate unions, by any name, and the ways in which these barriers might be overcome. Whether our concern is the welfare of children, the self-fulfillment of adults, or the moral health of our society, improved knowledge of the processes underlying marriage and other intimate unions is of the utmost relevance.

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# I

## TRENDS IN MARRIAGE AND COHABITATION