

## Preface

Marriage is an institution that plays a central role in most societies. As it affects decisions regarding labor supply, consumption, reproduction, and other important decisions, marriage receives considerable attention in academic circles. Much research has been done about marriage, principally by sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists.

While recognizing its importance, most economists have let marriage play a small role in their research. Economic theory ignores marriage almost completely. In their empirical studies, economists pay little attention to marriage, even where the evidence indicates that marital status is strongly related to the topic of research. If they include any reference to marriage, economists usually reduce marital status to the role of an exogenous control variable. So far, the *economics of marriage*, defined as the application of economic analysis to the study of marriage, has generated very limited interest. One of the reasons for this limited interest may lie in the lack of available books focusing on the economics of marriage.

As of the time of this writing, only three books on the economics of marriage have been published. Gary Becker's (1981) *Treatise on the Family*, published in the United States, stands out in the rigor of its mathematical presentation. Ivy Papps' (1980) *On Love and Money*, published in England, focusses on a limited number of applications of the economic analysis of marriage. The most comprehensive and readable book published on this topic in the past is Bertrand Lemennicier's (1988) *Le Marche du Mariage et de la Famille*. If it has not generated much interest in the economics of marriage in the United States or the United Kingdom, it is probably because it has not been translated into English. My major goals in the present book are to show that economics can be useful and relevant to the study of many aspects of marriage, and to fill some of the vacuum existing in this area.

Central to the book is the general theory of marriage presented in Part Two. The idea for that theory occurred to me during the beginning stages of my doctoral thesis in 1974-75. It was

then that I first developed a market for spousal labor and called it a "market for wife-services" (Grossbard 1976). At that time I also started writing on the interrelation between labor markets and spousal labor markets, but I did not have the opportunity to develop that idea until 1980, when I spent a year as a fellow at Stanford's Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences.

In an attempt to create better communication between the disciplines engaged in research on marriage and thereby facilitate cross-fertilization, this book emphasizes materials that are most likely to interest social scientists. The book deals mostly with issues and data of contemporary relevance to two industrialized countries, namely the United States and Israel. Of the two chapters reporting data analysis from developing countries, the chapter analyzing cohabitation is very relevant to contemporary social policy in industrialized countries today, given the rapid increase in the incidence of cohabitation in the West.

Furthermore, this book emphasizes themes that are of interest to mainstream economists and sociologists. One of the central ideas of the book--the impact of sex ratios on many aspects of behavior including labor supply--is an idea I started writing about in 1978 and which has become very popular in recent years. Another theme emphasized in the book, compensating differentials in marriage, will hopefully appeal to researchers in both labor studies and family studies.

Some of the themes covered in the book reflect my own research opportunities. I have researched polygamy in great part because Theodore W. Schultz and Gary Becker encouraged me to do so while I was a student at the University of Chicago. A summer job at Rand in 1976 offered the opportunity to work with William Butz studying Guatemalan data. As Guatemala is characterized by very high rates of cohabitation, I started to do research on cohabitation. An invitation to spend a year at Stanford in 1980 led to cooperation with Michael Keeley, who was concluding his analysis of the effects of Negative Income Tax experiments on divorce and labor supply.

Much about this book is new. Five of the fifteen chapters have never been published in English. Eleven chapters (Chapters 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, and 15) are based on articles that have previously appeared in Hebrew, in an anthropology journal, in books

and in economics journals of varying accessibility. Most of these chapters have been substantially expanded, rewritten, or translated.

Most chapters can be read without a strong background in economics or mathematics. Those chapters that contain some mathematical or economic analysis (Chapters 3, 7, 10, and 13) are preceded by introductions aiming at making the economics of marriage more accessible and appealing to readers without previous knowledge in economics. Even so, some readers may want to skip Chapter 3, or at least the portions of that chapter that are formulated in mathematical terms. The introductions to each part and to each chapter also facilitate the integration of the various chapters into one book, and often also create bridges to existing literature.

This book presents a long list of hypotheses. Some chapters are mostly theoretical (in particular, Chapters 3, 4, 12, and 13), and the other chapters are mostly empirical. Even though more pages are devoted to testing hypotheses than to developing them, most hypotheses presented here remain either untested or inadequately tested. I have attempted to execute many of these tests on my own or in conjunction with colleagues, but providing adequate scientific tests for all these hypotheses has not been possible. Many of my results should be considered tentative, and I am sure they will be improved through the use of better data and methodologies. If a better understanding of marriage follows and as a result of such better understanding the economics of marriage can help us design better social policies or perhaps help us make wiser personal decisions regarding marriage, I will be very pleased.

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