PARTNERING IN LATER LIFE: NEW FRONTIERS IN FAMILY RESEARCH

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Some of the results presented today come from research co-authored with:

Colleagues

Gary Lee, Professor and Chair of Sociology
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Former Graduate Students

Jennifer Roebuck Bulanda (PhD 2006), Assistant Professor, Miami Univ (OH)
Sayaka Kawamura (PhD 2011), Postdoctoral Fellow, Japanese General Social Survey
The Headlines

More Unwed Parents Live Together, Report Finds
The New York Times
August 16, 2011

Fewer Couples Embrace Marriage; More Live Together
USA Today
June 2, 2011

And iPhone Makes Three: Marriage in the Digital Age
NPR
November 2, 2010
The family formation and dissolution patterns of older adults (ages 50+) are changing

Today’s talk will show that:
- A growing share of older adults is unmarried
- Older adults increasingly form unmarried partnerships
  - Dating
  - Cohabitation
U.S. Age Distribution

1990
- 0-17: 26%
- 18-49: 49%
- 50+: 25%

2010
- 0-17: 24%
- 18-49: 44%
- 50+: 32%

2030
- 0-17: 24%
- 18-49: 41%
- 50+: 35%
Later Life Family Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marriage</th>
<th>Widowhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Marrieds enjoy better mental and physical health than unmarrieds</td>
<td>• Widowhood is linked to declines in mental and physical health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>Well-being</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Marrieds have more economic resources and social support</td>
<td>• Widowhood leads to reduced economic well-being (women) and social support (men)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortality</td>
<td>Mortality</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Marriage is positively associated with longevity</td>
<td>• Spousal loss heightens the risk of death</td>
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</table>
The Family Life Course

- Fewer older adults are married or widowed

- Early family experiences have consequences for middle and later life
  - Cohabitation
  - Delayed or foregone marriage
  - Divorce

- More older adults are unmarried
Percentage of Unmarried Persons, Ages 45-63

- 1980: 16% (Men), 27% (Women), 22% (All)
- 1990: 19% (Men), 27% (Women), 22% (All)
- 2000: 23% (Men), 31% (Women), 25% (All)
- 2009: 31% (Men), 37% (Women), 34% (All)

Legend:
- Orange line: All
- Brown line: Men
- Pink line: Women
Marital Status Composition of Unmarried Persons, Ages 45-63

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never-married</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unmarried Baby Boomers, 2009

Women
- Never-married: 26%
- Widowed: 14%
- Divorced: 60%

Men
- Never-married: 38%
- Widowed: 5%
- Divorced: 57%
Gender Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never-married</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Highly educated</td>
<td>• Highest income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High income</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Moderate education</td>
<td>• Moderate education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Moderate income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less educated</td>
<td>• Moderate income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Highest disability</td>
<td>• Most disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Highly educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lowest income</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Family Life Course

- Early Family Experiences
- Midlife Family Experiences
- Later Life Family Experiences
Later Life Divorce

Al, 62, and Tipper, 61, Gore married 40 years

Arnold Schwarzenegger, 63, and Maria Shriver, 55, married 25 years
U.S. Divorce Rates, by Age

Number of Divorces per 1,000 Married Persons

- **Ages 50+**
  - 1990: 4.67
  - 2009: 9.74

- **All ages**
  - 1990: 18.95
  - 2009: 17.92
Divorce Rate and Number of Persons that Experience Divorce, Ages 50+

- **Number of Divorces per 1,000 Married Persons (Divorce Rate)**
- **Number of Persons that Divorce**

- **Year**
  - 1990: 4.67
t  - 2009: 9.74
  - 2030 (Projection): 9.74

- **Number of Divorces**
  - 1990: 206,007
  - 2009: 604,643
  - 2030 (Projection): 807,229

- **Graph Notes**
  - Divorce Rate: Orange Line
  - Number of Persons that Divorce: Brown Line
  - Y-axis: Number of Divorces per 1,000 Married Persons
  - X-axis: Year (1990, 2009, 2030 (Projection))
Explaining the Rise in Divorce

**Marriage Order**
- First Marriage: 53%
- Remarriage: 30%
- Divorced: 47%
- Remained Married: 70%

**Marital Duration**
- 0-19: 9%
- 20-39: 45%
- 40+: 34%
- Divorced: 46%
- Remained Married: 46%
- Divorced: 20%
- Remained Married: 20%
Unmarried in Later Life

- Roughly 1/3 of Baby Boomers will confront old age unmarried

- Married Boomers will continue to experience marital dissolution
  - The divorce rate has doubled among older adults
  - Widowhood increases with age

