Institutional Participation and the Delay of Entry into Marriage: Generational Differences Between Late Baby Boomers and Early Millennials
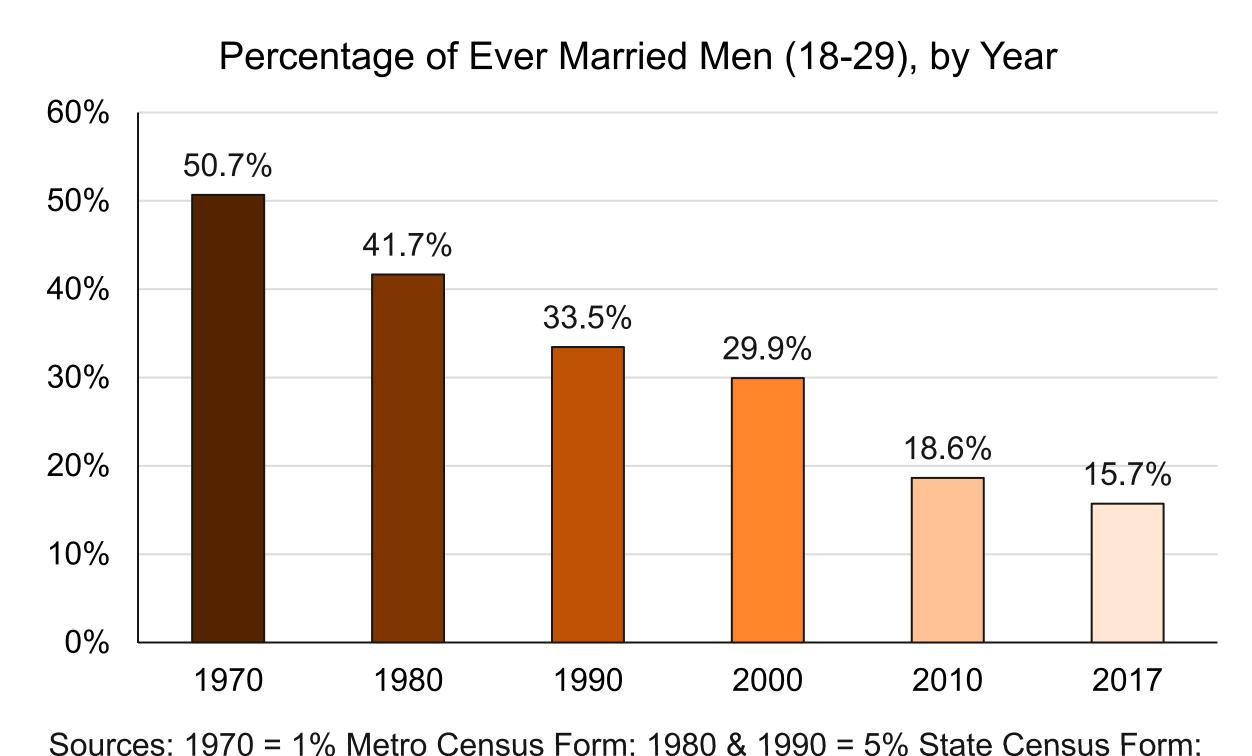
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Introduction

U.S. marriage rates are currently at a 40-year low
- Ages of entry into marriage have peaked to 27 among women and 29 among men

Percentage of Ever Married Men (18-29), by Year

Year	Percentage
1970	50.7%
1980	41.7%
1990	33.5%
2000	29.9%
2010	18.6%
2017	15.7%

Sources: 1970 = 1% Metro Census Form; 1980 & 1990 = 5% State Census Form; 2000 = 5% Census & 1-year ACS; 2010 & 2017 = 1-year ACS

Changes in Institutional Participation

School Enrollment:
- **Increase** in share of young adults who pursue higher levels of education (e.g. bachelor's degree or more)
- **Negatively** associated with entry into first marriage

Incarceration:
- **Increase** in incarceration rates since the 1970s
- **Negatively** associated with entry into first marriage

Military Service:
- **Decrease** in share of men serving on active duty after the termination of the draft
- **Positively** associated with entry into first marriage

Research Questions

1. Have the associations between participation in various institutions and entry into first marriage changed for young adult men?

