Stability of Remarriage across the Life Course

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Abstract

Because most transitions to first marriage occur during early adulthood, existing studies examining life course variation in marital instability are generally limited in their ability to disentangle effects of age from marital duration. Remarriage, however, has the potential to offer unique leverage on life course variation since it occurs throughout adulthood. Using data from three waves of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), I first investigate whether marital dissolution varies broadly by age (40+ vs. <40) for recently remarried individuals. Guided by Levinger's social exchange theory, I next examine whether life course variation in marital instability can be explained by factors such as attractions to the current marriage, divorce barriers, and the attractiveness and availability of alternatives. Throughout the analysis, I carefully consider differing patterns of selectivity characterizing remarriages formed relatively earlier versus later in life. Results suggest that individuals who remarried in mid to later life exhibit lower risks of marital disruption than individuals who remarried relatively earlier in life even after adjusting for background controls and theoretically important barriers to divorce such as children, relative economic independence of wives, religious factors, and commitment to the institution of marriage. However, no meaningful age differences exist after adjusting for shifts in the levels of attractions to the current marriage and availability and attractiveness of alternatives.

The question of what keeps a marriage together has been a focal point of family scholarship for decades, yet relatively little work carefully considers the stability of remarried relationships. This omission is surprising given that nearly half of recently formed marriages involve a remarriage for at least one spouse and because remarriages tend to be less stable than first marriages (Bumpass & Raley, 2007). The study of remarriage can also offer strategic opportunities to study key issues of concern to family scholars. For example, although a large body of work investigates how the determinants of divorce vary across the life course (e.g. Heaton, 1991; South, 2001; South & Spitze, 1986; White & Booth, 1991), these studies are limited in their abilities to disentangle effects of age from marital duration (see also Wheaton, 1990). Because first marriages tend to occur predominantly in early adulthood, it is difficult to distinguish sources of life course variability due to the selective attrition from the population of married couples. Individuals who are dissatisfied in their marriages are more likely to separate, thus leaving the sample of prevailing marriages in later life representative of longer-term happier unions with low risks of disruption. Remarriage has the potential to offer unique leverage on life course variation in marital dissolution since it occurs throughout adulthood.

In the current research, I utilize data from three waves of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) to shed new light on life course variability in patterns of marital instability among remarried individuals. Guided by Levinger's social exchange theory of marital cohesion, I first examine whether marital instability tends to differ in later life (40+) versus earlier in life (<40) for people in recently formed second marriages. I then consider whether age variation can be explained by factors such as attractions to

the current marriage, barriers to divorce, and the availability or attractiveness of alternatives. The analysis also considers whether differing patterns of selectivity characterize remarriages formed relatively earlier versus later in life.

Background

In his social exchange theory of marital cohesion, Levinger (1965; 1979) argues that the strength of a marital relationship is based on three factors: the attraction to the current marriage, barriers to leaving that marriage, and the attractiveness of marital alternatives. The stability of a marital relationship is positively related to the net rewards of the current relationship (rewards minus costs) and the strength of barriers to exiting the marriage, and inversely associated with the relative attractiveness of alternatives to the marriage. Although Levinger's (1965; 1979) framework of rewards, barriers, and alternatives is frequently utilized in studies of divorce (e.g. Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Knoester & Booth, 2000; Previti & Amato, 2003; Yabiku & Gager, 2009), relatively less work applies his theory specifically to the study of remarriage stability. In the discussion below, I first review Levinger's theory and existing empirical research linking attractions, barriers, and alternatives to divorce. I then consider ways in which these factors may explain life course variation in marital dissolution.

Attractions to the Current Marriage

In Levinger's theory, attractions to the current marriage relate to the net benefits that one receives from being in that relationship, such as companionship, emotional support, goods, and status. Rewards may be material (e.g., income and home ownership),

symbolic (e.g., educational or occupational status), or affectional (e.g., companionship and sexual enjoyment). In empirical research, attractions to the current relationship are typically measured in terms of marital quality or marital satisfaction (see Knoester & Booth, 2000 for a review). Low marital satisfaction and low marital happiness are associated with an elevated risk of divorce (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Glenn, 1991; Poortman & Seltzer, 2007). Low sexual satisfaction is found to be associated with an increased risk of divorce, even once adjusting for overall levels of marital happiness (Christopher & Sprecher, 2000; White & Keith, 1990). In terms of material and symbolic rewards, higher household income is generally associated with lower levels of divorce, (Hoffman and Duncan, 1995; Ono, 1998). Studies generally find that an individual's higher educational attainment reduces the risk of divorce, but there is some evidence that the protective effect of schooling is stronger for men than for women (Bumpass et al., 1991; Greenstein, 1995, Kalmijn & Poortman, 2006; Martin, 2006; Raley & Bumpass, 2003; South, 1995).

Barriers

The second main factor in an exchange perspective on marital cohesion is the strength of barriers to exiting the relationship. According to Levinger, barriers are psychological and moral restraining forces to dissolution that function to prevent or delay divorce even when attraction to the current relationship is low or alternatives to the relationship exist. Barrier forces include perceived obligation towards one's children, religious beliefs, and concerns about financial well-being (Levinger, 1965; 1979). Indeed, prior research notes the potential weakening of ties with children associated with divorce,

particularly for men (Amato & Booth, 1996). When asked open-ended questions about what is important to keeping one's marriage together, individuals indeed frequently mention factors such as religious beliefs, the presence of children, financial resources, general commitment to marriage, and support from family and friends (Knoester & Booth, 2000; Previti & Amato, 2003). Although research is somewhat mixed, several studies also find these barriers to be associated with lower risks of divorce (see Knoester & Booth, 2000 for a review). The strength of barrier forces may matter little when attractions to the current relationship are high. However, the effects of barriers on instability may be greater when attractions to the marriage are low. Indeed, individuals in less happy marriages are more likely to mention barriers than rewards as important to keeping their marriage together and those who mentioned barriers rather than rewards are more likely to divorce (Previti & Amato, 2003).

