

**TITLE:** Institutional Participation and the Delay in Entry into Marriage: Generational Differences between Late Baby Boomer and Early Millennials

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**PREFERRED FORMAT:** Session (1st choice); Poster (2nd choice)

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**ABSTRACT:** Concurrent patterns of the retreat from marriage and institutional participation among young adults brings into question whether shifts in the rates of educational enrollment, the military enlistment, and incarceration have contributed to shifting patterns of entry into marriage. Using the National Longitudinal Surveys of Youth 1979 and 1997, this study examines changes in the effects enrollment in three institutions (school enrollment, active duty military service, incarceration) on the odds of entry into a first marriage for two cohorts of men born 20 years apart (1960-1964 and 1980-1984). Additionally, decomposition techniques are employed to estimate the amount of the difference in the odds of marriage during young adulthood (18-29) that is due to changes in participation into these institutions. Results from this study have implications for our understanding of the influence that participation in various institutions has on prolonging the transition to adulthood among contemporary men.

Marriage rates in the United States are currently at a 40 year low (Wu, 2015). Furthermore, the age at first marriage has increased over the past several decades, with contemporary men and women marrying at a median age of 29 and 27 respectively (Anderson & Payne, 2016). The growing postponement of entry into marriage has prompted scholars to theorize about, and examine, the factors associated with entry into marriage. Shifts in the meaning of marriage and the prerequisites associated with entry into the institution has been discussed by this literature. Marriage is no longer a context for childbearing and a way to establish a division of labor among couples, but instead a marker of adulthood that is achieved once young adults complete their education, find steady employment and income, and set up an independent household (Cherlin, 2004). Furthermore, young adult's participation in institutions that have previously been linked with entry into marriage, such as educational establishments, the military, and jail or prison have shifted over the same decades as the retreat in marriage. These concurrent patterns bring into question whether changes in the rates of participation in enrollment in educational institutions, the military, and incarceration have contributed to shifting patterns of entry into marriage.

Using two cohorts of men – born 20 years apart from one another (1960-1964 and 1980-1984) – this study aims to investigate changes in the effects enrollment in three institutions (school enrollment, active duty military service, incarceration) on the odds of entry into a first marriage. Additionally, decomposition techniques will explore the amount of the differences in the odds of marriage during young adulthood (18-29) that is due to changes in participation into these institutions. The results from this study have implications for our understanding of the influence that participation in various institutions has on prolonging the transition to adulthood among contemporary men.

## **Background**

### *School Enrollment*

Entering and participating in an institution like secondary or post-secondary education can have implications for later life outcomes. Concerning entry into marriage during young adulthood, prior literature generally finds that school enrollment is negatively associated with marriage (Thornton, Axinn, & Teachman, 1995; Goldscheider & DaVanzo, 1989). Contemporary cohorts tend to forgo marriage during periods of school enrollment, delaying entry into marriage during young adulthood for those pursuing college degrees.

However, school participation trends have shifted during the period in which marriage rates declined in the United States. In 1950, about 15% of 18 to 24 years old men and women were enrolled in school. By 2007, this proportion tripled as about 45% of 18 to 24 reported school enrollment (Furstenberg, 2010). Growing shares of school enrollment by young adults has been accompanied by young adult populations with higher levels of educational attainment. Half-way through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, less than 40% of 25 to 29 years olds had completed high school, and slightly over 5% had a Bachelor's degree. By the late 2010s, these shares had risen to over 90% and 30%, respectively (Ryan & Bauman, 2016). Given the negative association between enrollment and first marriage, we would expect that part of the reason why the median age at first marriage has risen is because of the growing share of young men and women who remain enrolled in educational institutions as they seek to attain undergraduate and graduate degrees.

### *Military Service*

Another institution that young adults – most notably young men – engage with is the military. In fact, the military is the largest employer of young men and women in the United States (Angrist, 1998; Segal & Segal, 2004). The influence of active military service on the odds

of entry into marriage for young men serving the first decade of the All-Volunteer Force is well documented by prior literature, and finds a positive association between membership in the armed forces and experiencing a first marriage (Lundquist, 2004; Teachman, 2007). This association remains relevant among more recent cohorts of enlistees even though a majority of current service members enlisted after 9/11, presenting these service men with a set of experiences and benefits that differ from those experienced by previous generations of enlistees (Hemez, 2017).