- A growing share of middle-aged and older adults is eligible to form partnerships
Unmarried Partnerships

- Partnering can provide social support

- Older adults are less desirous of remarriage but they do want companionship

- Types of unmarried partnerships
  - Dating
  - Cohabitation
Daters among Unmarrieds, 57-84

Total: 14%
Men: 27%
Women: 7%
Dating by Age Group, 57-84

- **Ages 57-64**
  - Total: 18%
  - Men: 32%
  - Women: 14%

- **Ages 65-74**
  - Total: 9%
  - Men: 27%
  - Women: 24%

- **Ages 75-84**
  - Total: 7%
  - Men: 11%
  - Women: 3%
Daters vs. Non-Daters, 57-84

- Divorced:
  - Daters: 57%
  - Non-Daters: 33%

- Good Health:
  - Daters: 55%
  - Non-Daters: 34%

- College degree:
  - Daters: 37%
  - Non-Daters: 16%

- Religious Attendance:
  - Daters: 44%
  - Non-Daters: 25%
Dating and Loneliness, 57-84

The graph shows the relationship between loneliness and dating status for men and women. The x-axis represents the dating status, with 'Dating' on the left and 'Not Dating' on the right. The y-axis represents the level of loneliness, ranging from 0 to 1.

- Men: The line for men shows an increase in loneliness as they move from 'Dating' to 'Not Dating'.
- Women: The line for women also shows an increase in loneliness, but at a lower rate compared to men.

This indicates that being not in a relationship is associated with higher levels of loneliness, particularly for men.
Cohabiting Couples in the U.S.

- 2000: 3,822,000
- 2010: 7,529,000

The graph shows a steady increase in the number of cohabiting couples in the U.S. from 2000 to 2010.
Middle-Age & Older Cohabiters

Ages 50+
Ages 50-64
Ages 65+

2,758,000
2,183,000
575,000

Age Distribution of Cohabitors

2000

- < 49: 88%
- 50-64: 10%
- 65+: 2%

2010

- < 49: 81%
- 50-64: 15%
- 65+: 4%
% Cohabiting among Unmarrieds

- Ages 50+:
  - 2000: 4%
  - 2010: 8%
- Ages 50-64:
  - 2000: 7%
  - 2010: 12%
- Ages 65+:
  - 2000: 1%
  - 2010: 3%
Why Cohabit in Later Life?

- Less interest in remarriage
  - Women especially want to maintain independence

- Economic incentives
  - Protect social security benefits, pension from former spouse
  - Avoid liability for partner’s medical expenses, debt
  - Resource pooling is voluntary; protect assets, inheritance for adult children
Meet the Jordans

Charlotte: “I wasn't looking for anyone. Not at all. I was content.”

Jim was devastated by the loss of his wife and his sons suggested he consider finding a new mate.

He started asking women to have dinner with him. “And finally, Charlotte was the only one.”

They considered marrying and consulted an attorney about a prenuptial agreement – only to discover that keeping their finances and family trusts separate would be expensive, if not impossible.

-adapted from The Sacramento Bee, September 1, 2011

Charlotte, 82, and Jim, 85, met in seniors-only housing and now divide their time between her apartment and his larger cottage.
Union Formation, ages 51-75

- Remain Single: 72%
- Die: 19%
- Marry: 4%
- Cohabit: 5%
Older Cohabitors versus...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remarrieds</th>
<th>Unpartnereds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Cohabitors (esp. women) have fewer economic resources</td>
<td>□ Cohabitors enjoy greater economic resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Similar levels of health limitations</td>
<td>□ Cohabitors have fewer health limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Cohabitors report weaker social ties</td>
<td>□ Cohabitors report weaker social ties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cohabitors’ Union Outcomes

- Remain Cohabiting: 35%
- Marry: 19%
- Separate: 23%
- Die: 23%
Cohabitation in Later Life

- Among older adults, cohabitation operates as a long-term alternative to marriage.
- Nearly all cohabitators expect to remain with their partners for the rest of their lives.
- Is cohabitation functionally equivalent to marriage in terms of outcomes?
  - Health and well-being
  - Mortality
Discussion

- More older adults will be unmarried
  - Reflects earlier life course experiences
  - Recent rise in middle-age and older adult divorce

- Older adults increasingly seek companionship outside of marriage
  - Dating is common
  - Cohabitation may be replacing marriage

- Next steps include uncovering how family transitions in later life are linked to well-being
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