

Embracing the Institution of Marriage: The Characteristics of Remarried Americans

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Introduction

It has been suggested that marriage in the U.S. has become deinstitutionalized (Cherlin 2004), as a consequence of its diminished status in American society. In the past, marriage was a commonplace, even required, stage of the life course and a marker of the transition to adulthood. Today, it is a less obligatory institution (Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001), and some openly question the decision to marry. Those who do choose to marry do so at a later age than in the recent past. Between 1960 and 2005, the estimated median age at first marriage increased from 23 to 27 for men, and from 20 to 25 for women (U.S. Census Bureau 2006).

Furthermore, those forming relationships and families today have other “socially sanctioned” options in addition to marriage, including cohabitation and childbearing outside of marriage (Cherlin 2004). Among those marrying between 1965 and 1974, about 11% of marriages were preceded by cohabitation (Bumpass and Sweet 1989), in contrast to 56% of marriages between 1990 and 1994 being preceded by cohabitation (Bumpass and Lu 2000). Thus, cohabitation is increasingly accepted as an alternative to or trial for marriage (Wu 2000), and has consequently become more institutionalized (Cherlin 2004). Marriage is also no longer seen as a necessary precursor for having children. Americans are increasingly having children outside of the institution of marriage, as nonmarital childbearing has increased from about 5% of all American births in 1960 (Ventura and Bachrach 2000) to 40% in 2007 (Hamilton et al. 2009).

Demographic scholars interpret the deinstitutionalization of marriage and associated changes in the family in different ways. Some believe that a decline in the importance of the family has occurred through the loss of several social functions and its decreased influence on individuals’ behavior and attitudes (Popenoe 1988, 1993; Wilson 2002). Others maintain that the family is resilient, though changed, and that numerous family forms are valid and effective

(Coontz 1997, 2000; Goode 1970). In an attempt to better understand the meaning of marriage today and the factors that have led to the deinstitutionalization of marriage, researchers have begun to explore why Americans today continue to marry. By extension, this paper explores the factors that impel people to remarry. That is, within the context of deinstitutionalized marriage, which people choose to remarry? Are they more similar to or different from those marrying for the first time? Who remarries compared to those who cohabit or stay single following the end of a first marriage?

Existing evidence suggests that remarriage, compared with first marriage, is an incomplete institution. Remarriage lacks many of the norms that guide behavior in first marriages; expectations for dealing with partners' children are much less clear (Cherlin 1978). Other problems these families encounter include the incorporation of new kin and quasi-kin into the nuclear and extended family (Cherlin 1978), the lack of consistent or appropriate terms for these kin (Ganong and Coleman 2004; Koenig Kellis, LeClair-Underberg, and Normand 2008), ill-defined roles for these new relationships (Boss 1987), and boundary ambiguity, or uncertainty about who is a member of the family system (Boss and Greenberg 1984; Stewart 2005). Indeed, those in the same stepfamily may even disagree on definitions of family (Berger 1998; Smart et al. 2001). Legal provisions are also ambiguous in the treatment of remarried families, doing little to aid such families in negotiating rights, responsibilities, and resources between family members (especially between stepparents and stepchildren) (Cherlin 1978).

In addition to the difficulties it creates, the incomplete institutionalization of remarriage may lead to fewer rewards, increased risks, and more negative outcomes for remarried families. The lack of clarity in family membership and roles following remarriage may heighten dissatisfaction, misunderstandings, and resentment among family members (Fine and Kurdek,

1994). These, in turn, can contribute to family stress, depression, and inadequate family functioning (Boss 1980; Boss et al. 1990; Burns 1987, Madden-Derdich, Leonard, and Christopher 1999). This mechanism helps explain why the risk of divorce is higher for remarriages compared with first marriage (Booth and Edwards 1992; Bramlett and Mosher 2002), and why wives report lower levels of relationship quality and union stability as family ambiguity increases (Stewart 2005).

Given the difficulties associated with remarriage in many circumstances, and the deinstitutionalization of marriage in general, we might expect remarriage to be an unattractive option for Americans today. However, many Americans continue to remarry, and may even remarry multiple times. Cherlin has suggested that American culture generally places such a high value on marriage that it is viewed more positively in the United States relative to other Western countries (2009). But, is remarriage an alternative for all or just some? As with first marriages, there are likely social forces at work that affect the ways Americans view remarriage as well. Using new marital history questions from the 2008 American Community Survey (ACS), this paper will explore three possible explanations for variations in who remarries in America: cohort effects; variations in social and demographic characteristics such as education, income, race, and ethnicity; and geographic variations promoting a “culture” of marriage.

Theoretical Explanations for Remarriage

Cohort effect

Attitudes toward marriage and divorce have changed over time, such that different birth cohorts have experienced varying “cultures” of marriage. Members of elder cohorts tend to show greater endorsement of traditional family structures (Pagnini and Rindfuss 1993), in part because they were socialized and/or first married prior to the dramatic changes that occurred in

family attitudes and behavior in the latter part of the 20th century. Those raised during the Great Depression may have been particularly interested in starting their families early and having large families because of their childhood experiences and their subsequent experiences following World War II (Elder 1999). Those in elder cohorts who divorced may have been more inclined to remarry than those of younger cohorts due to more traditional norms and expectations regarding marriage.¹

In contrast, those in subsequent cohorts, such as the baby boomers and more recent cohorts (Generations X, Y, and the oldest of the Millennials) may place less emphasis on family life than older cohorts (Coltrane 2001). Following the post-World War II upsurge in marriage and childbearing, there were marked declines in marriage and fertility rates (Cherlin 1992; Fitch and Ruggles 2000; Haines 1996). This has occurred, in part, because younger individuals now spend more time in early adulthood pursuing education and careers, simultaneously detracting from their investment in marital relationships and offering alternative routes to life fulfillment. In addition, shifts in societal attitudes in recent decades may also contribute to those in younger cohorts having less attachment to marriage. Societal attitudes now express a greater tolerance about a variety of family conduct and family forms (Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001). Marriage is now less pivotal than it was in the past in the regulation of personal identities, transitions to adulthood, romantic relationships, household composition, and the bearing and raising of children (Axinn and Thornton 2000), and those who feel marriage is unnecessary for a

¹ It is important to note that the cohort effect proposed here could be confounded with an age effect. In either case, we would expect older adults to be more likely to remarry than younger adults. However, the logic behind this pattern differs for the two effects. A cohort effect would occur if elder individuals are more likely to remarry due to the influence of more traditional family values and patterns they encountered in their youth. An age effect would operate if older individuals are more likely to remarry simply because they have completed a greater portion of their lifespan and were thus exposed to a greater risk of divorce and, consequently, remarriage.

satisfactory life now outnumber those who believe it is key to life satisfaction (Kaufman and Goldscheider 2007).