Although military service appears to increase the odds of entry into marriage for young men, the number and characteristics of young men who enlist has shifted. In 1990, for example, the armed forces consisted of over 2 million active-duty members. By 2015, this number declined about 1.3 million (Parker, Cilluffo, & Stepler, 2017). As fewer young adults have participated in the military in recent years, we would expect that the influence of military service on overall marriage patterns has weakened, and thus resulted in fewer men and women entering into marriage during young adulthood. This notion corresponds with the patterns of a delay in marriage among contemporary young adults, but whether enlistment in the armed forces plays a significant role in the retreat from marriage remains unexplored.

### *Incarceration*

A third form of institutional participation that has been linked with entry into marriage is incarceration. Specifically, scholars find that incarceration significantly reduces the odds of marriage (Huebner, 2005; Lopoo & Western, 2005). Furthermore, the incarceration rate has increased substantially over the past 30 years, especially among race and ethnic minorities (Travis, Western, Redburn, 2014). The negative association between incarceration and entry into

marriage, in concurrence with the growing level of incarceration in the United States could contribute to the retreat from marriage among contemporary young adults.

### **Data & Methods**

#### *Data*

Two surveys are used to examine changes in the influence of institutional participation on men's odds of entry into marriage during young adulthood. To model the experiences of Late Baby Boomers (born between 1960 and 1964), I rely on the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79). Beginning in 1979, this survey sampled 6,111 young men and men between the ages of 14 and 22. An oversample of 5,295 black and Hispanic respondents, and an oversample of 1,280 military service members, were also interviewed in the initial survey, resulting in a sample of 12,686 respondents born between 1957 and 1964. Interviews were conducted annually until 1994, at which point the study shifted to a biennial interview design. For the purposes of the current study, I restrict the sample to white, black, or Hispanic men born between 1960 and 1964.

The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97) is used to model the experiences of Early Millennials (born between 1980 and 1984). This longitudinal survey consisted of 8,984 nationally representative young adults between the ages of 12 and 17 in 1997. Of these nearly 9,000 young men and women, 6,748 were selected as a nationally representative sample, and the remaining 2,236 were an oversample of blacks and Hispanics. Fifteen annual interviews were conducted (from 1997 to 2011), and the survey then shifted to biennial interviews. No restriction is placed on the birth cohort for this sample, as all NLSY97 participants were born between 1980 and 1984.

The NLSY79 and NLSY97 make it an ideal dataset to examine changes in the transition to adulthood for different cohorts for two reasons. First is that both surveys were originally designed with the purpose of tracking young adult's experiences of important life events, such as educational attainment, labor force participation, and union formation. As a result, the surveys provide a breadth of information on transitions into and out of various institutions throughout one's adolescence and young adult years. A second advantage of these datasets is that they provide oversamples of minority men and women (namely blacks and Hispanics). The inclusion of such oversamples allows for robust analyses of groups who have traditionally experienced higher rates of incarceration and lower marriage rates than their white counterparts.

### *Variables*

The dependent variable of interest, entry into marriage, is based on respondent's reports of their date of first marriage. Respondents are coded as a zero during rounds prior to their reported year of first marriage, and as a 1 in the round corresponding to the year they married.

Involvement in various types of institutions serves as the focal independent variable. This variable is created with four mutually exclusive categories that represent institutional participation during each year; enrolled in school, serving on active duty, incarcerated, and no institutional engagement.

To reduce the chances that results are due to spuriousness, a set of demographic and socioeconomic indicators that have previously been linked to entry into marriage are included in multivariate analyses. Race and ethnicity is captured through three mutually exclusive categories (non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, Hispanic); educational attainment represents whether the respondent has less than a high school degree, a high school degree or equivalent, some college experience, or a Bachelor's degree or more; income is adjusted to 1997 dollars; regions

of residence is a dichotomous variable representing if the respondents is living in the South; and respondent's age and a squared term of their age are included to capture nonlinearity in the odds of entry into marriage over time.

