Abstract
This paper evaluates Wilson’s (1987) argument that the race differential in the frequency of marriage results from a shortage of marriageable men in the African-American community. Previous investigators have approached this problem by measuring the local availability of eligible male marriage partners for black women. These studies have found a comparatively small but significant impact of the availability of marriageable black men on black women’s marriage rates. My analysis simplifies the problem by evaluating the effects of economic characteristics of young white and black men on their own marriage behavior since 1960. I use multiple standardization and decomposition methods to assess the impact of race differences in income, occupation, employment status, institutional residence, and education. I estimate that these factors can explain most of the race difference in marriage over the period as a whole.
Background

Family demographers have long focused on the availability of marriageable men to explain both the decline in marriage among black women and the differential in marriage between white and black women. Most of these studies were inspired by Wilson's (1987) theory that the low rates of marriage in the black community results from a shortage of employed men relative to the number of unmarried women. Virtually every study has found that the availability of employed men has a significant effect marriage rates of women (Cragie, Darity, & Myers 2012). At the same time, however, studies have generally found that the changes in the availability of marriageable men can account for only about 20% of the decline of marriage. Moreover, several studies suggest that only a small fraction of the marriage differential between whites and blacks can be ascribed to differences in the availability of marriageable men (e.g., Lichter et al. 1992; Lichter et al. 1991; Raley 1996; Wood 1995).

The most common strategy for evaluating the Wilson hypothesis is to develop community-level measures of the availability of “marriageable men,” and to use those measures in a model predicting the marital status of women. Availability is generally defined according to Wilson and Neckerman’s (1987) criteria, as the number of employed and unmarried men per unmarried woman, although there are many variations that account for earnings or other factors (e.g. Lichter et al. 1992; South & Lloyd 1992; Fossett & Kiecolt 1992; Testa & Krough 1995; Wood 1995). Availability of marriageable men is generally measured for local marriage markets, which are often defined as metropolitan areas, but sometimes for other geographic units.

Most recently, Raley, Sweeney, and Wondra (2015) challenged Wilson's interpretation on two main grounds. First, they argue, black marriage rates fell at the same time that racial discrimination was declining and black men’s wages were growing. They argue that the proportion of blacks who are poor is lower today than in 1960, and blacks’ median household income, after adjusting for inflation, is higher. Black marriage rates began to fall even while the black middle class was growing, and they continued falling after 1980 even as black men’s unemployment rates and real wages improved (Raley, Sweeney, and Wondra 2015:96).
Second, they argue that if the economic position of black men were responsible for the race differential in marriage, we would expect racial differences in marriage among people with the same level of education to be small. Analyzing the American Community Survey, they found that among both men and women aged 40-44, blacks are less likely to be married whether they have a high school education, some college, or a college degree. Since there is a significant race differential even for college educated black men, they conclude that the race differential cannot be explained by a shortage of marriageable men: “something more than class status is at play” (Raley, Sweeney, & Wondra 2015: 100).

This paper reevaluates this conclusion. The many studies stimulated by Wilson’s marriageability thesis have demonstrated that men’s employment and earnings are strongly associated with marriage rates. This paper seeks to answer two slightly different but related questions:

- How much of the difference in marriage between blacks and whites can be ascribed to the differing economic circumstances of young men?
- Has the impact of economic circumstances of young men on the race differential in marriage shifted over the past half century?

To approach these issues, instead of focusing on the impact of the number of marriageable men on the marriage behavior of women, I assess the effects of young men’s economic characteristics on their own marriage behavior. I begin by describing long-run race differentials in marriage age and marriage prevalence. I then assess trends in race differentials of male economic circumstances, including income, employment, and group quarters residence. Finally, I apply multivariate methods of standardization and decomposition to evaluate the impact of differential economic circumstances on race differentials in marriage.
Trends in Marriage Age and Marriage Prevalence

Age at marriage has fluctuated greatly over the past 150 years, and the trends for whites and blacks differed substantially. Figure 1 shows the indirect median age at first marriage for blacks and whites in the period since 1870. Before 1960, blacks married younger than whites, and since 1960, blacks have married later than whites.