Attractiveness of Alternatives

The final component of Levinger's theory is the relative attractiveness of alternatives to the marital relationship. When deciding whether to stay in a marriage, Levinger argues that individuals compare the rewards and attractions of their current relationship to the attractiveness of their perceived alternatives. If the net attractiveness of alternatives is higher than rewards associated with their current relationship, and barriers are low, they may decide to dissolve the marriage. Individuals may consider the attractiveness of other potential mates, but also the attractiveness of no partner at all. Thus, relationships with individuals other than one's spouse, such as those involving friends, colleagues, and relatives, may be important when weighing the attractiveness of

alternatives (Levinger, 1965; 1979). Individuals who are unsatisfied in their current relationship and perceive few barriers may still stay in their marriage if they do not feel that potential alternatives are more desirable than their current marriage.

Prior research finds that individuals in relationships rarely mention a lack of alternatives as a reason why their marriage stays together, but alternatives are more likely to be mentioned by individuals in less happy and more unstable marriages (Previti & Amato, 2003). Exploring alternatives is relatively common such that about one-sixth of recently-divorced or separated individuals reported having been romantically involved with another partner before their marriage ended (South & Lloyd, 1995). In addition, individuals are more likely to divorce when more alternatives exist. For example, couples are more likely to divorce if they are located in geographic areas where many opposite-sex potential alternatives exist or when the wife works in a male-dominated occupation (South et al., 2001). Furthermore, for individuals in their twenties, divorce is more likely to occur when men outnumber women or women outnumber men than when sex-ratios are more balanced (South & Lloyd, 1995).

Attractions, Barriers, and Alternatives and Marital Instability across the Life Course

There are a number of reasons to expect life course variation in marital attractions, barriers to divorce, and the availability and attractiveness of alternatives which may be important for explaining differences in marital dissolution broadly by age. There are a number of reasons to expect marital attractions to vary over the life course, perhaps also due to the differing circumstances of older and younger remarried couples. For example, younger couples are more likely to balance the day-to-day juggling of

childrearing and peak work demands, whereas older married couples are at a point in their lives when they can spend more time together as work and childcare obligations decrease (Kemp & Kemp, 2002; Twenge et al., 2003), perhaps aiding the quality of one's marriage.

There are several reasons to expect differences in the exposure to various types of barriers across the life course. The presence of children (especially minor children) is a consistently documented deterrent to divorce (see White, 1990 for a review) and expected difficulties parenting after divorce are associated with lower risks of divorce (Poortman & Seltzer, 2007). Younger couples may be more likely to have young children in the household and may not consider divorce as an option until the children are older. On the other hand, as children leave the household, older couples in relationships that are low quality may be less likely to remain together "for the children." Pragmatic barriers such as home ownership may be more common for older couples whereas concerns about financial independence may be more prevalent earlier in life. Concerns about financial independence after divorce may be relevant as young couples often juggle the financial demands of providing for children, basic necessities and rent or a mortgage. On the other hand, after taking into account differential mortality, assets tend to accumulate throughout the life course and older couples may be more likely to own their homes (Attanasio & Williamson Hoynes, 2000). In terms of religious factors, research often finds that church attendance increases with age, particularly through young adulthood (Argue et. al., 1999; Stolzenberg et. al., 1995).

The availability of attractive marital alternatives may also tend to vary across the life course, and to do so differently for men and women. Earlier in life both men and

women may have access to potential alternative partners, especially if they are in the paid labor force or in a metropolitan area (South et al., 2001; South & Lloyd, 1995). Younger individuals may also have more to gain in terms of an alternative sex partner (Levinger, 1979) as sexual desire and its importance for companionship tends to decrease with age (DeLamater & Sill, 2005).Yet, as women tend to have longer life expectancies than men, and men tend to prefer slightly younger partners than women, men's supply of potential partners tends to increase with age while women's supply of potential partners shrinks (Bhrolchain & Sigle-Rushton, 2005). The attractiveness of alternative partners may also be dampened for women as concerns about men's declining health and potential caregiving responsibilities arise in later life (Davidson, 2001; 2002). However, it is important to note that when weighing the attractiveness of their current marriage to alternatives, individuals may also consider the attractiveness of having no relationship at all (Levinger, 1965; 1979). Relationships with family members or close friends may weigh heavily in the decision to exit a marriage if an individual feels that it is unlikely that he or she will repartner. Research suggests that older women tend to have greater numbers of close relationships besides their spouse than older men (e.g. Antonucci & Akiyama, 1987). Although women may perceive fewer alternative partners as they age, remaining unmarried may be more beneficial for them relative to men as they are more likely to have close bonds outside of marriage.