### *Analytic Strategy*

Data are converted into person-years (or interval) such that each year a respondent is interviewed represents an observation. Furthermore, I restrict analyses to respondents who are unmarried on their 18th birthday. Men are then observed until their last round of participation in the survey, or until they marry. The final analytical sample sizes are comprised of 28,988 person-years intervals in the *Late Baby Boomer* cohort, and 36,729 person-years intervals in the *Early Millennial* cohort.

Discrete-time event-history analyses are used to estimate the influence of participation in certain institutions on the odds of marriage for both cohorts. The model is of the general form:

$$\text{logit}_{it} = B_1(\text{school})_{it} + B_2(\text{ams})_{it} + B_3(\text{jail})_{it} + G_1(\text{black})_i + G_2(\text{hispanic})_i + VX_{it}$$

where *logit* represents the logarithmic odds that person *i* will marry at time *t*; *school* indicates whether person *i* is enrolled in school or university at time *t*; *ams* indicates whether person *i* is serving on active duty at time *t*; *jail* indicates whether person *i* is incarcerated at time *t*; *black* represents whether respondent *i* is black; *hispanic* represents whether respondent *i* is Hispanic; *X* represents a vector of time-varying control variables for person *i* at time *t*; *B*<sub>1</sub>, *B*<sub>2</sub>, *B*<sub>3</sub>, *G*<sub>1</sub>, *G*<sub>2</sub>, are coefficients; and *V* is a vector of coefficients.

Using coefficients from the discrete-time event history models and sample means or distributions of covariates used in these models, I then decompose the cohort differences in

men's odds of marriage into two components: differences in characteristics of the cohorts, and cohort differences in the effects of institutional participation and sociodemographic indicators on entry into marriage. In decomposing the differences in the odds of entry into a first marriage, standardization techniques are used to estimate the predicted probability marriage for young adult men, when the composition (or characteristics) of the other cohort is used.

## **Results**

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Figure 1 presents the percentage of young adult men who married between the ages of 18 and 29 for the Late Baby Boomer and the Early Millennial cohorts. At each age, the share of men born between 1960 and 1964 who experienced a first marriage was greater than their counterparts born twenty years later. By their 30th birthday about 6 in 10 of Late Baby Boomer men had married, compared to slightly less than 4 in 10 of the Early Millennial men.

Figure 2 presents the hazards of marriage between the ages of 18 and 29 for both cohorts of men. Within each cohort, the hazards increase until the mid-twenties, at which point the risk of marriage slightly declines. Furthermore, the hazards of marriage are greater for the Early Baby Boomer men than Early Millennial men at each age, satisfying the proportional hazards assumption of event history analysis.

The percent of young adults who are enrolled in school, incarcerated, in the military, or none of these is presented for both cohorts in Table 1. Although respondents are observed beyond their 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, Table 1 only presents the institutional participation for the ages 18 to 29 among unmarried men to maintain suitable sample sizes at every age. Across their young adult years, a larger share of Early Millennials reported being currently enrolled in school than men born between 1960 and 1964; although for both cohorts, this share steadily declines as men



approach the age of 30. Incarceration was also more common for the Early Millennial men, and by age 29, more than 4% of these men were in jail or prison, compared to less than 3% of Late Baby Boomer men. Finally, military service was more common for the Late Baby Boomer between the ages of 18 and 24. Among those 25 to 29 however, active military service was slightly more common for the Early Millennial men.

