The Earnings of Men and Remarriage

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Abstract—Focusing on the effects of men's earnings, this paper analyzes remarriage. Previous empirical research has not established what theoretical aspects of men's earnings are important. Here, data for Wisconsin high school graduates that include male respondents' Social Security earnings history are analyzed. The results indicate that absolute earnings, earnings instability, and earnings relative to peers have minimal effects on a man's probability of remarriage, but that permanent income positively affects remarriage. However, studies of marital disruption often find permanent income is not as important as relative earnings measures. Concluding remarks speculate about the meaning of these contrasting findings for the economics of marriage.

INTRODUCTION

The number of persons experiencing remarriage has increased for two reasons. First, more people are eligible due to the increase in marital disruption, and, second, a rising proportion of those eligible remarry (Sweet, 1977). Most eligible persons do remarry. Thornton (1975) found that 83 percent of women interviewed for the 1970 National Fertility Survey remarried by the ninth year after marital disruption, with 52 percent remarrying within three years. Using male respondents from the 1967 Survey of Economic Opportunity, Sweet (1973) reported that 75 percent of those whose first marriage terminated prior to age 40 had remarried. Clearly, who remarries, how quickly they remarry, and what factors affect the stability of second or higher order marriages are becoming more important questions.

This work studies the influences that lead to remarriage by focusing on the effects of men's earnings. Our data are from the Wisconsin Study of Social and Psychological Factors in Socioeconomic Achievement which include each male respondent's Social Security earnings history. We first review the literature on the economics of remarriage and evaluate the empirical evidence from previous studies. We then discuss the data source, our models, and the measurement of our variables. After presenting the results, the conclusion relates our findings to those of previous studies.

HYPOTHESES AND PREVIOUS FINDINGS

Because our earnings data are for males only, we emphasize here the hypotheses and evidence about the relationship of men's earnings to the probability that they remarry. The theoretical and empirical literature on the role of earnings in affecting the likelihood that women remarry sets forth hypotheses that differ from those for men. Because women traditionally specialize in home work and/or tend to interrupt their full-time market work experiences with spells devoted to childrearing, women's earnings are usually viewed as an alternative to spousal support, leading to an emphasis on the degree of independence their earnings appear to permit.

There is no analogous hypothesis for men. In addition, women usually retain custody of children after a marriage ends, rendering them categorically eligible for income transfer payments that are not generally available to men and provide a source of income that may compete with the spousal support available from marriage. Thus, for women but not men, it is believed that the availability of welfare benefits inhibits remarriage. The empirical evidence tends to confirm both of these hypotheses about women (MacDonald and Sawhill, 1978). While the work of Hannan et al. (1976) contributes to this evidence, it is not comparable to this endeavor since their dependent variable combines first marriages and remarriages.

The primary hypothesis about male earnings and the probability of remarriage is that the higher the man's earnings are, the more likely he is to remarry. One formulation of this hypothesis stems from two closely related ideas about male earnings and the expected gains from marriage. According to Becker et al. (1977), the economic gains from marriage are primarily due to the division of labor between spouses. In searching for a prospective spouse, a man supposedly attempts to attract a woman whose productive attributes best complement his own; the more productive attributes a man has, the more likely he is to attract a desirable spouse. Thus, men with high earnings gain more from marriage and therefore have higher remarriage probabilities. Hear Becker in reference to high income men:

> In the optimal sorting they marry women with relatively low earnings potential, greater physical attractiveness and superior other nonmarket characteristics. Therefore, men with relatively high earnings potential gain more from marriage than men with relatively low earnings potential, not only because of the higher level of their income but also because of greater gains from specialization within marriage, since their mates have a comparative advantage in specializing in nonmarket investments. (Becker et al., 1977, p. 1146)

An earlier statement by Sweet (1973) also notes that high income men are more attractive to potential mates, but emphasizes the relatively greater family burden a low income man bears in exchange for home productivity gains, particularly if his earnings are unstable. In addition, Sweet seems to take a more neutral stance about the prevalence of the traditional sexual division of labor implicit in Becker's view. He suggests that low income men might be *more* likely to remarry in order to share pooled incomes.

