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

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

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

Young Men’s Institutional Participation

Event History Analyses

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)

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

This research was supported in part by the Center for Family and Demographic Research, Bowling Green State University, which has core funding from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (P50HD050955).