Historical data collected about attitudes toward marriage and divorce find that there were particularly important transitional periods. This suggests the benefit of studying cohort effects and the propensity to remarry. For example, in the period from 1957 to 1976, marriage attitudes altered markedly, so that fewer Americans expressed negative feelings toward remaining single and there was a pronounced rise in those who viewed marriage in a negative light and had concerns about the restrictiveness of marriage (Veroff, Douvan, and Kulka 1981). During the 1960s and 1970s, the divorce rate markedly increased as the legal restrictions on divorce loosened (Cherlin 1992; Cherlin 2009) and Americans became more approving of divorce (Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001), but these shifts slowed in the 1980s and 1990s (Casper and Bianchi 2002). Despite this slowing in change, acceptance of divorce remains at fairly high levels. About one fifth of adults believe that divorce is never justified (Inglehart 1997), and approximately four fifths of youth think divorce is acceptable even if children are present in the family (Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001). Even among conservative religious groups in the United States, divorce is not a desired outcome, but it is a tolerated life status (Cherlin 2009).

In this paper, we theorize that pre-boomers will be more likely to remarry compared with the baby boomers, and especially compared with more recent cohorts including Generations X, Y, and the Millennials. Given the difficulties in untangling age, period, and cohort effects, we will approach the analyses by using age groups, broken into their respective cohort designations, to approximate an understanding of cohort differences.

Social Characteristics

Marriage once served as the bedrock of an adult life, and young adults frequently married before accomplishing things in other realms. Today, however, marriage now serves as more of a capstone or crowning achievement, symbolizing prestige and marking personal success (Cherlin 2004). Many young adults today see marriage as a status that one builds up to, often benefiting from a trial period (i.e., cohabitation) beforehand (Popenoe and Whitehead 2009). The list of items that they wish to accomplish prior to marriage has lengthened considerably, and financial stability is particularly important (Edin and Kefalas 2005; Smock, Manning, and Porter 2005). Even the wedding ceremony itself has risen in prominence, serving as a marker of the couple's success (Bulcroft, Bulcroft, Bradley, and Simpson 2000; Cherlin 2004). Accordingly, many young couples today believe their wedding merits a large celebration, and that a small ceremony is less appropriate (Smock 2004; Smock, Manning, and Porter 2005).

Due to this shifting view of marriage, those who are better off and have demonstrably advanced in other areas are more likely to marry and often have better marriage prospects than others. Since the 1970s, marital rates have diverged according to women's education (Raley and Bumpass 2003). While two-parent married couple families are enduringly common among couples with high levels of educational attainment, they are ever more infrequent among those with less education (McLanahan 2004). Similarly, higher income is predictive of marriage. This is now the case for both women and men, likely because both men and women seek marriage partners with higher earning potential (Sweeney 2002). In contrast, though marriage continues to be a valued and ideal state for the poor and near poor (Sanchez et al. 2002), for many of them it remains out of reach (Edin and Kefalas 2005; Edin 2000). Women from lower income classes have difficulty forming fiscally advantageous marriages, as they have difficulty attracting the

most marriageable men, likely because men with higher incomes also seek partners who have better economic prospects (Oppenheimer, Kalmijn, and Lim 1997; Wilson 1987). In contrast, individuals who have achieved success in other realms of life are not only more likely to marry; they are also less likely to divorce. When women have higher incomes, the quality of their marriages, as well as the advantages to remaining married, are enhanced (Rogers and DeBoer 2001; Sayer and Bianchi 2000; Schoen et al. 2002).

In addition to economic class differences, a social characteristic related to marriage formation is race/ethnicity. Though marriage rates have fallen across various groups, the decline has been dramatic for some. The downturn in marriage has been particularly pronounced among African Americans when compared with Whites (Fitch and Ruggles 2000; Koball 1998).

Current research investigating the relationship between social characteristics and marriage focuses primarily on first marriages or all marriages. To date, few studies have examined whether the same attributes predict remarriage. It is possible that the very attributes that are desirable in a first spouse—higher earnings and education—are also sought when considering remarriage. If this is the case, we anticipate finding in this paper that remarriage is higher for those with more education and income. However, we may also find that those with more education and income are less represented among the remarried because of their greater marital stability. Similarly, we may also find in this paper that just as African Americans, relative to Whites, have lower rates of first marriage, they may also be less likely to remarry.

Geographic Variation

Cultural values regarding marriage and divorce vary geographically, as do the legal mandates regulating union formation and dissolution. Family legislation fluctuates widely among states because under the U.S. Constitution, marriage and divorce are regulated by the

states (Hawkins et al. 2002). In general, social policy and cultural norms are closely related to one another. Rather than occur within a social vacuum, constituents' actions and beliefs both shape and are shaped by laws and judicial decisions (Brotherson and Teichert 2001; Brotherson and Duncan 2004).

In recent years, a marriage movement, aiming to bolster marriage, has developed, taking root particularly at the state level. Hawkins et al. (2002) suggest that this movement developed as a result of the mixture of high divorce rates and enduring support of marriage as an institution. In several cases, the marriage movement has prompted state policies aimed at promoting marriage. Indeed, there is evidence that such policies occur in the context of a strong marriage culture.² Brotherson and Duncan (2004) assert that endorsement of government acts to fortify marriage requires crucial cultural assumptions, including that 1) the institution of marriage provides indispensable benefits to adults, children, and society; and 2) these benefits cannot be duplicated through legislative provisions or social programs.

Marriage promotion policies are least common in the Northeast region of the United States. Rather than respond to the marriage movement, policy in this part of the nation has continued in the tradition of family legislation that was dominant for most of the 20th century. Under this tradition, the goal of marriage and family policy is the maintenance of family privacy and the defense of households against superfluous state interference (McIntyre 1995).