> Clearly a man with a relatively large income would be in a better market position to attract a potential spouse than one who earns very little. He may also be more inclined to remarry as well. The man whose income is low and often unstable from month to month and year to year may prefer not to remarry and spread his meager income over a large number of consumers. On the other hand, he may perceive it to be to his advantage to marry and pool his income with that of a working wife. (Sweet, 1973, pp. 12-13)

Although the literature's main hypothesis about earnings and remarriage refers to the expected permanent level of the man's earnings, Sweet also expects that the uncertainty associated with income instability could lead to increased or reduced remarriage probabilities.

In general, Becker et al. and Sweet ignore to some extent the female's perspective. It is clear that from a woman's perspective, a man with high (permanent) income is a more attractive mate.

Nevertheless, in formulating other related hypotheses, Sweet and Becker et al. tend to neglect complications involving the woman's response to marriage offers that are contingent upon her intensive specialization in either home or market work. Referring to the thrust of the quote from Becker et al., the gain from marrying a high income man is reduced to the degree that the woman would not prefer "specializing in nonmarket investments." Conversely, with respect to Sweet's remarks, the woman must be willing to specialize intensively in market work to offset

the disadvantage of the low wage of a man who would find it "to his advantage to marry and pool his income with that of a working wife."

Previous empirical research has not established what theoretical aspects of male's earnings are important for remarriage. Glick and Norton (1971) found a positive zero order relationship between men's 1966 earnings and whether a remarriage had occurred by 1967 in the Survey of Economic Opportunity (SEO). Multivariate SEO analyses by Sweet (1973) and Becker et al. (1977) confirm this finding, using different specifications of the dependent variable and different analytical techniques. Becker et al. conducted a logit analysis of the effect of 1966 earnings on the log-odds that a man had remarried within 2, 5, 10, and 15 years after a divorce (apparently separated men were excluded). Sweet used ordinary least squares to determine the effect of the same earnings variable on the probability that a man would have remarried by 1967. Time since marital disruption entered this analysis as a control variable, and separated as well as divorced men were included in the sample on the grounds that there is often no need to obtain a divorce until contemplating remarriage. Sweet also studied the effects of occupation and education. Remarriage was generally more prevalent among men in high status occupations, but there was no consistent pattern of effects among education categories. Becker et al. obtained similar results for education but did not examine occupation.

Sweet quite appropriately emphasized that income and occupation were measured only in 1967 (for 1966) and "not necessarily at the time that the person was likely to be remarrying." This suggests certain methodological problems:

1. For younger men, 1966 income may not be an accurate measure of permanent income. To illustrate, a surgical intern's annual income would not represent his potential earnings as well as a plumber's represent a plumber's, because their age-earnings profiles are very different.

2. By measuring earnings at a time subsequent to the remarriage decision, it is possible that researchers are confounding the effects of earnings on remarriage with the effects of remarriage on a man's earnings.

3. With respect to the possibility of effects of earnings instability on remarriage, another difficulty is that instability must be defined in relation to some normal level, requiring more than one observation. For this reason, the SEO investigators could not analyze income instability effects.

There is some evidence that suggests the second problem may be quite serious. Duncan's multivariate analysis of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (1976) revealed that 1967 income had no effect on whether men who were unmarried in 1968 had remarried by 1974. However, interpreting this result is complicated by the fact that Duncan's sample consisted of both never-married and previously married men. Income might affect first marriages differently than remarriage.