Selectivity in Characteristics of Early Versus Late Remarriages

Finally, a key potential issue for research examining remarriage in order to gain leverage on life-course variation in the determinants of divorce is the possibility that

individuals who remarry relatively earlier in life may tend to have different background characteristics than those who remarry relatively later in life. I would expect that those who remarry relatively older (versus younger) may have a longer duration of their first marriage, may be more likely to have experienced widowhood, and may have more traditional values towards marriage and family such as cohabitation. Analysis of life course variability in the determinants of remarriage stability needs to address these potentially confounding factors.

The Current Research

Although prior research has examined life course variation in marital dissolution, this work is limited in its ability to disentangle age from marital duration. As remarriage tends to occur more broadly throughout the life course than first marriage, it offers potentially methodological insight into how the broader context of marital dissolution varies across the life course. Guided by Levinger's theoretical framework and using data from three waves of the NSFH, this study investigates whether marital dissolution varies broadly by age (40+ vs. <40) for remarried newlyweds. Next, the analysis examines whether measures of attractions to the current marriage, barriers to divorce, and availability and attractiveness of alternatives explain any potential life course variation in marital instability.[1] The analysis also pays particular attention to the role of selective background factors of those who remarry early versus relatively later in the life course.

[1] In previous analysis, I tested whether the effects of attractions, barriers, and alternatives vary by age or gender with a series of interactions between these factors (attractions, barriers, and alternatives) and age and gender. For the most part results suggest that age and gender do not moderate the associations between these factors and marital dissolution as also suggested by some prior work (e.g. Knoester & Booth, 2000; Previti & Amato, 2003). However, there is one exception - minor children from past relationships are associated with relatively lower risks of divorce among remarried individuals in mid to later life compared to younger remarried individuals.

Methods

Data

The data for this project utilize all three waves of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH). The NSFH includes a main sample of 9,643 households with an oversampling of Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, single-parent families, families and with stepchildren, cohabiting couples, and recently married people. Interviews were conducted with a total of 13,017 randomly-selected primary respondents age 19 or older in 1987-1988 (Wave 1), with 10,007 of these respondents completing follow-up interviews in 1992-1994 (Wave 2). Finally, the sample was interviewed again in 2001-2002 (Wave 3), although this time interviews were only conducted on individuals who had an eligible focal child at Wave 2 or who were age 45 or older as of January, 2000. In order to maintain generalizability of information utilized from Wave 3, individuals who had not yet separated from their second spouse and were younger than age 45 in 2000 are right censored at their Wave 2 interview date.[2] The NSFH is particularly well-suited for this study because it contains relatively large numbers of remarried individuals broadly across the life course, detailed marital history information, a variety of measures relating to marital attractions, barriers to divorce, and the availability and attractiveness of alternatives to the current marriage.

The analysis focuses on individuals in recently-formed second marriages in NSFH Waves 1 or 2 and examines subsequent transitions to separation within 15 years.[3]

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[2] Results are robust to other treatments of this group such as utilizing their Wave 3 information.

[3] Results are robust to other periods of time until dissolution such as 10 years.

Individuals in longer-term relationships may be selective of those in happier, more stable relationships (e.g. Heaton, 1991). Thus, the analytical sample is restricted to those who have been remarried for less than seven years.[4] The analytical sample is further restricted to the 1,095 individuals who provide valid marital history information, and dates of marital dissolution (when relevant). In order to maintain as many cases as possible, multiple imputation techniques are utilized for missing data on the independent variables, but it is worth noting that results were are similar and main conclusions are robust to other treatments of missing data.

Variables and Methods

Detailed variable descriptions and summary statistics for the dependent and independent variables are displayed in Table 1. A key independent variable in the analysis is an indicator of age at remarriage. I construct this variable as a simple dichotomous specification (<40/40+) to maximize sample sizes in each category and examine broad differences by life course stage.[5]

Marital Attractions

As prior research suggests advantages to measuring perceived global marital happiness, and points to both positive and negative dimensions of marital quality that are distinct and should be measured separately, both positive and negative domains of

[4] Results are robust to shorter duration criteria, such as 5 years. Using a criterion of 7 years instead of 5 is a trade-off between maintaining a short marital duration and conserving sample size.

[5] Results are robust to other cut points in the categories of age such as in the mid-thirties or mid-forties.

attractions to the current marriage are assessed (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000). The first measure of attractions to the current marriage is global marital happiness, based on responses to a single question that asks respondents, "Taking all things together, how would you describe your marriage?" Responses range on a seven point scale from "very unhappy" to "very happy." Responses range on a seven point scale from "very unhappy" to "very happy." Responses were coded one if "very happy" and zero otherwise.[6] The next domain assesses perceived fairness in the marital relationship across several domains - household chores, working for pay, spending money, and childcare. Responses include: "very/somewhat unfair to respondent," "fair to both," "somewhat/very unfair to respondent's spouse." Each item was coded 0 if "very unfair to me or partner" 1 if "somewhat unfair to me or partner" and 2 if "fair to both." A composite scale was created by summing these responses with higher values indicating more marital fairness.[7] A third domain assesses marital conflict based on questions asking respondents how often they disagree about household tasks, money, spending time together, in-laws, and the children. Responses range from "less than once a month," to "almost every day" and items are summed with increasing values indicating higher levels of marital conflict.[8]

[6] In analyses not shown, I explored other constructions of this variable such as leaving it as a linear term. Results were very similar and the substantive conclusions drawn here are the same.

[7] Prior research notes that it is quite rare for wives and husbands to note that the division of household labor as unfair to the husband (Gager & Sanchez, 2003). Thus, in results not shown I have constructed this variable in terms of increasing unfairness to the wife. Results are very similar and main conclusions are robust.