In contrast, southern states have reacted most strongly to the marriage movement, enacting a variety of marriage promotion policies. Louisiana was the first state, in 1997, to authorize covenant marriage (Sanchez et al. 2002), and Arkansas followed in 2001 (Hawkins et

² It is possible that some states enacted marriage promotion legislation not out of a desire to increase marriage, but in response to high divorce rates. However, the motivation to arrest the prevalence of divorce still entails the presumption that marriage and two-parent families are preferable over divorce and single parenthood. Thus, policies aimed at thwarting divorce also are indicative of a pro-marriage culture.

al. 2002). Compared with conventional marriage, covenant marriage places stricter standards on entry into and exit from marriage. Prior to marrying, couples must participate in counseling and sign an affidavit recognizing marriage as a lifetime commitment. Covenant couples must undergo marital counseling before divorce, and divorce is much more difficult to attain. Several Southern states that have not enacted covenant marriage do have various marital counseling and/or education programs in place, including Alabama, Florida, Maryland, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, and South Carolina.

Marriage promotion in many states, but particularly in the South, is also tied to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Family (TANF) program. Some TANF programs were designed such that married couples may receive more money per month or may have the income of a new spouse disregarded with respect to their monthly payment to encourage marriage (Hawkins et al. 2002; Gardiner et al. 2002). The Southern states of Arkansas, Louisiana, and North Carolina have also all issued proclamations affirming the importance of marriage to society (Gardiner et al. 2002).

In addition to increasing regulations regarding marriage formation, legislation in many Southern states reflects a more restrictive attitude regarding divorce. While nearly all states enacted no-fault divorce legislation in the 1970s and early 1980s, Arkansas became the final state, in 1991, to authorize no-fault divorce (Martin and Parashar 2006). In Oklahoma and Tennessee, the waiting period before divorce is extended for couples with children, and in Florida, Tennessee, and Virginia, divorcing couples with children are required to participate in divorce education. Georgia has modified no-fault divorce legislation such that no-fault divorce is permitted only in cases where no children are involved and both parties agree to the divorce (Gardiner et al. 2002).

Compared with the South, Western states are less unanimous in their enactment of marriage promotion policies. Arizona and Utah are two Western states that have been noticeably influenced by the marriage movement. Arizona was the second state, in 1998, to pass covenant marriage legislation (Hawkins et al. 2002), and one million dollars in TANF funds have been committed to fund community-based instruction in marriage and communication skills. Utah proclaimed marriage to be a public good, and established Marriage Awareness Week. In 2002, \$600,000 of Utah's TANF funds were allocated to marriage promotion efforts, including relationship skills training and a website for couples intending to marry (Brotherson and Duncan 2004). In contrast, other Western states like California, Hawaii, Nevada, and Oregon offer no explicit benefit to couples on TANF who are married (Moffitt et al. 2009).

Marriage promotion initiatives have also been passed in parts of the Midwest, though they remain less pervasive than in the South. Marital education and/or counseling have been instituted in Indiana, Minnesota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Indeed, premarital counseling is mandated in Indiana (Gardiner et al. 2002). A few states have allocated TANF money to such programs, though in smaller amounts compared with other regions. Michigan has committed \$250,000 to a pilot initiative, and Wisconsin has designated \$210,000 for use in a community-based program (Brotherson and Duncan 2004).

Certainly, legislation is not the only indicator of marriage culture in a state, but it may be the most objective way we have to evaluate the undercurrent of regional attitudes toward marriage. Overall, the marriage movement has been most effective in impacting policy in the South, and least embraced by states in the Northeast (with the exception of the same-sex marriage movement which has been most embraced by the Northeast). Marriage promotion policies have also been adopted, though on a more limited basis, in the Midwest and West.

Using legislation and policy as our indicators, these findings suggest that a strong marriage culture is active in the South, while the marriage culture in the Northeast may be oriented toward allowing more personal choice and diversity regarding family life. The strength of the marriage culture in the West and Midwest is less clearly marked, though it appears to be high in Arizona and Utah. Thus, in this paper we would expect marriage to be more pervasive in the South compared with the Northeast and that regions and states that promote marriage may also foster remarriage as well as first marriage.

Data and Methods

The analyses in this paper use new marital history items that were recently added to the American Community Survey (ACS) in 2008. Consequently, data are available annually on marriage, divorce, and widowhood nationally and for states, as well as data about the year individuals were last married and the number of times they were married. The addition of marital history variables to the ACS, and particularly the number of times married, allow a never before realized opportunity to understand remarriage patterns in the United States.

The ACS was fully implemented in 2005 and was designed to replace the collection of data from the long form decennial census questionnaire that was previously distributed to 1 in 6 households in 2000. Data from the ACS are collected on an annual basis: the Census Bureau mails out a quarter-million ACS questionnaires every month to a nationwide sample, and follows up through phone and in-person interviews, ultimately collecting data from an unweighted sample ranging from 1.9 to 2.0 million households in the U.S. annually. This sample is then weighted to be representative of the nation's population as a whole. The ACS is notable for its ability to examine annual data for small geographies and consequently is well suited for analyzing geographic differences (such as state level and regional variations as this paper does).

Additional information about the ACS, its methodology, and data products can be found at <http://www.census.gov/acs/www>.

In this paper, we have restricted our analyses to those individuals age 15 and older who have ever been married in order to compare the patterns of those who have remarried to those who have only been married once. Overall, 167,048,362 Americans age 15 and over (weighted) have ever been married and among that number, 24% have been married more than one time.³ Specifically, we explore the reasons why Americans form multiple unions in an era where marriage is becoming “deinstitutionalized” (Cherlin 2004) by examining cohort differences, socio-demographic differences such as education, income, and race/ethnicity, and geographic differences. This study uses two dependent variables of interest in descriptive as well as multinomial logistic regression analyses. First, we investigate differences among those 15 and older who report marrying once compared to those who marry two or three or more times. Then, we explore differences among individuals age 20 and older who had a first marriage that resulted in a remarriage, cohabitation with an unmarried partner, or separation or divorce as reported at the time of survey.⁴ The coding of the independent variables used in the multinomial logistic regression models in this paper are listed in Table 1, and these variables are anticipated to relate to an individual’s likelihood of remarriage.

³ 2008 ACS estimates of those married more than one time are from table B12505 on American Fact Finder, http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=ACS&_submenuId=&_lang=en&_ts=.