In summary, a review of previous studies reveals that the effects of income on remarriage are thought to be much different for women than for men. Income from earnings or government transfer payments is thought to offer women independence from the need for spousal support, as confirmed by the bulk of the empirical evidence. For males, increased permanent incomes are expected to promote remarriage by improving their marriage market positions, i.e., their attractiveness to potential mates. Becker et al. posit that this also leads to greater gains from marital work specialization, while Sweet mentions two alternatives—low income men may be more reluctant to share their own income, or they may wish to pool that income with a wife's market earnings. Three studies of the 1967 Survey of Economic Opportunity revealed a positive income-remarriage relationship. However, these findings are based on an income report for a single year, raising the possibility that the use of either a permanent

income measure or a measure of income instability might yield different results. Another study, based on panel data, revealed no effect of men's 1967 income on marriages between 1968 and 1974.

DATA, MODELS, VARIABLES

The Wisconsin Study data permit investigation of the relationship between the likelihood of remarriage and several aspects of men's earnings, including annual earnings for the year after the marital disruption, a measure of long-run permanent income, an earnings instability measure, and the man's earnings relative to that of other men with similar characteristics. This last variable is tested as a new measure of marriage market attractiveness.

The Wisconsin Study of Social and Psychological Factors in Socioeconomic Achievement is a longitudinal, random sample of 10,317 persons who were Wisconsin high school seniors in 1957 (Sewell and Hauser, 1975). The original interviews were conducted in 1957. There was a mail survey sent to the respondent's parents in 1964; however, data from this wave will not be used in the present analyses. A follow-up study was executed in 1975, obtaining completed interviews from 9,138 respondents (88.5 percent of the original sample). Among other things, these interviews obtained detailed marital and fertility histories. Furthermore, for all male members of the 1957 Wisconsin cohort, we have individual Social Security earnings records by year from 1957 through 1971. We use elaborate procedures to safeguard the identity of individuals. A disadvantage of this data set is that one cannot generalize the results to men who are not high school graduates.

Our sample for this analysis is restricted to 413 males whose first marriages ended in divorce or separation. We included those men whose marriages ended in separation because for some subgroups of the population official termination of a marriage is not likely or necessary unless a remarriage is imminent (only 6 percent of those who had terminated first marriage

were separated at time of interview). Our dependent variable is whether a man ever remarried. Since we are aware of the open-ended interval problem, we tried to first predict whether a man remarried in the first three years after the separation and then predict remarriage during years three to six conditional on not having remarried during the earlier period. Unfortunately, sample size became problematic, rendering this strategy unfeasible.

We use multiple regression with a dichotomous dependent variable (which is scored one if the man remarries, zero otherwise). There are well-known econometric problems associated with estimation based on a dichotomous dependent variable (see Goldberger, 1964). However, these problems are of less concern when the mean probability ranges between 0.25 and 0.75 (Goodman, 1976). Because our sample's mean probability of remarrying is 0.60, we employ ordinary least squares.

To measure differences in the period of "eligibility" or exposure (beginning at separation) to the risk of remarriage, we use the variable EXPOS which is the number of months from the time the respondent stopped living with his first spouse until the time of the 1975 survey interview. We also include in our models the duration of first marriage in years (NDURFM), calculated as the number of years from the beginning of first marriage to the time when the respondent stopped living with his first spouse. It could be argued that the longer the duration of marriage, the higher the likelihood of remarriage, since the man would be more accustomed to being in the married state. The analysis of Becker et al. suggests that for men, duration of first marriage has a small positive, statistically significant effect on remarriage during the first five years after the termination of the first marriage.

Because all respondents graduated from high school in 1957, it would seem they are exactly the same age. If age were fixed by sample selection, then since age equals age at marriage plus duration of marriage

plus exposure, an increase in marital duration could reflect both the effect of a one-year increase in duration of marriage and a one-year earlier age at marriage, holding exposure fixed in a regression sense. Likewise a one-year increase in exposure holding constant marital duration captures both an extra year's exposure and the effect of a one-year earlier age at marriage. There is considerable sample variation in respondent's age, however. At high school graduation about 18 percent were over 18 whereas another 45 percent were at least six months younger. Of all men who had remarried by time of interview, 56 percent did so within three years. Hence age differences as small as six months may be considered important. Therefore, we believe the regression coefficients for EXPOS and NDURFM can properly be interpreted as indicators of the respective effects of exposure and duration of marriage among men of various ages.