[8] Although Levinger also conceptualizes income and status as a reward to the relationship, there is overlap in his conceptualizations of these factors. For example, he notes that family or spousal income is an attraction to the marriage, but includes costs of termination and financial independence after divorce as barriers and attractions to alternatives. I describe my approach to operationalizing these concepts below.

Barriers

Barriers are the psychological and moral restraining forces to leaving a marriage. Research finds that children, especially minor children, may be a salient barrier force to leaving a marriage, particularly for women (see White, 1990 for a review). Measures of children such as whether children were born in the second marriage, number of minor children from other relationships, and number of adult children born from prior relationships are included in the analysis. Being raised in or actively involved in a religion that doesn't sanction divorce represents a moral barrier force to exiting a marriage. Thus, variables indicating Catholic religious upbringing of the respondent as well as frequency of church attendance are included. In addition, since high commitment to the institution of marriage represents another moral restraining factor to divorce (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007), I include a measure of commitment to marriage based on responses to the following statement: "Marriage is a lifetime relationship and should never be ended except under extreme circumstances." Responses range from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" and this item was coded 1 if "strongly agree," and zero otherwise. In addition, pragmatic barrier forces are included. Prior research often finds that divorce is positively associated with wives' earnings and wives' earnings relative to her husband (e.g. Teachman, 2010 & see Sayer & Bianchi, 2000 for a review). I include a measure of whether the husband's earnings are 75% or more of the total couple's earnings as an indicator of wives' relative economic dependence. Finally, an indicator of home ownership is included as another pragmatic barrier that has been associated with lower risks of divorce (e.g. White & Booth, 1991).

Attractiveness and Availability of Alternatives

When deciding to stay in one's marriage, Levinger notes that individuals compare their current relationship to the attractiveness of their alternatives to that relationship. If the attractions to alternatives are higher than the rewards in their current relationship, and barriers are not strong, an individual may decide to leave the marriage. Here I focus on three dimensions of alternatives: availability of alternative partners of any quality, alternative sources of social support and diversion, and the expected attractiveness of alternatives relative to the current relationship. The availability of suitable partners may be particularly important to consider when examining the correlates of dissolution across the life course as women's availability shrinks while men's increases with age (Bhrolchain & Sigle-Rushton, 2005). A measure of the percentage of males in the population by age categories and region from the Current Population Survey is included as a measure of the potential availability of alternative partners. Individuals may consider the attractiveness of other potential mates, but also the attractiveness of no partner at all. Thus, spending time with friends, adult children and other relatives may be important when weighing the attractiveness of alternatives (Levinger, 1965; 1979). Reports of the frequency of time spent with relatives, co-workers, neighbors, and friends, is included as a measure of available social support and diversion. Responses range from "never" to "several times per week" and a composite scale is constructed with higher values indicating greater levels of social interaction. The net attractions of an alternative sex partner are likely to differ across the life course. Thus, I include a measure of how the respondent's life would be different if separated in terms of one's sex life. Responses of "better," "much better," or "the same" are coded as perceived alternative sex life are

coded as one indicating one's sex life would be at least as good upon separation and zero if one's sex life would be "worse" or "much worse" if separated.

Control Variables

The analysis also includes several background variables that have important theoretical implications or have been shown to be associated with dissolution in prior research (White, 1990). Background characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity, and respondent's education are included in the analysis. Region and metropolitan status are also included as they may influence both union stability and the potential availability of alternative partners (South et al., 2001).

Selective Characteristics

There may be differences in the background characteristics of the types of people who enter into a remarriage in mid to later life versus relatively earlier in life and this may have importance consequences for life course variation in marital dissolution. For example, age at first marriage has been shown to be associated with lower stability of remarriages versus first marriages (Castro, Martin, & Bumpass, 1989). It may be important to control for characteristics that may tap into differences in selection between the two age groups. Several selective background variables are included such as dissolution status (widowhood versus divorce), age at first marriage, duration of the first marriage, cohabitation experiences, and cohort when the first marriage ended. In addition, there may be other background differences that may be important to consider when examining life course variation of remarried couples such as health and emotional

well-being. The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression (CES-D) scale and a measure of self-rated health are included in the analysis. Information regarding the timing and dates of marriage, separation, widowhood, and children are gathered from all three waves of the data. With the exception of basic demographic information such as gender and race, other information is utilized from the relevant wave in which the respondent was in a recently-formed remarriage. There are 7 cases that fit the criteria of being in a recent remarriage of 7 years or less at both Wave 1 and 2. Wave-specific information for these respondents is utilized from Wave 1.

Analysis

The analysis utilizes Kaplan-Meier estimates of survivor functions and Cox proportional hazard models to investigate how marital dissolution varies for individuals in recently formed remarriages later in life (40+) versus earlier in life (<40). Kaplan-Meier estimators model survival over time, and survival in this case refers to remaining in a second marriage rather than separation or divorce. An advantage of Kaplan-Meier estimates is that they allow for censoring due to non-response or death in the data. Cox proportional hazard models estimate the extent to which predictors raise or lower the hazard of an event occurring. In the Cox models, untransformed coefficients greater than zero reflect higher risks of marital dissolution and coefficients less than zero reflect lower risks of disruption. These models allow for flexibility in the shape of the duration structure of the data, but also assume that the hazard functions for any two individuals are

parallel over time. However, nonproportionality can be corrected by adding interactions of the offending covariates with time to the model (Allison, 1995).[9]