⁴ The analyses of remarriage, cohabitation, or divorce are performed on the population age 20 and older who were married once previously, are either remarried, living with an unmarried partner, or are separated or divorced and are householders or the householders’ unmarried partners or spouses. The sample is restricted by age because editing procedures in the ACS do not allow anyone under the age of 20 to report being married twice. The sample is further restricted to householders and householders’ unmarried partners or spouses because the ACS questionnaire does not determine the presence of unmarried partners for those living in subfamilies and does not ask the relationship to householder question for those living in group quarters housing. However, only 2.4% of all individuals with a first marriage that ended were members of subfamilies. Also, remarried individuals may have had a first marriage that ended through widowhood, but we are unable to detect this with the ACS data. Because widowhood is a less common end to marriage than separation or divorce, the small population of the previously widowed is not likely to affect our conclusions about the remarried.

Table 1: Coding of variables included in the logistic regression models of remarriage

Variable	Coding
Age 15 to 24	1=Yes; 0=No
Age 25 to 34	1=Yes; 0=No
Age 35 to 44	1=Yes; 0=No
Age 45 to 54	1=Yes; 0=No
Age 55 to 64	1=Yes; 0=No
Age 65 and over	1=Yes; 0=No (Excluded age category)
Female	1=Yes, female; 0=No, male
White	1=White alone; 0=Does not identify as White alone (Excluded race category)
Black	1=Black alone; 0=Does not identify as Black alone
American Indian and Alaska Native	1=AIAN alone; 0=Does not identify as AIAN alone
Asian	1=Asian alone; 0=Does not identify as Asian alone
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1=NHPI alone; 0=Does not identify as NHPI alone
Some other race	1=Other race alone; 0=Does not identify as other race alone
Two or more races	1=Identifies as two or more races; 0=Identifies as single race
Hispanic or Latino origin	1=Hispanic; 0=Not Hispanic
White alone, not Hispanic	1=Non-Hispanic White; 0=Not non-Hispanic White
Northeast	1=Yes; 0=No (Excluded region category)
Midwest	1=Yes; 0=No
South	1=Yes; 0=No
West	1=Yes; 0=No
Less than high school	1=Yes; 0=No
High school graduate	1=Yes; 0=No (Excluded educational attainment category)
Some college	1=Yes; 0=No
Bachelor's degree or more	1=Yes; 0=No
Own child present	1=Yes, householder or subfamily member has own child present; 0=No, has no own child present
High personal income	1=Income is greater than or equal to the 75th percentile; 0=Income is less than the 75th percentile
Household below poverty level	1=Yes, in poverty; 0=No, not in poverty
Household receives public assistance	1=Yes, receives assistance; 0=No, does not receive assistance
Employed	1=Yes; 0=No (Excluded labor force category)
Unemployed	1=Yes; 0=No
Not in labor force	1=Yes; 0=No
Veteran	1=Yes, veteran; 0=No, not veteran
Unmarried partner household	1=Yes, householder has partner; 0=No, householder does not have partner

Methods

To better understand explanations of patterns of remarriage, two separate analyses were performed on the data to understand variations in patterns of remarriage and subsequent union

formation. To understand variation in the number of times individuals marry, a descriptive bivariate comparison table was run to show variations in the characteristics among individuals married once, twice, and three or more times (Table 2). A subsequent multinomial logistic regression model was then run to understand if individuals age 25 and older⁵ with particular characteristics (cohort, class and race/ethnicity variations, geographic location) were more likely to be married once, twice, or three or more times (Table 3).⁶ Then, descriptive analyses were run for individuals living in households who were age 20 and older and had been married previously, but the marriage had ended and culminated in remarriage, cohabitation with an unmarried partner, or separation or divorce (Table 4). Finally, a multinomial logistic regression model was also performed to understand who was likeliest to be living with an unmarried partner or to be divorced or separated and not in a union compared to those who had remarried (Table 5). This paper adds to the literature by examining with the most representative and large-scale data ever collected on marital history patterns which Americans are likeliest to remarry and whether theorized explanations for such variations matter.

Findings

WHO ARE REMARRIED AMERICANS?

Table 2 shows the descriptive characteristics of Americans married once, twice, and three or more times.

⁵ The sample in this model was restricted to individuals age 25 and older because editing procedures do not allow those under the age of 25 to be married three or more times.

⁶ An ordinal logistic regression model was also run for the number of times married outcome variable, but results from a score test suggested that a multinomial logistic regression model was more appropriate for this variable.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Ever Married People 15 or Over by Times Married: ACS 2008 (Population 15 and older who were ever married; Weighted; n=167,048,362)

Demographic Characteristics	Total Ever Married		Times Married					
			Once		Twice		Three or More	
	167,048,362		126,198,264		32,310,448		8,539,650	
	%	SE/1	%	SE/1	%	SE/1	%	SE/1
	100.0	-	100.0	-	100.0	-	100.0	-
Age								
15 to 24 years	2.1	0.01	2.7	0.02	0.3	0.01	-	-
25 to 34 years	13.5	0.03	16.2	0.03	6.1	0.05	1.9	0.05
35 to 44 years	20.5	0.03	21.6	0.04	18.7	0.07	11.9	0.11
45 to 54 years	23.1	0.03	21.6	0.04	27.8	0.08	27.9	0.15
55 to 64 years	18.6	0.03	16.2	0.03	24.4	0.07	31.8	0.15
65 years and over	22.2	0.03	21.7	0.03	22.7	0.07	26.4	0.14
Sex								
Male	46.4	0.04	46.3	0.04	46.7	0.08	47.0	0.16
Female	53.6	0.04	53.7	0.04	53.3	0.08	53.0	0.16
Race and Hispanic Origin								
One race	98.7	0.01	98.8	0.01	98.6	0.02	98.3	0.04
White	80.3	0.03	79.0	0.04	83.5	0.07	88.1	0.11
Black or African-American	9.1	0.02	9.2	0.03	9.4	0.05	6.8	0.09
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.7	0.01	0.6	0.01	0.7	0.01	1.0	0.03
Asian	4.6	0.02	5.5	0.02	2.3	0.03	1.0	0.03
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.1	0.00	0.1	0.00	0.1	0.01	0.1	0.01
Some other race	3.8	0.02	4.3	0.02	2.5	0.03	1.3	0.04
Two or more races	1.3	0.01	1.2	0.01	1.4	0.02	1.7	0.04
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	12.2	0.03	13.5	0.03	9.1	0.05	5.6	0.08
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	72.4	0.04	70.4	0.04	77.4	0.08	84.2	0.12
Region								
Northeast	17.8	0.03	19.2	0.03	14.6	0.06	8.5	0.09
Midwest	22.2	0.03	22.4	0.03	21.7	0.07	21.4	0.12
South	37.4	0.04	35.8	0.04	41.4	0.08	46.9	0.16
West	22.6	0.03	22.6	0.04	22.4	0.07	23.3	0.14
Educational Attainment								
Less than high school	14.8	0.03	15.0	0.03	13.7	0.06	15.7	0.12
High school graduate	28.8	0.03	27.9	0.04	31.0	0.08	33.0	0.15
Some college	29.1	0.03	27.8	0.04	32.9	0.08	34.8	0.15
Bachelor's degree or more	27.3	0.03	29.3	0.04	22.4	0.07	16.5	0.12
Own Child under 18 in Household	33.7	0.04	36.1	0.04	28.2	0.08	18.3	0.13
Economic Well-Being								
High Personal Income	31.0	0.03	31.1	0.04	31.8	0.08	27.3	0.14
Household Below Poverty Level (n=164,033,354 living in households)	8.2	0.02	8.2	0.03	8.0	0.05	9.4	0.10
Household Receives Public Assistance (n=164,033,354 living in households)	2.0	0.01	2.0	0.01	2.1	0.03	2.5	0.05
Labor Force Status								