Our first measure of a man's financial attractiveness is YSPLAT, annual earnings (in constant 1972 hundreds of dollars) in the year subsequent to the disruption of his first marriage. Some readers of preliminary versions have been concerned that YSPLAT may be a poor indicator because of life style adjustments occurring shortly after marital disruption. However, none of the suggested alternatives seem feasible. Using income two or three years after marital disruption is problematic because many men have already remarried by this time. Similarly the use of income at a particular age would be incorrect since for some it would represent earnings while married, while for others it would represent earnings during exposure to remarriage or even after remarriage.

To tap the effects of earnings instability on the remarriage probabilities of men, we calculated the ratio of earnings in the year after the split to his "normal earnings," defined as the average earnings received during the three years previous to the analysis period. The use of this ratio presumes that the impact of earnings instability depends on its magnitude with respect to normal earnings. Two dummy variables were created for use as explanatory variables, one indicating whether the ratio exceeded 1.40 (AN, or above normal) and another (BN, below normal) for respondents whose ratio was less than .90 (the cutoff points are not equidistant from 1 since the data are for a period of men's lives when their earnings increase quite rapidly).

When a potential mate considers the financial attractiveness of marrying a given man, it is possible that she not only considers the level of his current earnings, but also how well he is doing relative to other men she knows (e.g., her friends' husbands). As a measure of this type of attractiveness we calculated the ratio of the man's earnings in the year after he stopped living with his first spouse to his "expected" earnings—that is, the earnings he would have received if he had the same rate of return to productive attributes as his peers. To obtain the denominator of this ratio, we estimated the parameters of a regression of absolute earnings in that period on whether or not the respondent was raised in a town of less than 2,500 persons, his IQ score, normalized rank in high school class, whether he was enrolled in a college preparatory program, and his education attainment level in the year previous to his marital disruption. The sample for these regressions was all men in the original cohort who had no missing data for earnings during that year. We then used these parameters to obtain a predicted earnings value for each individual. Implicitly, then, the peers we had in mind are those of similar intelligence, school preparation, high school rank, and educational attainment. For analysis, our two dummy variables were BETTER (better than peers) when earnings relative to peers exceeded 1.25 and WORSE (worse than peers) when relative earnings were less than 0.75.

In addition, because marriage is traditionally viewed as a long-term commitment, we would expect that permanent income (PER45) may be a more impor-

tant determinant than annual earnings in the year after disruption (YSPLAT). PER45 (expressed in hundreds of dollars) estimates the husband's earnings at age 45 by multiplying his report of total income in 1974, when he was about age 35, by a ratio of average incomes earned at age 45 to average income at 35, for men in his three-digit 1974 occupation. This ratio was derived from an extract of the 1970 Census public use sample for a population of men with characteristics similar to those of our sample. Other measurement strategies are not feasible. In particular what seems to be the best alternative strategy is to (a) pool across time periods, (b) estimate an earnings model which provides parameters for each individual, and (c) obtain an income predicted at age 45 by using the parameters in the earnings model, the parameter for the individual, and substituting in the individual's values using 45 as his age. However, we would have only one or two years with which to obtain the individual parameters for a proportion of our sample because some men remarried during the early part of the span of earnings histories. Hence although PER45 is problematic, it is clearly superior to other available strategies.

Furthermore, a man in the remarriage market who has had children from his previous marriage usually has additional demands on his earnings due to child support payments. To assess the remarriage impact of these alternative demands on men's earnings, we constructed two variables. KIDS is scored 1 if the man had reported that any of his children were born prior to the time he separated from his first wife and 0 otherwise. We then multiplied this dummy variable by YSPLAT (actual earnings in the first year after he stopped living with his spouse) to produce a variable YSPKIDS. We hypothesize that the effect of this variable should be negative; that is, having high earnings makes a man an attractive marriage partner, but this attractiveness decreases if the man has children to support.