As mentioned above, age is measured as a fixed covariate at the start of the second marriage. The risk period of remarriage dissolution, measured in years, begins at the start of the second marriage and continues until the first instance of separation or divorce or until 15 years into the duration of the marriage. Individuals lost due to follow-up are censored at last interview date. Individuals who did not separate and were lost to follow-up due to death (or had a spouse that died) are censored at the time of death. Individuals too ill to complete an interview who had not separated are censored at the last interview s/he responded to. I choose marital duration as my primary "clock" for the risk period because the date of marriage marks the onset of continuous exposure to the risk of dissolution, as described by Allison (1995). For cases where separation occurred before formal divorce or when the couple did not formally divorce, I use the date when the respondent stopped living with his or her spouse rather than the date of legal divorce to mark marital dissolution. This is appropriate because some individuals may proceed to legal divorce only when considering remarriage and because of established subgroup variation in the timing of transitions from separation to divorce (e.g. Sweet & Bumpass, 1987; Sweeney, 2002).

The first model considers the estimated association of age at remarriage (40+ vs. <40) on the likelihood of marital instability adjusting for background controls. The analysis then adds indicators of barriers to divorce, attractions to the current marriage,

[9] Only one covariate in models presented here seems to violate proportionality, whether children were born within the second marriage. Results were very similar and main conclusions remain the same after adding an interaction of this variable and time to the model.

and availability and attractiveness of alternatives separately in Models 2, 3, and 4 in order to examine whether these factors explain age variation in marital instability. Model 4 includes all of the measures of attractions, barriers and alternatives in one model and Model 5 adds selective characteristics to control for differences in the background characteristics of those who remarry relatively earlier versus later in life.

Results

Kaplan-Meier Survival Analysis

The analysis begins with descriptive patterns of marital dissolution using Kaplan-Meier estimates of the survivor function to see if there is evidence that patterns of marital instability differ by age at remarriage. The y-axis of Figure 1 display the proportion "surviving" (i.e. those who have not yet dissolved their second marriage) and the x-axis displays time since the beginning of the second marriage. Results at this stage of the analysis suggest that individuals who remarried age 40 or later are less likely to divorce than individuals who remarried before age 40. Roughly 30% of respondents who remarried younger than age 40 separated from their second marriage, whereas this same percentage is about 18% for the group who remarried relatively older. Log-rank tests (not shown) indicated that differences in the survival curves by age are statistically significant at conventional levels.

Cox Proportional Hazards Models

Table 2 presents (non-exponentiated) coefficients from Cox proportional hazards models of marital dissolution among individuals in recent second marriages. Again,

coefficients greater than zero reflect higher risks of remarriage and coefficients less than zero reflect lower risks of separation or divorce.[10] Model 1 begins by considering the estimated effects of age (<40/40+) on the likelihood of marital dissolution while adjusting for background control variables. Results at this stage of the analysis suggest that remarriages formed in mid to later life are associated with lower risks of divorce than are remarriages formed at relatively younger ages net of the control variables. For example, remarrying age 40 or older relative to under age 40 is associated with a 41% lower hazard of divorce [exp(-.52)=.59].

Model 2 includes measures of potential barriers to see if divorce barriers explain life course variation in marital dissolution. The coefficient for age is still statistically significant, suggesting that age variation in marital dissolution remains after adjusting for characteristics that may represent potential barriers to exiting a marriage such as children, religious factors, commitment to marriage, and relative income of wives. Models 3 and 4 separately include measures of marital attractions and availability and attractiveness of alternatives to the first model. In Model 3, the coefficient for age is no longer statistically significant after adjusting for marital happiness, conflict, and fairness, although at somewhat marginal levels (p=.056). Age variation in the risk of marital dissolution is also explained by including indicators of the availability and attractiveness of alternatives in Model 4. Results are consistent with the idea that although remarried individuals in mid to later life have lower risks of marital dissolution on average, this can be explained by shifts with age in the levels of attractions to the current marriage and the availability and attractiveness of alternatives. However, it is interesting to note that barrier forces alone do not explain differences in marital disruption broadly across the life course.

[10] Throughout the text the term divorce will now refer to separation or divorce.

In Modes 5 which include attractions, barriers, alternatives together and Model 6 which includes selective background characteristics, there still remains no statistically significant association between age and risk of dissolution. However, results suggest several statistically significant associations between the other independent variables and risk of divorce. For example, minor children from past relationships, unhappiness with the second marriage, low commitment to the institution of marriage, low percentage of males in the population, high expectations of one's sex life if separated, and later remarriage cohort are generally associated with higher risks of marital dissolution.

Discussion

Although a plethora of research examines marital instability of first marriages, relatively little work carefully considers the stability of remarried relationships. Prior studies examining how marital dissolution varies broadly by age are limited because the majority of first marriages occur during early adulthood. Since remarriage occurs more broadly throughout the life course, it has potential to offer additional leverage disentangling effects of age from marital duration when examining life course variation in marital disruption. Using data from three waves of the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), this study investigates whether marital dissolution varies broadly by age (40+ vs. <40) for recently remarried individuals. Guided by Levinger's social exchange theory, a second aim examines whether life course variation in dissolution can be explained by factors such as attractions to the current marriage, divorce barriers, and the attractiveness and availability of alternatives. The analysis also pays particular

attention to the role of differing patterns of selectivity characterizing remarriages formed relatively earlier versus later in life.