Table 2 presents the unweighted person-year intervals used in analyses predicting entry into marriage for unmarried young adult men in both cohorts. For both groups of men, more than two-thirds of person-year intervals involved no institutional participation, and over one-fifth of the intervals were enrolled in school. Just over half of the intervals were to white men. The Late Baby Boomer sample had a larger share of blacks than their cohort of men born twenty years later, whereas the Early Millennial person-years were more often Hispanic. For both cohorts, the modal educational attainment level was a high school degree, although this was more common for the older cohort. Nearly 40% of the Early Millennial person-years involved college experience, compared less than 30% of Late Baby Boomer intervals. On average, unmarried men born between 1960 and 1964 made about \$1,350 more than those born between 1980 and 1984, in 1997 dollars. Finally, the share of intervals living in the South and the age of intervals remained relatively stable between the two cohorts.

### *Multivariate Results*

Unweighted discrete-time event history models predicting the logarithmic odds of entry into marriage for the two cohorts of men are presented in Table 3. For both cohorts, enrollment in school and incarceration are negatively associated with the odds of marriage. Among Late Baby Boomers, school enrollment was associated with  $[\exp(-0.848) - 1] * 100 = -57.2\%$  lower odds of marriage, relative to young men who were not participating in any of the institutions

considered. The effect of school enrollment on the odds of marriage was slightly lower among Early Millennials, who experienced a 41.6% reduction in their odds of marriage due to school enrollment.

For both cohorts, incarceration reduced the odds of marriage more strongly than did school enrollment. For young men born between 1960 and 1964, residence in a jail was associated with a 68.5% reduction in the odds of marriage, whereas those born twenty years later experienced a 55.6% reduction in their odds of marriage due to incarceration.

Finally, active duty military service was significantly associated with an increase in the odds of a first marriage. This effect was much stronger among the Early Millennial cohort, who experienced odds of marriage that were 175.9% higher during periods of active duty. Late Baby Boomers serving in the military, on the other hand, experienced odds of marriage that were 78.2% higher than their peers who were not incarcerated, and not enrolled in school.

Using these regression coefficients (Table 3), and the sample means (Table 2), I estimate the predicted probability of entry into marriage for both cohort of men at any given age (not shown). Among Late Baby Boomer men, the predicted probability of marriage during any given age is 0.089, or 8.9%. This predicted probability was lower among Early Baby Boomer men, who experienced a probability of marriage of 0.035 (or 3.5%) during their young adult years. Note that the means used to calculate these predicted probabilities are based on unweighted person-years used in the discrete event-history models, and exclude respondent's characteristics in the years following their first marriage.

#### *Standardization and Decomposition Exercises*

To examine the amount of the difference between the two cohort's odds of entry into marriage during young adulthood that are due differences in the composition/characteristics of

the cohorts and due to differences in the effects of institutional participations and sociodemographic characteristics, I conduct a decomposition exercise. Recall the predicted probabilities of marriage at any given age for the Late Baby Boomer and Early Millennial men were 8.9% and 3.5%, respectively, resulting in a 5.4 percentage point difference.

I begin the decomposition by creating two counterfactual scenarios, where the model coefficients of one cohort (from Table 3) are multiplied with the characteristics of the other cohort (Table 2). The resulting predicted probabilities represent the chances that young men married at any given age if they held the characteristics of the other cohort. Using the coefficient of Late Baby Boomers and the characteristics of Early Millennials, for example, the predicted probability of marriage is 0.086. In other words, if Late Baby Boomers held the characteristics of the cohort of men born twenty years later, they would have experienced an 8.6% chance of marriage during each of their young adult years. Conversely, if men born between 1980-1984 held the compositional characteristics of those born between 1960-1964, their odds of marriage during their young adult years would have been 3.8%. Comparing these counterfactuals to the actual predicted probabilities of marriage reveals that holding compositional characteristics constant across cohorts only slightly changes the odds of marriage, and suggests that differences in the characteristics of the two cohorts only explains a small portion of the difference in the odds of entry into marriage for these two groups of men.

Next I use the decomposition technique provided by Levitt (1999) to estimate the exact amount of the difference in the odds of marriage due to a change in the characteristics from one cohort to the next. Using each cohort's predicted probability of marriage, and the probabilities based on the counterfactuals, I estimate that compositional differences contribute to about 5.9% of the difference in the probability of marriage between Late Baby Boomer young adult men and

Early Millennial young adult men. Furthermore, this suggests that the remaining 94.1% of the decline in the odds of marriage from the 1960-1964 to the 1980-1984 birth cohort is due to cohort differences in the effects that sociodemographic characteristics have on the probability of marriage during young adulthood.