The remaining variables are sociologi-

cal in nature. We include REL, a dummy variable for religion which is coded 1 if the respondent's family of origin was Catholic and 0 otherwise. Religion in the family of origin was used instead of religion at time of interview since marital events could affect one's religious affiliations. Divorce and remarriage are grounds for excommunication in the Catholic Church. One would expect that not only are Catholics less likely to experience a marital disruption (see Wolf and MacDonald [1978] and Sweet [1973] for evidence) but also are less likely to remarry, given that they have experienced a marital disruption. Finally we include EDSPLIT, the number of years of schooling completed by the man by the time he separated from his first wife. This serves as another indicator of attractiveness on the marriage market. Other standard variables reflecting differing social norms were not included because the sample is quite homogeneous with respect to such variables as race and region of the country.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlation matrix of the variables in our models:

(1) REMAR = f(YSPLAT, PER45, AN, BN, KIDS, YSPKIDS, EXPOS, NDURFM, REL, EDSPLIT)

(2) REMAR = f(YSPLAT, PER45, BETTER, WORSE, KIDS, YSPKIDS, EXPOS, NDURFM, REL, EDSPLIT)

We present the matrix of intercorrelations to show that our inclusion of so many earnings variables need not produce serious multicollinearity problems. It should be noted that the intercorrelations between YSPLAT, PER45, AN, BN, BETTER and WORSE are not extraordinarily high (never exceeding .294). Of course, the correlation of YSPLAT with YSPKIDS is quite a bit higher, but this is a result of the method of constructing this interaction term. Nevertheless, we estimate two sepa-

Table 1.—Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Matrix for Remarriage Model Variables

	REMAR	YSPLAT	PER45	AN	BN	YSPKIDS	KIDS	REL	NDURFM	EXPOS	EDSPLIT	BETTER	WORSE	X̄	S.D.
REMAR	1.00	-.018	.091	.222	-.039	-.154	-.150	-.119	-.420	.563	-.099	.091	.051	0.60	.489
YSPLAT		1.00	.182	.142	-.208	.580	.022	.043	.061	.041	.077	.264	-.165	99.2	82.0
PER45			1.00	-.040	.037	.176	.042	.054	.089	-.092	.280	.276	-.173	166.	90.1
AN				1.00	-.181	-.130	-.133	-.029	-.384	.495	-.009	-.063	.166	.179	.384
BN					1.00	-.150	-.043	-.044	.076	-.157	.050	-.137	.294	.131	.337
YSPKIDS						1.00	-.605	.051	.421	-.277	.177	.410	-.369	73.6	73.3
KIDS							1.00	.016	.480	-.252	.026	.193	-.269	.734	.443
REL								1.00	.037	-.034	-.018	-.063	-.015	.312	.464
NDURFM									1.00	-.747	.109	.138	-.195	6.23	3.99
EXPOS										1.00	-.284	-.033	.154	79.9	52.2
EDSPLIT											1.00	.059	-.025	13.2	2.01
BETTER												1.00	-.393	.291	.455
WORSE													1.00	.274	.446

rate equations (one with earnings instabil-
ity included and one with earnings relative
to peers) to avoid the criticism of those
who might believe that both of these sets
of variables are tapping the same concept.

The results of the models are in Table 2.
Model 1 appears in Column (1); Model 2
in Column (3). Variations on Models 1
and 2 appear respectively in Columns (2)
and (4). By excluding PER45, these varia-
tions help to evaluate the extent of any
multicollinearity problems.