Results suggest that older recently remarried couples on average display lower risks of marital dissolution than couples who remarried earlier in life. This finding remains after adjusting for background controls and even after theoretically important after barriers to divorce such as children, relative economic independence of wives, religious factors, and commitment to the institution of marriage. However, age differences in divorce risk are no longer exist after adjusting for shifts in the levels of attractions to the current marriage or the availability and attractiveness of alternatives. This is consistent with the idea that although older remarried individuals have lower risks of divorce, this is explained by changes in the levels of attractions to the current marriage and availability and attractiveness of alternatives to the marriage across the life course.

Although there are several contributions noted here, this study has limitations that should be addressed in future work. One potential limitation is the relatively small sample sizes influencing the choice to examine differences broadly by age. As there may be important variation within each age category examined here, future work should examine more refined measures of age categories across the life course. In addition, indicators of social participation with relatives, co-workers, neighbors, and friends utilized here may not accurately capture sources of social support if one were to remain unmarried after separation. Future revisions of this project will examine other measures of close relationships and sources of social support available in NSFH such as items pertaining to giving and receiving help from various individuals. In addition, marriage markets may not be captured well in this study with measures of the percentage males in the

population by age and region. Ideally, one would have a smaller level of geography to reflect the pool of potential sources for individuals to meet others. Future revisions of this project will explore the possibility of using smaller levels of geography included in the NSFH data that is restricted to the public. There may also be important differences in the determinants of dissolution when utilizing information gathered from both spouses in the marriage instead of just one. As sample sizes permit, future versions of this project will consider ways to incorporate couple-level data into the analysis. Although much prior work utilizes Levinger's exchange theory of marriage, this paper is among the first to study remarriage in order gain leverage on life course variation in divorce.

Figure 1. Survival Estimates by Age for Individuals in Recently Formed Remarriages

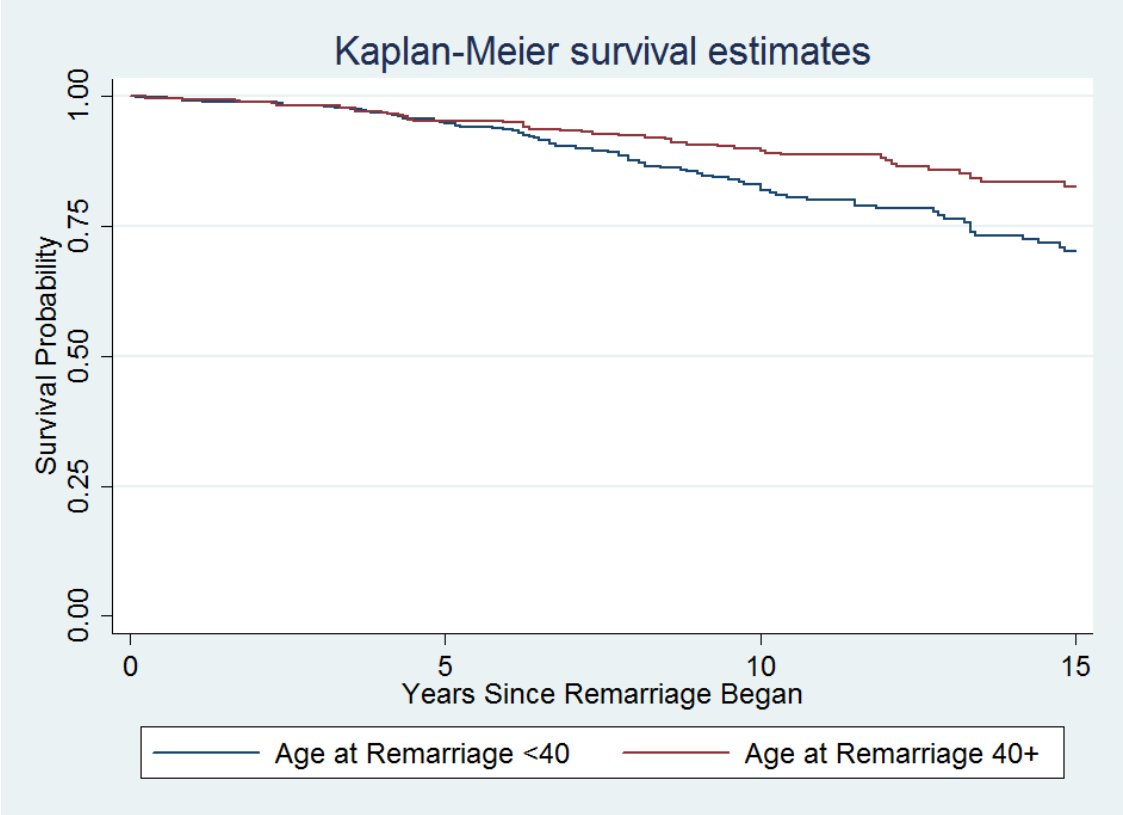

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Variable Descriptions of Recently Remarried Individuals: National Survey of Families and Households, Waves 1-3

