




VOLUME 29 - ARTICLE 20 | PAGES 521-542 

Delayed entry into first marriage and marital stability: Further evidence on the Becker-Landes-Michael hypothesis

BY Evelyn Lehrer, Yu Chen

DOWNLOAD PDF

SUBMIT A RESPONSE LETTER



DATE RECEIVED: 18 Jan 2013

DATE PUBLISHED: 20 Sep 2013

WORD COUNT: 5719

KEYWORDS: **divorce, heterogamy, marital instability, marriage**

DOI: **10.4054/DemRes.2013.29.20**

ADDITIONAL FILES: **readme.29-20** (text file, 490 Byte)
demographic-research.29-20 (zip file, 6 MB)

Abstract

Background: In their pioneering research, Becker, Landes, and Michael (1977) found that beyond age 30 there is a positive relationship between women's age at first marriage and marital instability. They interpreted this finding as a "poor-match effect" emerging when the biological clock begins to tick.

Objective: Our objective was to ascertain with more recent data whether or not there is evidence of a poor match effect and if so, whether it is associated with higher marital instability.

Methods: We used data on non-Hispanic white women from the 2006-2010 National Surveys of Family Growth (NSFG) (N = 3,184).

Results: We found evidence of the existence of a poor-match effect: women who delay marriage disproportionately make unconventional matches, which are generally associated with high marital instability. We also found, however, that their unions are very solid. Both of these results were consistent with earlier findings for the 1995 and 2002-2003 NSFG cycles. In attempting to explain this puzzle, we proposed and tested competing hypotheses. We found that the destabilizing effects associated with indicators of unconventional matches are also present in marriages contracted late, but are dwarfed by the stabilizing influences associated with higher levels of education and older ages.

Conclusions: This paper contributes to our understanding of the determinants of marital instability and the poor match effect by providing a new interpretation for the puzzle described above.

Comments: Our findings have implications for analyses of changes over time in the extent of positive assortative mating in the marriage market, and for the extensive literature showing that heterogamy in traits that are complementary in the context of marriage is destabilizing -- heterogamous marriages contracted at a late age are likely to be stable.

Author's Affiliation

Evelyn Lehrer - University of Illinois, United States of America [[EMAIL](#)]

Yu Chen - University of Illinois at Chicago, United States of America [[EMAIL](#)]

Most recent similar articles in *Demographic Research*

» **Marriage and divorce of immigrants and descendants of immigrants in Sweden**

VOLUME 33 - ARTICLE 2 | KEYWORDS: **divorce, marriage**

» **Family dynamics and housing: Conceptual issues and empirical findings**

VOLUME 29 - ARTICLE 14 | KEYWORDS: **divorce, marriage**

» **Educational Differences in Divorce in Japan**

VOLUME 28 - ARTICLE 6 | KEYWORDS: **divorce, marriage**

» **Marital Dissolution in Japan: Recent Trends and Patterns**

VOLUME 11 - ARTICLE 14 | KEYWORDS: **divorce, marriage**

» **Marriage in Russia: a reconstruction**

VOLUME 10 - ARTICLE 2 | KEYWORDS: **divorce, marriage**

ARTICLES

- » [Current Volume](#)
- » **Older Volumes**
 - » [Volume 29](#)
- » [Editor's Choice](#)
- » [Replicable Articles](#)
- » [by Author](#)
- » [by Subject](#)
- » [Search](#)

CITATIONS

Cited References: 50

- » [View the references of this article](#)

Download to Citation Manager

- » [RIS format](#)
- » [BibTeX format](#)

SIMILAR ARTICLES

PubMed

- » [Articles by Evelyn Lehrer](#)
- » [Articles by Yu Chen](#)

Google Scholar

- » [Articles by Evelyn Lehrer](#)
- » [Articles by Yu Chen](#)

JUMP TO ARTICLE

Volume

Page

Volume

Article ID

© 1999 - 2015 Max-Planck-Gesellschaft

Articles

[Current Volume](#)
[Older Volumes](#)
[Editor's Choice](#)
[Replicable Articles](#)
[by Author](#)
[by Subject](#)
[Search](#)

Special Collections

[About Special Collections](#)
[All Special Collections](#)

for Authors

[General Information](#)
[Copyright Information](#)
[Review Process](#)
[Submit a Paper](#)
[Submit a Letter](#)
[My Author Account](#)

for Readers

[Get Email Alerts](#)
[How to cite DR](#)

About the Journal

[Purpose](#)
[From the Publisher and Editor](#)
[Who's Who](#)
[Our Reviewers](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Copyright & Legal](#)

