

## Conclusion

*It is not up to you to complete the work yet you are not free to desist from it.*

--Ethics of the Fathers, Talmud

This book has presented the major insights I have gained from eighteen years of research on marriage. As suggested from the subtitle, the major emphasis has been theoretical, although a number of chapters have also presented empirical results. An attempt was made to add to the existing literature on marriage by presenting:

1. New ways of organizing existing hypotheses, including connections between previously unrelated hypotheses. For instance, previously developed hypotheses regarding the effect of marriage squeezes on the likelihood of marriage inside a group (in-marriage) were connected to other marriage squeeze hypotheses and to other hypotheses regarding in-marriage (see Chapters 3 and 8).
2. New hypotheses, such as the hypotheses regarding the effect of marriage squeezes on the participation of married women in the labor force. Some new hypotheses are extensions of existing hypotheses regarding the relationship between two variables. For instance, it has been hypothesized in the past that unexpected changes in income are positively related to the likelihood of divorce. New hypotheses were presented here regarding third variables which are expected to intervene in the relationship between the first two variables (see Chapters 3 and 10). Many of the new hypotheses that were presented regarded the predicted relationship between three variables, a type of hypothesis rarely found in the existing literature on marriage.
3. A few tests of the hypotheses, especially of some of the new hypotheses.

In addressing a subject matter as broad and multi-faceted as marriage, an attempt was made to take a multi-cultural perspective. Applications were presented in the context of a modern industrialized nation such as the contemporary U.S., nations in transition such as the U.S. in 1930 and Israel in the 1970s, and freshly industrializing nations such as Guatemala or Nigeria in the 1970s. While the perspective was broad in one sense, it was narrow in the sense conveyed in the title of this book. The reliance on economics found in this book was expressed as follows:

1. Focus on aspects of behavior such as labor supply, earnings and productivity, which are commonly considered legitimate applications of economics.
2. Use of demand and supply analysis. Many chapters are based on the concept of markets for spousal labor, as explained in Chapter 3.
3. Use of general equilibrium theory, which combines the analysis of markets for spousal labor and for labor in general.
4. Use of wage and income as explanatory variable (Chapters 3 to 11) or dependent variable (Part VI).

There are many ways in which the work presented here is incomplete and could benefit from further research. Here are some directions for future research:

1. More empirical tests of previously tested hypotheses, using better data and statistical techniques.
2. Tests of previously untested hypotheses.
3. More emphasis on policy-relevant issues. For instance, more could be said on the impact on income-maintenance programs and the welfare system, starting with some of the analysis found in Chapter 10.
4. Development of more legal implications. Some legal scholars have already become interested in this line of work (for instance, Ellman (1989) in his recent work on alimony). At the present time, more connections could easily be drawn to issues of legal concern such as divorce laws, spousal support, marriage contracts,

and rights of cohabitating couples. Further cooperation between lawyers and scholars adopting the approach presented here could be very fruitful.

5. Refinements and extensions of the theory.

If this book will inspire at least a few capable people to expand their research agenda in some of these directions, I will have the satisfaction of knowing that I did not waste my time.

I will feel equally happy if this book helps some individuals in reaching their goals with respect to marriage, labor or divorce. The analysis presented here can clarify the choices and constraints faced by individuals, and thereby help them make wiser decisions in their personal life. Informal counseling seems to have become a by-product of the classes in which I teach about this material. In one particular instance, a student who had become heavily involved in my work (in part, because he had gone to graduate school in economics at the University of Chicago...) credited my course for saving his third marriage. I hope that in the future, my work will help others save their second or first marriages as well, perhaps in part by helping them think rationally about their decision to marry and the circumstances surrounding that decision. Of course, I realize that the book is far from being written in the style of a self-help book, and that very few will delve deep enough in the abstract analyses to make connections to their personal life. Maybe one day I will write another book, which will make it easier for readers to reach such practical insights.

Finally, I allow myself to hope that some of the ideas presented here will also help policymakers. If this book can contribute in any way to the improvement of laws and administrative procedures related to marriage, labor and divorce, I will feel very honored.