For Model 1 a perusal of the coeffi-
cients for the earnings variables indicates
that only permanent income has a statisti-
cally significant effect on remarriage. This
effect is positive, such that a $10,000 in-
crease in permanent income increases the
probability of remarriage by 0.08. Al-
though the effect is not particularly large,
the direction is as expected. We had hy-
pothesized that because marriage is tradi-
tionally viewed as a permanent arrange-
ment, permanent income would have a
strong positive effect. Even when PER45
is excluded from the models, YSPLAT
remains insignificant, indicating that mul-
ticollinearity with permanent income is
not responsible for the small effects of
absolute earnings. In addition, the earn-
ings instability variables lack important
effects in Models I and II. Perhaps men
with high earnings instability are viewed
as especially poor mates, offsetting the
possible desires of these men to marry
someone with a more stable earnings
stream. Also, it has been suggested our
measures of instability should instead be
interpreted as indicators of the steepness
of the age earnings profile. In this view,
AN represents men with steep profiles,
and it is expected that they would be more
attractive mates. The finding that AN and
BN do not matter could imply that either
earnings growth (although poorly mea-
sured) does not affect remarriage, or that
earnings instability is also unimportant.

KIDS likewise lacks an important effect
suggesting that, for a man, having had
children during the first marriage does not
restrict his ability to remarry. Of course,

this is quite different than the usual empir-
ical results for females, where children
negatively affect the probability of remar-
riage. On one hand, this seems reasonable
since mothers have traditionally been
awarded custody of the children. On the
other hand, fathers have traditionally
been at least legally responsible for some
amount of child support. Our results for
KIDS suggest that these varying amounts
of additional financial responsibility that
fall on the father do not affect his mar-
riage ability. The interaction term YSP-
KIDS also lacks substantive importance,
suggesting that the effect of absolute earn-
ings on a man's remarriage probabilities
does not vary depending on whether there
were children in the first marriage. Here
again, we were trying to tap the effects of
financial responsibilities of fathers for
child support on marriage. Because
PER45 does have a significant impact on
the likelihood of remarriage, we also in-
teracted it with KIDS in a model (not
shown here) that omitted YSPLAT and
YSPKIDS. The coefficient for this inter-
action variable was not significant. Hence
the additional responsibilities of children
appear to have no effect on remarriage.
Certainly it would have been desirable to
include a measure of actual child support
payments.

Turning to the control variables,
EXPOS has a powerful positive effect, as
expected for a measure of exposure to the
risk of remarriage. However, duration of
the first marriage has no statistically sig-
nificant or substantively important effect.
This is not necessarily in conflict with the
results of Becker et al. (1977) who found
that duration of first marriage positively
affects remarriage only during the first five
years since the termination of marriage
and has no effect thereafter. Since we are
averaging this effect over the many years
of risk, we may average a strong and a
weak effect, and obtain an insignificant
one.

EDSPLIT is not important, which is
not surprising when other measures of
"status in the community" are held con-

Table 2.—Coefficients, Standard Errors, and Standardized Coefficients from Regression Models of Remarriage

	(1)			(2)			(3)			(4)			(5)		
	b	S.E.	β	b	S.E.	β	b	S.E.	β	b	S.E.	β	b	S.E.	β
YSPLAT	-.0009	.0036	-.099	-.0005	.001	-.077	-.0007	.001	-.112	-.0066	.005	.099	--	--	--
PER45	.0008*	.0002	.148*	—	—	—	.0007*	.0002	.133*	--	--	--	.0007*	.0002	.167*
AN	-.0820	.060	-.064	-.0932	.062	-.073	--	—	—	--	--	—	--	--	--
BN	.0361	.061	.025	.0491	.061	.034	—	—	—	—	--	--	--	--	—
YSPKIDS	.0005	.001	.074	.0005	.0005	.080	.0003	.0005	.044	.0002	.001	.031	--	--	--
KIDS	-.0611	.0693	-.055	-.0643	.070	-.058	-.059	.069	-.054	-.059	.069	-.003	-.015	.051	-.014
REL	-.1100*	.042	-.104*	-.1023*	.043	-.097*	-.102*	.043	-.097*	-.092*	.043	-.007*	-.112*	.042	-.106
EXPOS	.0064*	.006	.649*	.0062*	.001	.660*	.0056*	.001	.600*	.0056	.001	.063	.005*	.001	.585*
EDSPLIT	.0081	.011	.033	.018	.011	.074	.0068	.011	.028	.016	.011	.064	.006	.011	.025
BETTER	--	--	—	--	—	—	.093	.051	.086	.126*	.050	.117*	--	--	--
WORSE	—	—	—	--	--	—	.0019	.049	.002	-.009	.050	-.001	--	--	--
NDURFM	.0033	.008	.026	.0045	.0086	.037	.0024	.009	.020	.0033	.001	.027	.002	.009	.012
N	413			413			413			413			413		
Constant	-0.032			-0.063			-0.022			-0.005			-.005		
R^2	0.360			0.340			0.362			0.347			0.340		