Employed	62.2	0.04	62.8	0.04	61.6	0.08	55.2	0.16
Unemployed	2.8	0.01	2.7	0.02	2.9	0.03	3.1	0.06
Not in Labor Force	35.0	0.04	34.5	0.04	35.5	0.08	41.7	0.16
Veteran (Includes those in military)	12.6	0.02	11.1	0.03	16.4	0.06	21.2	0.13
Unmarried Partner Households	1.5	0.01	1.4	0.01	1.6	0.02	1.8	0.13

- Represents or rounds to zero.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2008

1/ Standard errors were computed using the Taylor Expansion method.

Table 2 shows descriptive differences among those married once compared to those married two or three or more times. With respect to cohort differences, proportionately, the highest percentage married three or more times are baby boomers age 55 to 64 (31.8 percent). Those age 65 and older constitute only 26.4 percent of those married three or more times. This may reflect generational differences among those most affected by the social upheaval during the 1960s and 1970s that produced increases in the divorce rate (Cherlin 2009).

The socio-demographic characteristics described in Table 2 reveal variations. White individuals are likely to remarry (constituting 88.1 percent of those married three or more times, and 83.5 percent of the population married two times, compared with 79.0 percent of the population married once). This is particularly the case when the White alone, not Hispanic or Latino population is examined: although constituting 70.4 percent of the population married once, White alone, non-Hispanic individuals comprise 77.4 percent of the population married two times, and 84.2 percent of the population married three or more times. Those with a bachelor's degree are 29.3 percent of those married once, but 22.4 percent of those married twice and 16.5 percent of those married three or more times. Finally, veterans constitute 11.1 percent of those married once, while representing 16.4 percent of those married twice, and 21.2 percent of those married three or more times (Table 2).

Looking at regional differences in Table 2, it is notable that the percent remarried in the Northeast is low, while high in the South. Individuals in the Northeast represent 19.2 percent of

those married once, but, 14.6 percent of those married twice, and 8.5 percent of those married three or more times. Those in the South represent 35.8 percent of those married once, but 41.4 percent of those married twice, and 46.9 percent of those married three or more times. These descriptive characteristics present some evidence fitting with the hypothesis that the culture of marriage may be higher in the South relative to the Northeast.

Table 3 presents the results from the multinomial logistic regression, where the likelihood of being married twice and three or more times is tested against being married only once.

Table 3: Logistic Regression Predicting Likelihood of being married one, two, or three or more times: ACS 2008 (Population 25 and older who were married at least once and living in households; Weighted; n=160,589,635)

	Married two times compared to one			Married three or more times compared to one		
	Estimate	SE/1	Odds Ratio	Estimate	SE/1	Odds Ratio
Age (<i>excluded category is 65 and older</i>)						
25 to 34 years	-0.9903 ***	0.011	0.371	-2.1076 ***	0.031	0.122
35 to 44 years	-0.1426 ***	0.008	0.867	-0.4771 ***	0.017	0.621
45 to 54 years	0.2296 ***	0.007	1.258	0.2724 ***	0.012	1.313
55 to 64 years	0.3718 ***	0.006	1.45	0.5866 ***	0.01	1.798
Female	0.1075 ***	0.005	1.113	0.1381 ***	0.008	1.148
Race and Hispanic Origin						
<i>One race (excluded category is White)</i>						
Black or African-American	0.1167 ***	0.029	1.124	-0.1819 **	0.059	0.834
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.2779 ***	0.034	1.32	0.6396 ***	0.062	1.896
Asian	-0.5798 ***	0.031	0.56	-1.2208 ***	0.066	0.295
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	-0.1394 +	0.073	0.87	-0.4703 **	0.159	0.625
Some other race	-0.1361 ***	0.016	0.873	-0.2843 ***	0.039	0.753
Two or more races	0.398 ***	0.028	1.489	0.777 ***	0.055	2.175
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	-0.1197 ***	0.027	0.887	-0.5046 ***	0.054	0.604
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	0.2849 ***	0.028	1.33	0.4954 ***	0.057	1.641
Region (<i>excluded category is Northeast</i>)						
Midwest	0.221 ***	0.006	1.247	0.7113 ***	0.013	2.037
South	0.4763 ***	0.006	1.61	1.1679 ***	0.012	3.215
West	0.4028 ***	0.007	1.496	1.0488 ***	0.013	2.854
Educational Attainment (<i>excluded category is HS grad</i>)						
Less than high school	-0.0487 ***	0.007	0.952	0.0999 ***	0.012	1.105
Some college	0.0485 ***	0.005	1.05	0.0583 ***	0.009	1.06
Bachelor's degree or more	-0.3992 ***	0.006	0.671	-0.7117 ***	0.011	0.491
Own child under 18 in household	0.00162	0.006	1.002	-0.1652 ***	0.011	0.848
Economic Well-Being						

High Personal Income	0.0168 ***	0.005	1.017	-0.1113 ***	0.009	0.895
Household Below Poverty Level	0.0561 ***	0.008	1.058	0.1972 ***	0.013	1.218
Household Receives Public Assistance	0.1394 ***	0.015	1.15	0.3321 ***	0.023	1.394
Labor Force Status (<i>excluded category is Employed</i>)						
Unemployed	0.1093 ***	0.013	1.115	0.2284 ***	0.021	1.257
Not in Labor Force	-0.1127 ***	0.005	0.893	-0.1003 ***	0.009	0.905
Veteran (Includes those in military)	0.3641 ***	0.006	1.439	0.594 ***	0.01	1.811
Unmarried Partner Household	0.0615 ***	0.016	1.063	0.1795 ***	0.026	1.197
Intercept	-1.837 ***	0.03		-3.7971 ***	0.06	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2008

1/ Standard errors were computed using the Taylor Expansion method.

