

Introduction

This book deals with marriage from various perspectives. From the perspective of the different disciplines, this book deals with the *economics* of marriage to the extent that most hypotheses developed and tested are based on economic theory. It can also be classified as economics in the sense that it touches on many topics traditionally analyzed by economists, such as labor supply, labor productivity and earnings. This book can be classified as *sociology*, *demography*, or *anthropology* to the extent that it deals with topics such as marriage rates, consensual unions, polygamy, and the distribution of power in marriage, which have traditionally been considered part of the domain of these disciplines.

While this book contains a lot of facts and *empirical* findings, and touches on policy issues, the book's main contribution to the existing literature lies in the *theoretical* perspective it offers. The central part of the book is Part Two, which presents a general equilibrium theory of marriage. Years of experience have taught me that most people lack the motivation to read this kind of theoretical material on marriage. Common reasons why people shy away from such theory are the notions that (1) economics does not have much to add to the existing literature on marriage, and (2) an economic analysis of marriage leads to undesirable practical implications, such as denial of love and glorification of selfishness. Since such notions are so widespread, Part One of this book attempts to dispel them.

Addressing the first notion, the materials in Part One aim at showing that other disciplines do not offer close substitutes to an economic analysis of marriage. Chapter 1 compares the economics of marriage with some of the related literature found in anthropology and sociology. These disciplines provide a wealth of studies about marriage, including some theoretical material. However, sociological and anthropological theories of marriage have some drawbacks in comparison to economic theories of marriage.

Part One also addresses the second notion that discourages many people from reading an economic analysis of marriage, namely, the notion that an economic approach to the analysis of marriage

leads to the denial of emotions and social or spiritual concerns. Most people, including most social scientists, think about marriage either in romantic terms, or in ethical-religious terms. To some extent, romanticism contradicts the economic approach. Romantics typically rely on feelings in making decisions, not on rational comparisons of costs and benefits. The romantic mentality stresses individual uniqueness, and stands in sharp contrast to the economic approach in which markets play a central role. Chapter 2 attempts to dispel the notion that by applying economics to the study of marriage one suppresses basic human tendencies for love and intimacy.

Some readers may want to start directly with Part Two, which presents the general equilibrium theory of labor and marriage that served as inspiration to most of the other papers in this volume. Previous analyses of marriage, whether they were written by sociologists or by economists, have not integrated marriage markets with labor markets. This theory uses a general equilibrium framework to integrate labor and marriage markets. Predictions are derived regarding the effects of particular factors, such as individual resources and market size, on individual and market labor supply and marital choices. The two chapters in Part Two complement each other. Chapter 3 emphasizes theory and applications to labor supply, whereas Chapter 4 emphasizes implications for the study of marriage and divorce. Readers who lack a background in economic analysis may want to skip the first part of Chapter 3.

Parts Three and Four deal with implications of the theory: sex ratio effects and compensating differentials in marriage. A major implication of this general equilibrium theory integrating marriage markets with labor markets, is that the sex ratio of marriageable men to marriageable women may influence labor supply as well as marriage. Part Three consists of two chapters dealing with sex ratio effects.

The first chapter on sex ratio effects, Chapter 5, was written for a mixed audience of sociologists and economists, and avoids the technical jargon and statistical techniques familiar to economists. Chapter 6 is addressed to readers trained in economics or statistics and includes regression results. The two chapters also vary in the generality of their subject matter. Whereas Chapter 6 focuses on only one effect of sex ratio variations, namely, its effect on the

participation of married women in the labor force, Chapter 5 looks at the effect of sex ratio variations on a number of social and economic aspects of life.

The two papers included in Part Four both deal with compensating differentials in marriage. Chapter 7 is a study of married women's labor supply and shows how differences between husband's and wife's characteristics, associated with compensating differentials in marriage, add to our degree of understanding of women's labor force participation. The paper was written for an audience of economists.

Chapter 8 attempts to explain an aspect of similarity between husband's and wife's characteristics, what sociologists call homogamy. The degree of homogamy in one dimension, such as religion, is related to the similarity of husband's and wife's characteristics in other areas, such as education, age, and divorced status. It is assumed that compensating differentials in marriage exist. Hypotheses regarding the likelihood of intermarriage between members of different groups are derived and estimated, using the example of Jewish men in the United States.

The general equilibrium theory of marriage and labor can be applied in many different ways to the study of marriage, as suggested in Chapter 4. Part Five presents further applications of the theory to selected aspects of marriage. Chapter 9 deals with marriage formality and cohabitation, Chapter 10 with divorce and labor supply, and Chapter 11 with polygamy. These chapters test a number of hypotheses regarding the effect of aggregate characteristics--such as sex ratios--and individual characteristics--such as education and income--on these aspects of marriage.

The theory of marriage presented in Part Two views individuals as suppliers of spousal labor, and defines spousal labor as any service benefiting a spouse. Such spousal labor is not simply about washing dishes and taking care of the garden, but also about investing in a spouse's human capital. People invest in their spouse's human capital to the extent that household labor boosts the spouse's earning capacity or other aspects of the spouse's productive capacity (including the capacity to produce at home). The papers in Part Six of the volume all deal with aspects of spousal help that increase a person's human capital.

Chapters 12 to 14 deal with spousal help aimed at increasing a worker's earning capacity, whereas Chapter 15 focuses on the contribution of a spouse to an individual's religious practice, which can be considered as a particular aspect of home production. The last two chapters are of an empirical nature. They both analyze Israeli data and were written with Shoshana Neuman. Dafna Izraeli also collaborated on Chapter 14.