*Significantly different from zero at the 0.05 level.

stant. Finally, if the respondent's family was Catholic, he is 11 percent less likely to remarry. This suggests that the norm against divorce and remarriage prevalent in Catholic families not only decreases the likelihood of marital disruption but also decreases the likelihood of remarriage.

The results for Model 2 are quite similar to those of Model 1, with EXPOS, PER45 and REL all having statistically significant effects on remarriage. The substitution of earnings relative to peers for earnings instability has little impact on the other parameters of our estimated model. Although statistically significant only when PER45 is excluded, BETTER has a sizable effect in the expected direction. An income greater than one's peers apparently increases the probability of marriage by about 13 percent. Overall, it again appears that a man's permanent income has the greatest effect on his attractiveness as a marriage partner.

To obtain a relatively clean permanent income coefficient a regression that included only PER45 and no other income measures was obtained; this is presented in Column (5) of the table. Based on findings already discussed, PER45 was not interacted with KIDS. The resulting coefficient for PER45 is virtually identical to that for other models.

The fact that permanent income is a more important determinant of remarriage than are our other measures of economic status is not surprising. It seems reasonable that a woman would evaluate a man's attractiveness as a husband by his long-run earnings potential instead of by his earnings in any particular year. We find it intriguing that permanent income is a more important determinant of remarriage than either of the two measures of relative economic success (i.e., relative to the man's normal earnings or relative to his peers'). This is in contrast to the results from research on marital disruption by Wolf and MacDonald (1978) and Ross and Sawhill (1975) which suggest that permanent income is less important than relative earnings measures. Yet the differ-

ences between the results for remarriage and divorce may not be as perplexing as they first appear. In the marriage market, women are free to use long-run permanent income as a criterion for evaluating their potential spouse's financial attractiveness. On the other hand, it would not be reasonable for a woman, already married and contemplating divorce, to evaluate her husband's performance on the basis of absolute criteria such as permanent income. Rather, she may judge whether he is performing up to her expectations relative to his earnings history or his productive attributes.

CONCLUSION

Previous research on the economics of remarriage left ambiguous the nature of the relationship between a man's financial attractiveness and his probability of remarriage. These studies relied on a single income variable, absolute earnings, whereas the hypotheses concerning the economics of remarriage consider how different aspects of earnings, such as long-run permanent income and earnings instability, influence remarriage. The availability of earnings histories in our data allow us to study several aspects of a man's earnings. In addition, these histories help to solve some of the methodological problems of earlier studies. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that our results are for a sample of Wisconsin high school graduates. They indicate that absolute earnings, earnings instability, and earnings relative to peers have minimal effects (if any) on a man's probability of remarriage, but that long-run permanent income positively affects remarriage. With respect to previous research, these findings are consistent with the results of studies based on the Survey of Economic Opportunity, but tend to refute the Panel Study of Income Dynamics finding that income has no effect on marriage probabilities.

We find it interesting that permanent income is more important for remarriage than other studies have shown for marital

disruption. Therefore, we speculate that women in the marriage market are free to use absolute criteria when evaluating the financial attractiveness of a potential mate, whereas women contemplating divorce may mainly evaluate their spouse's performance relative to his history or his peers' performance. Although our analysis clearly contributes to the literature, the increasing prevalence of remarriage necessitates further work to resolve remaining methodological problems in a nationally representative data set.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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