Significance is noted as the following: + (p<0.1); *(p<0.05); **(p<0.01); ***(p<0.001).

Findings from Table 3 indicate a number of demographic differences among the ever married. Looking at age, compared to those age 65 and older, those aged 55 to 64 are 1.5 times more likely to be married two times and 1.8 times more likely to be married three or more times all compared to being married once. This suggests that the baby-boomers who lived through the dramatic changes in laws and social acceptance of divorce in the 1960s and 1970s (Cherlin 2009) have very different remarriage patterns than those in the generation before them. The higher likelihood of remarriage among 45 to 64 year olds compared to the younger age groups may also reflect the effect of age: the older one is, the more time one has been exposed to the “risk” of divorce and remarriage. This makes the contrast between those 65 and older and those aged 55 to 64 particularly noteworthy as a cohort effect.

Other socio-demographic characteristics are associated with a greater likelihood of remarriage. Looking at race, Blacks compared to Whites have a higher likelihood of being married two times, but a lower likelihood of being married three or more times compared to being married once. However, American Indians and Alaska Natives and those who identify as having two or more races are more likely than Whites to report being married two or three or more times compared to being married just one time. But, looking at those who are White alone and non-Hispanic, they are 1.3 times more likely to be married two times and 1.6 times more

likely to be married three times than other race and ethnic groups⁷ compared with being married one time (Table 3). Another socio-demographic characteristic of interest is Veterans and those in the military at the time of survey: Veterans were 1.4 times more likely to be married 2 times compared to 1 time and 1.8 times more likely to be married 3 times compared to 1 time than non-Veterans and non-military individuals (Table 3).

Region also produces interesting variations in who is remarried two or three or more times. Compared to the Northeast, individuals in all other regions of the country are more likely to be married two times compared to one time (Midwest is 1.2 times more likely; South is 1.6 times more likely; West is 1.5 times more likely). The odds ratios are even higher for all regions compared to the Northeast when comparing those married three or more times compared to one time (Midwest is 2 times more likely; South is 3.2 times more likely; and the West is 2.9 times more likely). Such findings may suggest that the regional emphasis on personal choice in the Northeast relative to the stronger culture of marriage in regions such as the South.

HOW DO REMARRIED AMERICANS DIFFER FROM THOSE WHO COHABIT WITH AN UNMARRIED PARTNER OR ARE DIVORCED OR SEPARATED?

Cherlin (2009) argues that relative to other Western countries, Americans are distinctive in placing a high value on marriage. Furthermore, the individualistic approach to marriage in America leads us to constantly assess and reassess our personal satisfaction in relationships. These two characteristics make Americans particularly likely to form and reform partnerships (Cherlin 2009). However, there may be a distinctive quality to those individuals who pursue additional relationships by remarrying as opposed to simply cohabiting with their new partners or living alone as a separated or divorced individual. The following analysis compares

⁷ The comparison group to White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, referred to here as other race and ethnic groups, includes all who indicate that they are of Hispanic or Latino descent and all who indicate that they are of a race other than White (Black or African-American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, some other race, or two or more races).

differences in those individuals who choose to remarry as opposed to choosing to cohabit or remaining separated or divorced. All individuals in this sample were married previously – the distinction being that one group remarried a second time, one group is cohabiting with a partner, and the other group is still separated or divorced.

Table 4 shows the descriptive findings comparing those remarried, those cohabiting with an unmarried partner, and those remaining separated and divorced among the population previously married once.

Table 4: Demographic characteristics of those who remarried, live with an unmarried partner, or are separated or divorced: ACS 2008 (Population 20 and older who were previously married once and live in households; Weighted; n=38,707,673)

Demographic Characteristics	Those 20 and older who were previously married at least once		Currently Living with an					
			Currently Remarried		Unmarried Partner		Currently Divorced	
	38,707,673		21,958,229		3,268,974		13,480,470	
	%	SE/1	%	SE/1	%	SE/1	%	SE/1
	100.0		100.0		100.0		100.0	
Age								
25 to 34 years	9.5	0.05	6.9	0.06	21.3	0.25	10.8	0.10
35 to 44 years	22.3	0.07	20.5	0.08	30.8	0.27	23.0	0.12
45 to 54 years	29.0	0.07	29.0	0.09	27.2	0.25	29.3	0.13
55 to 64 years	22.7	0.06	25.0	0.08	12.9	0.17	21.4	0.11
65 years and over	16.0	0.05	18.3	0.07	5.8	0.11	14.7	0.09
Sex								
Male	46.2	0.08	51.0	0.10	50.1	0.28	37.3	0.14
Female	53.8	0.08	49.0	0.10	49.9	0.28	62.7	0.14
Race and Hispanic Origin								
One race	98.6	0.02	98.7	0.02	98.3	0.08	98.4	0.04
White	81.0	0.07	85.4	0.08	81.1	0.23	73.7	0.13
Black or African-American	11.4	0.05	7.7	0.06	10.1	0.18	17.6	0.11
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.7	0.01	0.6	0.02	1.1	0.06	0.8	0.02
Asian	2.4	0.02	2.4	0.03	1.8	0.07	2.4	0.04
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Isl.	0.1	0.01	0.1	0.01	0.1	0.02	0.1	0.01
Some other race	3.0	0.03	2.4	0.04	4.0	0.12	3.7	0.06
Two or more races	1.4	0.02	1.3	0.02	1.7	0.08	1.6	0.04
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	10.2	0.05	8.9	0.06	13.0	0.20	11.7	0.10
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	74.3	0.07	79.4	0.09	72.8	0.26	66.4	0.14
Region								
Northeast	16.6	0.06	14.9	0.07	19.3	0.22	18.7	0.11
Midwest	22.0	0.06	21.9	0.08	23.3	0.23	21.9	0.11