### **Discussion & Conclusion**

The current investigation aimed to examine generational changes in men's probability of marriage during young adulthood, with an emphasis on changes in men's participation in three institutions: school enrollment, military service, and incarceration. Bivariate results present evidence that participation in these institutions differed for men born between 1960 and 1964, from those born between 1980 and 1984. Most notably, the older cohort of men reported greater amounts of military service, whereas their younger counterparts spent more time in school and incarcerated. However, the discrete-time event history models suggest that, net of other covariates, the participation in these institutions influenced entry into marriage in the same fashion for both cohorts. For both cohorts of men, military service increased the odds of experiencing a first marriage, whereas incarceration and school enrollment decreased the likelihood young men entered such a union.

Decomposition exercises were also conducted to estimate the amount of the difference in the probability of marriage between the two cohorts that was due to changes in the composition (or characteristics) of young men from one generation to the next. The decomposition analyses reveal that about 6% of the difference in the odds of marriage between the cohorts was due to disparities in their composition, whereas the remaining 94% of the difference in the odds of marriage are due to differences in the effects of the covariates.

There are several additional steps that will be taken to reach a more complete understanding of the role institutional participation has on men's retreat from marriage during their young adult years. One such step will be to test for generational differences in the effects that the covariates have on the odds of entry into marriage. Doing so will involve pooling both cohorts of men and creating interaction terms between every covariate and one of the generations. Including these interactions in a model predicting entry into marriage will indicate whether the influence of a characteristic (e.g. being enrolled in school) had the same influence on the odds of marriage for the Late Baby Boomer as the Early Millennials. Another important future step will be to consider changes in institutional participation and entry into marriage for specific subgroups. Not all groups have experienced equal changes in their propensity to marry (e.g. Manning, Brown, Payne, 2014), or participate in the institutions that were considered in the present investigation (Travis, Western, & Redburn, 2014; Parker, Cilluffo, & Stepler, 2017). Conducting the decomposition exercises for more vulnerable populations such as race/ethnic minorities or men born to parents with lower levels of education may yield larger generational differences in the probability of marriage during young adulthood. A final step will be to break down the amount of the change in entry into marriage that is due to differing levels of participation in specific institutions. In other words, how much of the declines in men's entry into marriage are due to a reduction in the share of men who enlist? What about the amount that is due to increases in the share of men who are incarcerated? A potential way to capture the amount of change in entry into marriage that was due to cohort differences in their participation of a specific institution may be to repeat the decomposition exercise, but only change the share of young adults who are involved with the institution as the counterfactual. In other words, using only Late Baby Boomer's incarceration levels in the equation predicting Early Millennial's odds

of entry into marriage (holding everything else constant to the levels of Early Millennials) would indicate the predicted probability of marriage for the cohort born between 1980 and 1984, had their levels of incarceration remained the same as those born twenty years prior. In addition, STATA modules such as “mvdcomp” can also be used to decompose differences in rates that are attributable to a specific subset of indicators in the models (Powers, Yohioka, & Yun, 2011). Overall, completing these future steps will lend additional insights to the influence that institutional participation has had on the retreat from marriage for contemporary young men in the United States.