Variable	Age <40 Mean	Age <40 SD	Age 40+ Mean	Age 40+ SD	Description
Respondent Separated or Divorced	0.13		0.11		Coded 1 if respondent's second marriage ended in divorce or separation within 15 years; 0 otherwise.
Attractions to the Current Marriage					
Global Marital Happiness					Based on responses to the following question: "Taking things all together, how would you describe your
Very Happy	0.49		0.48		current marriage? Coded 1 if "Very Happy"; 0 otherwise.
Fairness	10.79	1.63	10.58	1.70	Composite score based fairness in marriage across several domains (household tasks, working for pay, spending money, and child care). Each item was coded 0 if "very unfair to me or partner" 1 if "somewhat unfair to me or partner" and 2 if "fair to both." Range = 3 (least fair) to 12 (most fair), alpha = .58.
Marital Conflict	11.60	4.47	10.06	4.62	Composite score based on the frequency of disagreements across several domains (household tasks, money, spending time together, sex, in-laws, and the children). Range = 2 (least disagreements) to 28 (most disagreements), alpha = .77. Individuals with no children were coded to the modal response (less than once a month).
Barriers					
Children Born with Second Spouse					Coded 1 if any children were born with the second spouse starting when couple first lived together (or
Yes	0.53		0.12		marriage date if did not cohabit prior to remarriage); 0 if no children born during this time period.
Number of Prior Minor Children	1.00	1.03	0.46	0.50	Number of children under age 18 from prior relationships.
Number of Prior Adult Children	0.10	0.09	1.69	1.64	Number of children over age 18 from prior relationships.
Catholic (vs. Not Catholic)	0.30		0.22		Coded 1 if raised Catholic; 0 otherwise.
Church Attendance	17.82	37.88	23.92	40.83	Number of times per year respondent attended religious services.
Commitment to Institution of Marriage					Based on responses to the question, "Marriage is a lifetime relationship and should never be ended
Strongly Agree	0.28		0.34		except under extreme circumstances. Coded 1 if 1 if "Strongly Agree"; 0 otherwise.
Relative Income					Relative income from wages between husband and wife. Coded 1 if husband's share is 75% or more of
Husband earns 75%+ of couple income	0.34		0.32		total couple earnings; 0 otherwise.
Home Ownership					
Owns home	0.60		0.81		Coded 1 if respondent and spouse own their own home; 0 if otherwise.
Alternatives					
Percent Male in Population by Age and Regic	49.54	0.76	48.21	2.39	Calculated using population counts by age group (18-19, 20-29, 30-39…80-85) and region from the 1988 Current Population Survey (CPS) for Wave 1 recently remarried individuals and the 1994 CPS for Wave 2.
Social Participation	5.15	2.97	5.30	2.76	Composite score based on how frequently respondent spends time with relatives, neighbors, co-workers, and friends. Responses for each item range from "never" to "several times per week" and are summed to indicate greater social participation. Range = 0 (lowest social participation) to 16 (highest social participation). alpha = .44.
Sex Life if Separated					Based on responses to how the respondent's life would be different if separated in terms of one's sex life.
Same, Better, Much Better	0.45		0.56		Coded 0 if "Same," "Better," or "Much Better"; 0 if "Worse," or "Much Worse."

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Table 1. (Continued)

Background Characteristics					
Sex					
Female	0.59		0.40		Sex of respondent. Coded 1 if female; 0 if male.
Race/Ethnicity					
White (Non-Hispanic)	0.77		0.68		Respondent's race/ethnicity .
Non-White	0.23		0.32		
Education					
< High School	0.14		0.16		Based on respondent's highest completed degree at Wave 1. College graduate refers to those with a
High School	0.45		0.34		4-year college degree.
Some College	0.27		0.23		
College Graduate	0.15		0.27		
Region					
Northwest	0.17		0.15		Region of respondent's residence.
North Central	0.26		0.24		
South	0.35		0.38		
West	0.22		0.22		
Metropolitan Status					
SMSA	0.22		0.23		Metropolitan classification of respondent's residence.
Selective Characteristics					
Dissolution Status of 1st Marriage					
Widowed	0.02		0.26		Coded 1 if 1st marriage ended in widowhood; 0 if ended in divorce.
Age at First Marriage					
<21	0.60		0.41		Age in years at time of first marriage.
21-23	0.27		0.29		
24+	0.13		0.31		
Duration of First Marriage	4.84	3.69	18.69	12.15	Duration in years of first marriage.
Cohabitation Experiences					Based on whether the respondent lived with his or her first or second spouse prior to marriage. Coded 1
Cohabited with a Spouse	0.68		0.41		if yes; 0 otherwise.
Cohort When 1st Marriage Ended					
<1975	0.20		0.22		Based on calendar year when first marriage ended.
1975-1984	0.45		0.44		
1985+	0.34		0.34		
Poor or Fair Health					Self rated health based on the question, "Compared to others your age, how would you describe your
Fair, Poor or Very Poor	0.19		0.18		health?" Coded 1 if "Very Poor," "Poor," or "Fair"; Coded 0 if "Good" or "Excellent."
Depressive Symptoms	8.75	7.90	6.38	7.09	Score on CES-D scale. Based on self-reported frequency on abridged 12 symptoms of depression. Sample range = 0 (fewest depressive symptoms) to 36 (most depressive symptoms) alpha = .93.
unweighted n	678		417		

Weighted using Wave 1 Individual Sample Weight which corrects for unequal probability of selection, screening and interview nonresponse, and postratification adjustment.
Multiple imputation used on independent variables, results very similar using listwise deletion.