South	39.3	0.08	41.2	0.10	34.2	0.28	37.5	0.14
West	22.0	0.07	22.0	0.08	23.1	0.24	21.9	0.12
Educational Attainment								
Less than high school	11.8	0.05	11.0	0.06	14.2	0.21	12.5	0.10
High school graduate	29.4	0.07	30.0	0.09	33.9	0.27	27.3	0.13
Some college	33.9	0.07	33.5	0.09	33.8	0.27	34.5	0.13
Bachelor's degree or more	24.9	0.07	25.5	0.08	18.1	0.21	25.7	0.12
Own Child under 18 in Household	30.7	0.07	35.3	0.10	18.8	0.23	26.0	0.13
Economic Well-Being								
High Personal Income	34.6	0.07	36.3	0.09	29.0	0.25	33.2	0.13
Household Below Poverty Level/2	10.4	0.05	4.4	0.04	19.0	0.23	17.9	0.11
Household Receives Public Assistance/2	2.3	0.02	1.4	0.02	4.1	0.11	3.4	0.05
Labor Force Status								
Employed	69.1	0.07	66.6	0.09	76.3	0.24	71.3	0.12
Unemployed	3.2	0.03	2.5	0.03	5.5	0.13	3.8	0.06
Not in Labor Force	27.7	0.07	30.8	0.09	18.2	0.21	24.9	0.12
Veteran (Includes those in military)	14.5	0.05	17.5	0.07	11.2	0.17	10.5	0.08

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2008

1/ Standard errors were computed using the Taylor Expansion method.

2/ This variable is a household-level variable (n=26,804,616), in contrast to the rest of the table which constitutes the eligible population living in households and may include more than one eligible person in a household (n=38,707,673).

Looking at age differences in Table 4, a notable difference among the groups is that those currently living with an unmarried partner are younger. Those 25 to 34 are 9.5 percent of the population, yet among those previously married and living with an unmarried partner, they are 21.3 percent of the population. Those 35 to 44 are 22.3 percent of all previously married once, yet represent 30.8 percent of those living with an unmarried partner. These data reflect general findings about cohabitation after the end of a first marriage: women 25 and older are less likely to be cohabiting than younger women (Bramlett and Mosher 2002). Among those who are currently divorced, 62.7 percent are women, while 37.3 percent are men. This gender difference may reflect patterns following divorce: men who had divorced previously are more likely to be remarried than similar women (Kreider 2005).

Race is also notable on Table 4. White individuals who were previously married at least once constitute 81 percent of the population, and are 85.4 percent of the remarried and 73.7

percent of those currently separated or divorced.⁸ White alone, non-Hispanic individuals are 74.3 percent of all previously married once, but represent 79.4 percent of those remarried and 66.4 percent of those separated or divorced. While Black individuals constitute 11.4 percent of those previously married once, they are 7.7 percent of the remarried and 17.6 percent of those separated or divorced.

Indicators of socio-economic status such as education and poverty level also show variation. For example, those with a Bachelor's degree or more constitute 24.9 percent of the population married once previously, yet they are 18.1 percent of those living with an unmarried partner following their first marriage.⁹ Those in poverty are 10.4 percent of all individuals married once previously, and among those remarried are 4.4 percent of those who remarried, but 19.0 percent of those living with an unmarried partner, and 17.9 percent of those who are separated and divorced (Table 4).

Table 5 presents the results of the multinomial logistic regression among those previously married once, to understand variations among those who remarried, those living with an unmarried partner, and those who remain divorced or separated.

⁸ The total percentage of Whites (81.0) is not significantly different from the percentage of Whites living with an unmarried partner (81.1).

⁹ The percentage of those with a Bachelor's degree who are remarried (25.5) is not significantly different from the percentage of those with a Bachelor's degree who are separated or divorced (25.7).

Table 5: Multinomial logistic regression predicting likelihood of remarriage compared to living with an unmarried partner or being separated or divorced: ACS 2008 (Population 20 and older who were previously married once and live in households; Weighted; n=38,707,673)

	Living with unmarried partner compared to remarried			Separated or divorced compared to remarried		
	Estimate	SE/1	Odds Ratio	Estimate	SE/1	Odds Ratio
Age (excluded category is 65 and older)						
20 to 24 years	3.3523 ***	0.07	28.568	1.1656 ***	0.06	3.208
25 to 34 years	2.9451 ***	0.03	19.013	0.7916 ***	0.02	2.207
35 to 44 years	2.1985 ***	0.03	9.011	0.4842 ***	0.01	1.623
45 to 54 years	1.1463 ***	0.03	3.147	0.0706 ***	0.01	1.073
55 to 64 years	0.3016 ***	0.03	1.352	-0.2388 ***	0.01	0.788
Female	0.0525 ***	0.01	1.054	0.5261 ***	0.01	1.692
Race and Hispanic Origin						
One race (excluded category is White)						
Black or African-American	0.1813 *	0.08	1.199	0.7103 ***	0.05	2.035
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.2216 *	0.09	1.248	0.0376	0.06	1.038
Asian	-0.4630 ***	0.09	0.629	-0.2105 ***	0.05	0.81
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	-0.0760	0.21	0.927	-0.3189 *	0.14	0.727
Some other race	0.0074	0.05	1.007	0.1857 ***	0.03	1.204
Two or more races	0.0664	0.08	1.069	0.0736	0.05	1.076
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	0.0404	0.07	1.041	0.0359	0.04	1.037
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	-0.1481 +	0.08	0.862	-0.2805 ***	0.05	0.755
Region (excluded category is Northeast)						
Midwest	-0.3205 ***	0.02	0.726	-0.2116 ***	0.01	0.809
South	-0.6742 ***	0.02	0.51	-0.4432 ***	0.01	0.642
West	-0.2575 ***	0.02	0.773	-0.2251 ***	0.01	0.798
Educational Attainment (excluded category is HS grad)						
Less than high school	0.0505 *	0.02	1.052	0.0251 +	0.01	1.025
Some college	-0.0814 ***	0.02	0.922	0.1507 ***	0.01	1.163
Bachelor's degree or more	-0.2187 ***	0.02	0.804	0.2525 ***	0.01	1.287
Own child under 18 in household	-2.1266 ***	0.02	0.119	-1.1301 ***	0.01	0.323
Economic Well-Being						
High Personal Income	-0.1100 ***	0.02	0.896	0.1179 ***	0.01	1.125
Household Below Poverty Level	1.7581 ***	0.02	5.801	1.7397 ***	0.01	5.696
Household Receives Public Assistance	0.6128 ***	0.04	1.846	0.5125 ***	0.03	1.669
Labor Force Status (excluded category is Employed)						
Unemployed	0.1080 ***	0.03	1.114	-0.0748 ***	0.02	0.928
Not in Labor Force	-0.6326 ***	0.02	0.531	-0.6055 ***	0.01	0.546
Veteran (Includes those in military)	-0.1570 ***	0.02	0.855	-0.2351 ***	0.01	0.791
Intercept	-2.1610 ***	0.08		-0.3409 ***	0.05	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2008