2. To what extent are reductions in entry into marriage among contemporary young adult men due to cohort differences in the participation various institutions?

Data & Methods

Data:
- National Longitudinal Surveys of Youth 1979 and 1997 (NLSY79 & NLSY97)
- Two cohorts of young men between ages 18-29:
  - *Late Baby Boomers*: born 1960-1964 (NLSY79)
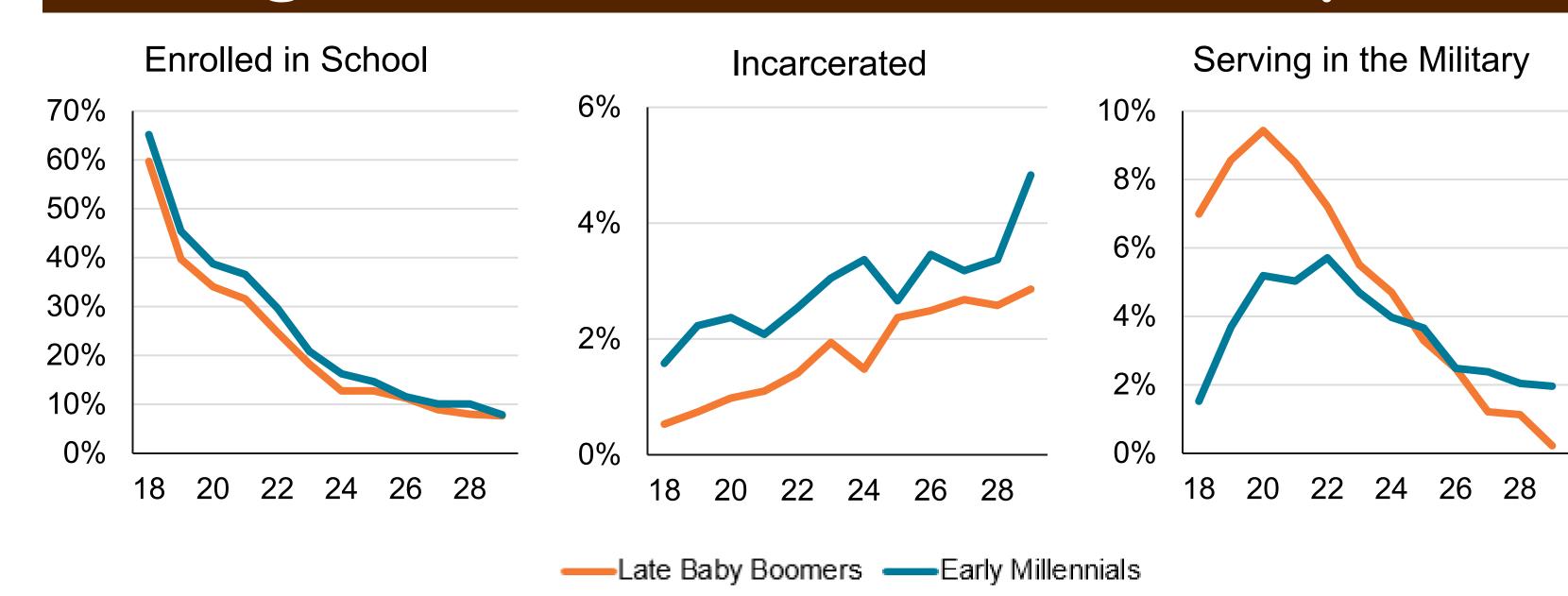 - *Early Millennials:* born 1980-1984 (NLSY97)

Variables:
- *Dependent:* entry into first marriage
- *Independent:* institutional participation *(school enrollment, incarceration, active military service)*
- *Controls:* race/ethnicity, educational attainment, income (1997 dollars), living in the South, age

