

# Impact of Relationship Status on Subjective Well-being Across Education Levels

## Research Question

- Does having a relationship correlate to an increase in overall well-being?
- Does the correlation vary based on education level?

## Significance

- There are more American adults today that are not married, but cohabiting or stay single (Dush & Amato, 2005; Wright & Brown, 2017).
- It is important for people to understand this data for life planning.

## Background

- Married couples have a higher subjective wellbeing than other relationship types (Dush & Amato, 2005).
- The gap in well-being between married and never married Americans has changed (Lee et al., 1991).
- From 2000 to 2013 there was an increase from 1.2 million to 3.3 million cohabiting adults over the age of 50 (Wright & Brown, 2017).

## Hypothesis

- Being married will have a positive association with well being.
- The association will be greater for adults with higher education.

## Data and Sample

- General Social Survey 2018 (N=2,348).
- Representative sample of Americans over eighteen in the continental U.S.

## Dependent Measure

### Subjective Well-being Scale

Average of three questions (1-5):

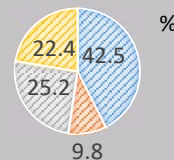
- “How would you rate your satisfaction with your social activities and relationships?”
- “Would you say your quality of life is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?”
- “How would you rate your mental health, including your mood and your ability to think?”

$M = 3.60$  ( $SD = .81$ )

## Independent Measure

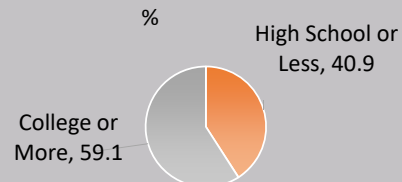
### RELATIONSHIP STATUS

- Married
- Cohabiting
- Widowed, Divorced, Separated
- Never Married



## Control Measure

### Education Level

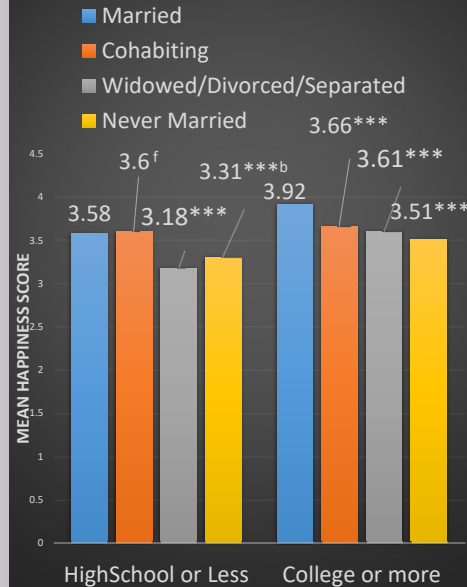


## Analysis

An independent samples T-test for differences in means of subjective well being using SPSS.

## Results

### Mean Subjective Well-being (0-5) by Relationship Status and Education



- Differences from the Married are significant at \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ ;
- Differences from Cohabitation are significant at <sup>a</sup> $p < .05$ , <sup>b</sup> $p < .01$ , <sup>c</sup> $p < .001$ ;
- Differences from Widowed/Divorced/Separated are significant at <sup>d</sup> $p < .05$ , <sup>e</sup> $p < .01$ , <sup>f</sup> $p < .001$

## Summary of Findings

- At the higher education level, married people report significantly higher well-being than all other groups.
- Being married is correlated to a higher subjective rating of well-being and is statistically significant when compared to every variable except when compared to lower education cohabiters.

## Future Research

- Break down education levels to examine where a major difference emerges.
- Examine whether income levels matter.
- Look at the relationship satisfaction and how past relationships may influence their current subjective well-being.

## References

- Dush, C. M. K., & Amato, P. R. (2005). Consequences of relationship status and quality for subjective well-being. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 22(5), 607-627.
- Lee, G. R., Seccombe, K., & Shehan, C. L. (1991). Marital status and personal happiness: An analysis of trend data. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 839-844.
- Wright, M. R., & Brown, S. L. (2017). Psychological well-being among older adults: The role of partnership status. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 79(3), 833-849.