1/ Standard errors were computed using the Taylor Expansion method.

Significance is noted as the following: + (p<0.1); *(p<0.05); **(p<0.01); ***(p<0.001).

A number of characteristics affect the likelihood of living with an unmarried partner or being separated or divorced rather than remarrying after a first marriage that ended. Age is a significant predictor of subsequent paths: Younger adults are more likely than older adults to be cohabiting after an ended first marriage rather than remarrying (28.6 times more likely for those age 20 to 24 and 19 times more likely for those age 25 to 34 compared to those age 65 and older), reflecting general age patterns of cohabitation among the population overall. Also, the older one is, generally, the more likely they are to be remarried rather than separated or divorced. The exception to this statement is among those 55 to 64: they are more likely to be remarried rather than separated or divorced compared to those 65 and older following an ended first marriage (Table 5).

Looking at other socio-economic indicators on Table 5, compared to white individuals, black individuals are 2 times more likely to be divorced or separated rather than remarrying following a first marriage that ended. Those with an own child under 18 in the household are one-third as likely as those without a child in the household to be divorced or separated rather than remarried following the end of a first marriage. Both receiving public assistance and living in a household below the poverty level are also predictors of living with an unmarried partner rather than remarrying (5.8 times more likely for those in poverty and 1.8 times more likely for those receiving public assistance) or being divorced or separated rather than remarrying (5.7 times more likely for those in poverty and 1.7 times more likely for those receiving public assistance) following a first marriage that ended. Finally, looking at regional variations, individuals in the Northeast are more likely than all other regions to live with an unmarried partner or be separated or divorced following the end of a first marriage, rather than to remarry (Table 5).

Conclusions

As hypothesized in this paper, remarriage in the United States varies considerably among Americans, particularly when age/cohort, socio-demographic factors, and regional variations are considered. Consequently, remarriage may also be considered a deinstitutionalized institution for some, yet a thriving path to subsequent union formation for others.

Looking at age differences, we see, not surprisingly, that younger Americans are less likely to be married more than one time and are more likely to be living with an unmarried partner rather than remarrying following a first marriage that ended when compared with older Americans. Such findings not only reflect a lower risk toward remarriage (simply by being younger and having a lower exposure to, or “risk,” of having a subsequent marriage), but a greater acceptance of cohabitation as an alternative union formation. But, the story is not simply about age, either, but suggests that values have shifted for more recent cohorts of Americans. Among the baby boomers (or those age 55 to 64 at the time of survey), there is a greater likelihood to marry two or three or more times rather than just once, as well as to remarry rather than being separated or divorced, relative to those 65 and older. This finding suggests that baby boomers who were young adults during the years where considerable transition about attitudes and laws about divorce happened may have different notions about marrying just once relative to the generation prior.

The socio-demographic findings also show interesting variations in remarriage patterns. Those who are White alone and non-Hispanic are 1.3 times more likely to be married two times and 1.6 times more likely to be married three or more times compared to being married once relative to other race and ethnic groups. Compared to white individuals, black individuals are 2 times more likely to be divorced or separated rather than remarried following a first marriage

that ended, consistent with the historical downturn from marriage among Blacks (Fitch and Ruggles 2000). Veterans and those in the military were 1.4 times more likely to be married two times compared to being married once and 1.8 times more likely to be married 3 times compared to being married once than non-Veterans and non-military individuals, also consistent with evidence that individuals in the military have transitions to adulthood that parallel those of previous generations (Kelty, Segal, and Kleykamp 2010). Receiving public assistance and living in a household below the poverty level are also predictors of living with an unmarried partner rather than remarrying (5.8 times more likely for those in poverty and 1.8 times more likely for those receiving public assistance) or being divorced or separated rather than remarrying (5.7 times more likely for those in poverty and 1.7 times more likely for those receiving public assistance) following a first marriage that ended. Such evidence suggest that remarriage may be out of reach for the poor and near poor, much in the way that first marriages are out of reach among this population (Edin and Kefalas 2005; Edin 2000).

Finally, region also presents interesting evidence about variations in patterns of remarriage. As was theorized, those in the Northeast are less likely than others to marry two or three or more times and are less likely to remarry following a first marriage that ended compared to those in other areas of the country. This is consistent with the idea that personal choice in union formation may be more prevalent in the Northeast. In particular, those in the South were much more likely to remarry two or three or more times compared to being married just once relative to those in the Northeast. As the policy and legislation suggest, marriage is promoted in a more traditional way in the South than it is in other regions of the country. However, the “culture of marriage” in the South also makes divorce more difficult, which is not readily apparent in these findings. These findings may demonstrate that the “risk to remarriage” is

higher in the South not only because of its regional “culture of marriage,” but also because such a culture encourages first marriages to happen sooner in the South and thus puts individuals at a higher risk for divorce and subsequent remarriage at an earlier point in their adult lives.¹⁰

Overall, these findings suggest that remarriage as an institution is not equally or overwhelmingly uniform in the United States. For some groups and areas of the country, marriage may be increasingly deinstitutionalized. But, for others, it remains a thriving option for subsequent union formation following the end of a first, or even second or third marriage.

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¹⁰ See tables R1204 and R1205 in the 2008 ACS American Fact Finder tables for state rankings of median age at first marriage for men and women:
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