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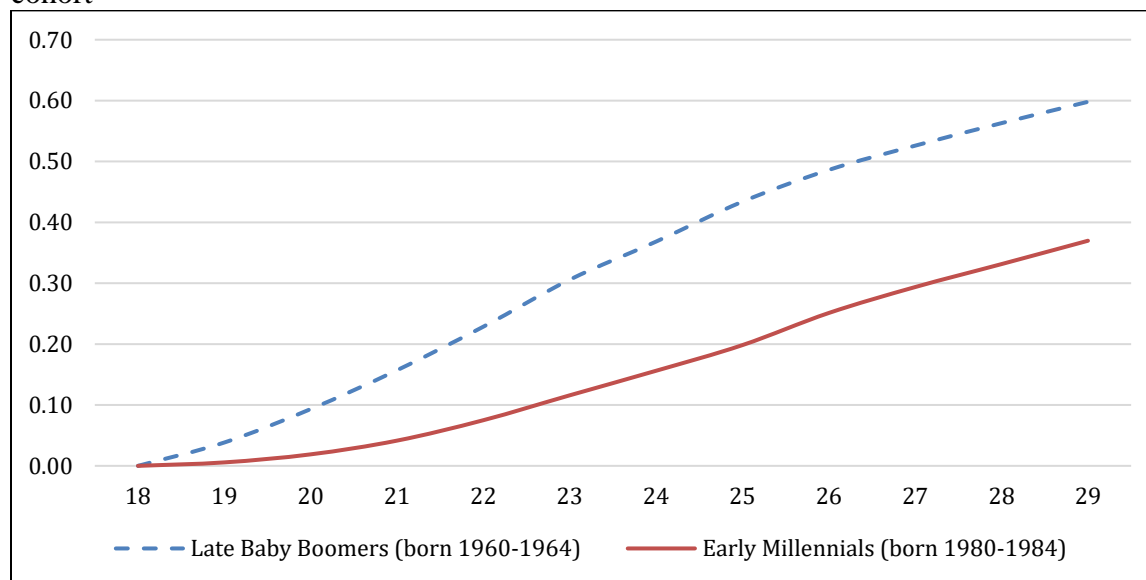
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### Tables & Figures

Figure 1. Cumulative proportion of men who experienced a first marriage, by age and birth cohort



Source: The NLSY79 is used for the Late Baby Boomers; the NLSY97 is used for the Early Millennials cohort

Figure 2. Hazards of entry into marriage, by age and birth cohort

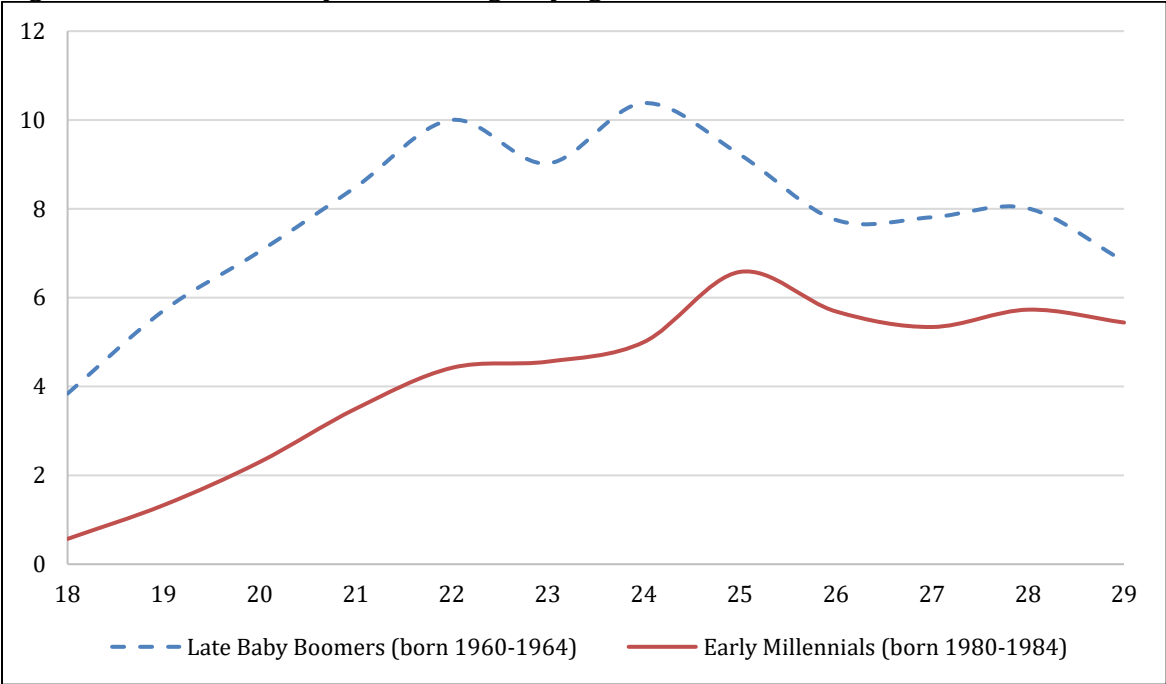


Table 1. Share of young men who reported being enrolled in schooling, incarcerated, on active military duty, or none, by age and birth cohort