Methods:
- Event history analysis using person-year intervals predicting the odds of entry into first marriage
- Counterfactual and decomposition exercises to explore the role of institutional participation on entry into first marriage

Young Men's Institutional Participation

Enrolled in School | Incarcerated | Serving in the Military

— Late Baby Boomers — Early Millennials

Event History Analyses

Coefficients from Discrete-Time Event History Regression Analysis Predicting Entry into First Marriage

	Late Baby Boomers (born 1960-1964)	Early Millennials (born 1980-1984)
Institutional Involvement (ref. = None)		
Enrolled in School	-0.97***	-0.56*** a
Incarcerated	-1.53**	-0.87**
Active Military Service	0.56***	0.92*** a
Race/Ethnicity (ref. = White)		
Black	-0.60***	-0.56***
Hispanic	-0.03	-0.01
Education (ref. = High School)		
Less than High School	-0.06	-0.13
Some College	0.15	-0.04
Bachelor's or More	0.11	0.06
Income/1000 (adjusted to 1997 dollars)	0.02***	0.02***
Living in the South	0.30***	0.22***
Age	1.61***	1.79*** a
Age Squared	-0.03***	-0.04*** a
Constant	-21.61***	-25.45*** a
Unweighted N (person-year intervals)	26,241	35,588

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001
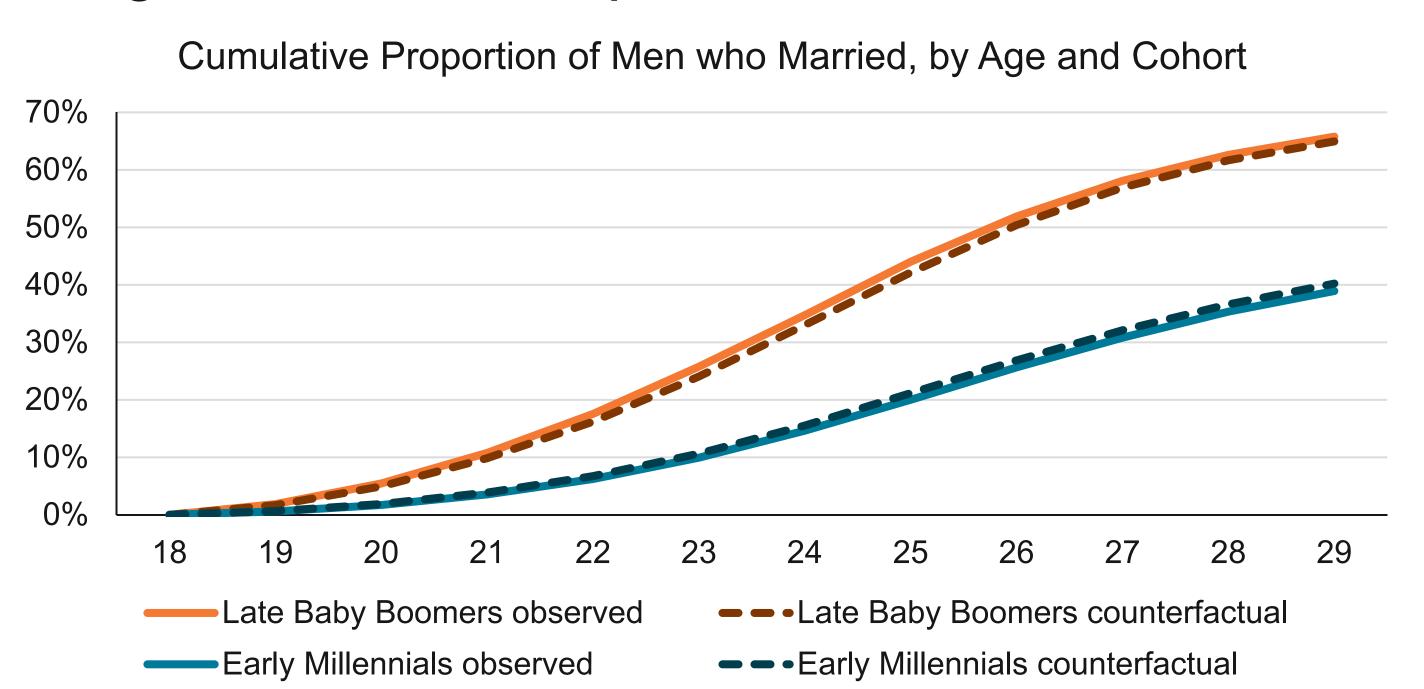a = signifcantly different from Late Baby Boomer cohort at p<0.05 level
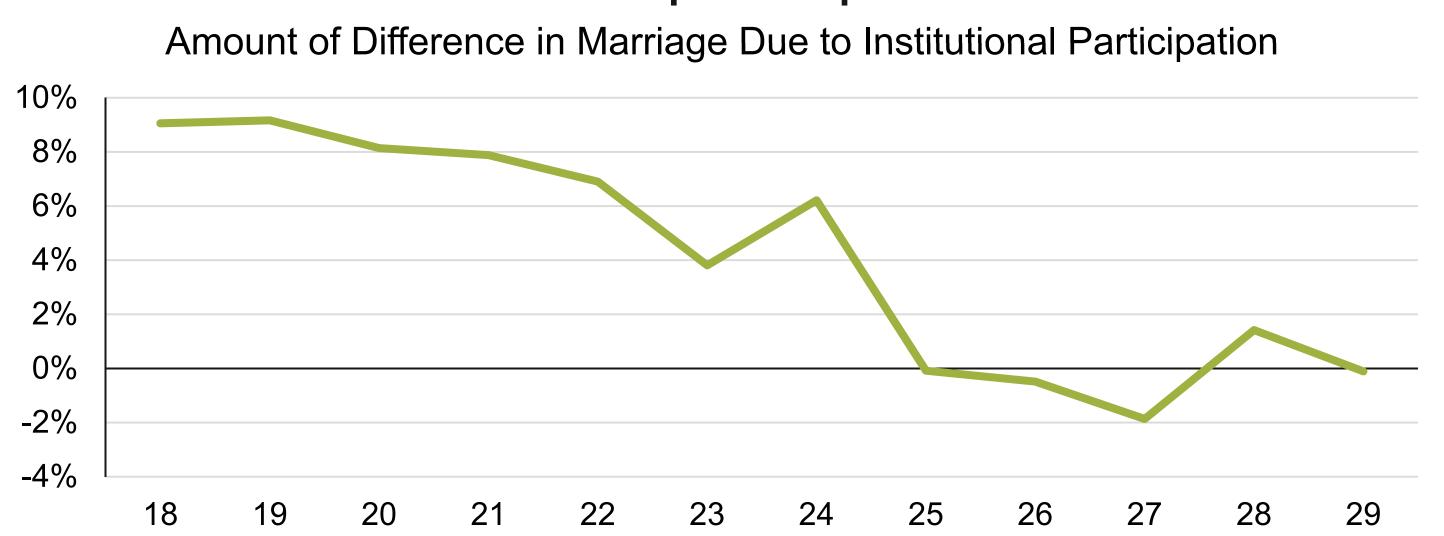
Predicted Probability of 1st Marriage

Cumulative proportion of men who enter into marriage calculated using means and regression coefficients
- Counterfactuals predict entry into marriage if cohort participated in institutions the same way as their younger/older counterparts (Van Hook & Altman, 2013)

Cumulative Proportion of Men who Married, by Age and Cohort

— Late Baby Boomers observed --- Late Baby Boomers counterfactual
— Early Millennials observed --- Early Millennials counterfactual

Decomposition Exercise

Decomposition analyses indicate the amount of the cohort difference in entry into marriage due to differences in institutional participation

Amount of Difference in Marriage Due to Institutional Participation

Cohort differences in school enrollment, incarceration, and military service contribute to less than 10% of the reductions in young adult's entry into first marriage