Table 2. Coefficients from Cox Models of Marital Dissolution for Individuals in Recently Formed Second Marriages: National Survey of Families and Households Waves 1 - 3 (Multiple Imputation Used on Independent Variables)

	Model 1 Age and Background Vars		**Model 2** Adds Barriers to Divorce to M1		**Model 3** Adds Attractions to M1		**Model 4** Adds Alternatives to M1		**Model 5** Adds Barriers, Attractions, Alternatives to M1		**Model 6** Adds Selective Characteristics to M5	
Independent Variables	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)
Age 40+ (vs. <40)	-0.52 **	(0.19)	-0.62 *	(0.25)	-0.38	(0.20)	-0.21	(0.21)	-0.28	(0.27)	-0.24	(0.29)
Background Characteristics												
Female (1=Yes)	-0.004	(0.18)	0.004	(0.18)	-0.01	(0.19)	0.09	(0.18)	0.07	(0.20)	0.18	(0.21)
Non-White (1=Yes)	0.10	(0.25)	0.15	(0.26)	-0.03	(0.28)	-0.01	(0.25)	-0.05	(0.29)	-0.12	(0.31)
Education (vs. Less than High School)												
High School	0.27	(0.33)	0.24	(0.34)	0.12	(0.34)	0.21	(0.33)	0.05	(0.36)	0.03	(0.37)
Some College	0.44	(0.34)	0.51	(0.35)	0.33	(0.35)	0.40	(0.34)	0.37	(0.37)	0.36	(0.38)
College Graduate	0.18	(0.36)	0.23	(0.39)	0.05	(0.38)	0.12	(0.37)	0.02	(0.41)	-0.04	(0.43)
Region (vs. Northwest)												
North Central	0.16	(0.27)	0.12	(0.27)	0.28	(0.28)	-0.05	(0.28)	0.02	(0.31)	0.05	(0.31)
South	0.11	(0.27)	0.12	(0.27)	0.10	(0.29)	0.21	(0.27)	0.11	(0.29)	0.10	(0.29)
West	0.18	(0.29)	0.15	(0.29)	0.19	(0.31)	-0.26	(0.33)	-0.22	(0.36)	-0.14	(0.37)
Located in SMSA (1=Yes)	0.07	(0.21)	0.14	(0.21)	0.07	(0.22)	0.10	(0.21)	0.14	(0.22)	0.15	(0.23)
Barriers												
Children Born with Second Spouse (1=Yes)	----	----	-0.33	(0.21)	----	----	----	----	-0.37	(0.21)	-0.46 *	(0.22)
Number of Prior Minor Children	----	----	0.28 ***	(0.08)	----	----	----	----	0.26 **	(0.09)	0.29 **	(0.10)
Number of Prior Adult Children	----	----	0.07	(0.10)	----	----	----	----	0.07	(0.10)	0.20	(0.12)
Catholic (vs. Not Catholic)	----	----	0.01	(0.20)	----	----	----	----	-0.08	(0.22)	-0.05	(0.22)
Church Attendance	----	----	-0.001	0.003	----	----	----	----	0.001	0.003	0.002	0.003
Strong Commitment to Marriage (1=Yes)	----	----	-0.66 **	(0.24)	----	----	----	----	-0.49	(0.26)	-0.62 *	(0.26)
Husband Earns 75%+ of Couple Income (1=Yes)	----	----	-0.01	(0.20)	----	----	----	----	0.04	(0.20)	0.06	(0.21)
Owns Home (1=Yes)	----	----	0.05	(0.22)	----	----	----	----	-0.11	(0.22)	-0.06	(0.23)
Attractions to the Current Marriage												
Very Happy in Current Marriage (1=Yes)	----	----	----	----	-0.72 ***	(0.21)	----	----	-0.62 **	(0.22)	-0.70 **	(0.22)
Marital Fairness	----	----	----	----	0.09	(0.07)	----	----	0.08	(0.07)	0.09	(0.07)
Marital Conflict	----	----	----	----	0.04 *	(0.02)	----	----	0.03	(0.02)	0.03	(0.02)

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Table 1. (Continued)

Alternatives												
Percent Male in Population by Age and Region	----	----	----	----	----	----	0.35 **	(0.12)	0.27 *	0.13	0.21	(0.14)
Social Participation	----	----	----	----	----	----	0.00	(0.03)	0.01	0.03	0.004	(0.04)
Sex Life if Separated Same or Better (1=Yes)	----	----	----	----	----	----	0.66 ***	(0.18)	0.45 *	0.21	0.50 *	(0.21)
Selective Characteristics												
Widowed (1=Yes)	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	0.53	(0.41)
Age at First Marriage (vs. <21)												
21-23	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	-0.04	(0.24)
24+	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	0.45	(0.29)
Duration of First Marriage	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	-0.04	(0.02)
Cohabited with a Spouse (1=Yes)	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	0.09	(0.20)
Cohort When 1st Marriage Ended (vs. <1975)												
1975-1984	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	0.58 *	(0.23)
1985+	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	0.66 *	(0.34)
Poor or Fair Health (1=Yes)	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	0.20	(0.24)
Depressive Symptoms	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	-0.01	(0.01)
Imputed N	1095		1095		1095		1095		1095		1095	
Wald test relative to prior model (d.f.)	F=0.33 (9, 1.3e+07) (tests control vars)		F=2.90**(8,3.0e+06) (test relative to M1)		F=7.04***(3,56625) (test relative to M1)		F=6.47***(3,1.08e+07) (test relative to M1)		F=3.03***(14,1.9e+06) (test relative to M1)		F=1.72(9, 2.0e+07) (test relative to M1)	

* p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<001 (two-tailed tests).

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