Age	None		School Enrollment		Incarcerated		Active Military Service	
	Late Baby Boomers	Early Millennials	Late Baby Boomers	Early Millennials	Late Baby Boomers	Early Millennials	Late Baby Boomers	Early Millennials
18	37.73	34.57	52.95	62.18	0.86	1.68	8.47	1.58
19	55.07	51.02	32.75	42.65	1.35	2.66	10.82	3.67
20	62.03	57.46	25.29	34.69	1.58	2.66	11.11	5.20
21	66.26	60.38	21.33	31.39	2.04	2.66	10.36	5.57
22	72.66	65.46	16.14	25.48	2.02	2.91	9.19	6.15
23	77.43	73.33	12.14	18.25	2.49	3.30	7.93	5.11
24	83.31	77.71	8.25	13.74	2.03	3.40	6.42	5.15
25	85.03	79.26	7.81	12.60	2.59	3.00	4.57	5.15
26	86.91	82.19	7.14	10.29	2.62	3.38	3.33	4.14
27	88.28	82.98	6.08	9.58	2.53	3.42	3.11	4.02
28	89.56	83.53	5.69	9.69	2.47	3.21	2.28	3.58
29	90.25	84.67	5.36	7.60	2.92	4.05	1.46	3.68

Source: The NLSY79 is used for the Late Baby Boomers; the NLSY97 is used for the Early Millennials cohort

Table 2. Unweighted descriptive statistics of unmarried young adult men, by cohort

	Late Baby Boomers (born 1960-1964)	Early Millennials (born 1980- 1984)
<b>Institutional Participation</b>		
None	0.696	0.666
School Enrollment	0.215	0.267
Incarcerated	0.027	0.032
Active Military Service	0.062	0.035
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White	0.518	0.517
Black	0.325	0.277
Hispanic	0.157	0.206
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
Less than High School	0.256	0.299
High School	0.449	0.320
Some College	0.201	0.255
Bachelor's or More	0.094	0.126
Income (adjusted to 1997 dollars)	12,523.48	11,168.96
Living in the South	0.354	0.386
Age	23.10	22.86
Age Squared	533.61	522.58
<b>Unweighted N</b>	<b>28,988</b>	<b>36,729</b>

Source: The NLSY79 is used for the Late Baby Boomers; the NLSY97 is used for the Early Millennials cohort

Table 3. Unweighted discrete-time event-history models predicting men's logarithmic odds of first marriage by cohort

	Late Baby Boomers (born 1960-1964)	Early Millennials (born 1980-1984)
Institutional Involvement (ref. = None)		
School Enrollment	-0.848 ***	-0.537 ***
Incarcerated	-1.155 ***	-0.813 **
Active Military Service	0.578 ***	1.015 ***
Race/Ethnicity (ref. = White)		
Black	-0.636 ***	-0.567 ***
Hispanic	0.004	-0.047
Education (ref. = High School)		
Less than High School	0.046	-0.088
Some College	0.114	-0.013
Bachelor's or More	0.236 **	0.136
Income/1000 (adjusted to 1997 dollars)	0.020 ***	0.019 ***
Living in the South	0.305 ***	0.201 **
Age	0.040 ***	0.101 ***
Age Squared	-0.000 ***	-0.000 ***
Constant	-8.200 ***	-18.927 ***
Unweighted N (person-year intervals)	28,988	36,729

\*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

Source: The NLSY79 is used for the Late Baby Boomers; the NLSY97 is used for the Early Millennials cohort