Marriage age among blacks was stable from 1900 to 1950, and began increasing rapidly after 1960. Among whites, there was a gradual decline in marriage age over the course of the 20th century, especially for white men. Whites had a dramatic marriage boom at midcentury, when median age at marriage fell to 19.9 among women and 22.5 among men. No marriage boom can be seen among blacks after World War II. Accordingly, the marriage ages of whites and blacks diverged in the decade between 1940 and 1950, as whites began marrying significantly younger and black marriage age remained nearly constant.

The percentage of persons who ever marry followed the same general trends as age at first marriage. To assess trends in the prevalence of marriage among blacks and whites, Figure 2 shows the percentage of blacks and whites who had not married by age 40-44. The patterns are similar to Figure 1: before 1960, blacks were more likely to have married by their early 40s than were whites, and after 1960 non-marriage rose more rapidly for blacks than for whites, especially among women. This mirrors the race differential in marriage age that emerged two decades previously.

By 2014, almost 40% of black women had never married by the time they reached their early 40s, compared with about 14% of whites. Based on the marriage behavior of women currently in their early 20s, we can expect both these figures to rise sharply over the next two decades, perhaps nearly doubling (Ruggles 2016). It is reasonable to infer that within the foreseeable future a substantial majority of black women and perhaps a quarter of white women will never get married.
Figure 1. Indirect Median Age at First Marriage: U.S. Blacks and Whites, 1870-2013

Source: Ruggles et al. 2015
Figure 2. Percent Never Married by age 40-44: U.S. Blacks and Whites, 1880-2014

Women

Percent ever married

Blacks

Whites

Men

Percent ever married

Blacks

Whites

Source: Ruggles et al. 2015
Trends in the Economic Circumstances of Young Men

Fitch and Ruggles (2000) argued that blacks had no post-war marriage boom because they experienced massive economic dislocations in the mid-twentieth century. In 1920, almost half of blacks in the United States resided on farms, the great majority of which were Southern tenant or sharecropping farms. From the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, tenant farming and family sharecropping were strongly associated with early marriage; ordinarily only married couples could obtain a contract for a farm (Tolnay 1984, 1999; Bloom & Muller 2015; Landale & Tolnay 1991).

As shown in Figure 3, black farm operators in the South virtually disappeared during the four middle decades of the twentieth century. In the mid-1930s, the New Deal Agricultural Adjustment Act and technological change resulted in the eviction of perhaps a hundred thousand black farm tenants and sharecroppers (Depew, Fishback, & Rhode 2013). Mechanization of cotton and corn production accelerated after the war, and hundreds of thousands of additional farm tenants and sharecroppers were displaced (Day 1967).

Agricultural employment declined among whites as well as among blacks, but that process was gradual, extending over many generations. The percentage of the entire U.S. labor force engaged in agriculture fell in linear fashion from about 65% in 1845 to 5% in 1965, dropping steadily by about 0.5% per year. This long-term decline in overall agricultural employment did not cause hardship for the white population; on the contrast, it was mainly a consequence of growing opportunity in other sectors; young white men were increasingly attracted to the comparatively high pay and urban amenities that came with wage-labor employment in commerce or industry. The rise of wage labor for white men led to a decline of marriage age, since wage workers did not have to wait to inherit land or build up the capital necessary to establish a farm (Ruggles 2016).
For black men in the mid-twentieth century, the decline of agriculture worked differently in two key respects. First, the shift came suddenly. As shown in Figure 4, the percent of young black men working on farms dropped in half in the single decade from 1940 to 1950, and that change was concentrated mainly in the 5 years from 1945 to 1950. Second, the decline of agricultural employment of blacks did not occur because of the lure of well-paid jobs in the cities; instead, it was the direct result of the mass eviction of a quarter-million tenant farmers and sharecroppers. The sharp decline in agricultural employment fully accounts for the absence of a marriage boom in the black population in the mid-twentieth century. With the demise of
black sharecropping and tenant farming, the incentives for early black marriage diminished greatly.

The employment prospects for young black men weakened further over the next eight decades. Figure 5 shows the percentage of young black and white men who were not working—either unemployed or not in the labor force—between 1910 and 2013. This analysis is restricted to men aged 20 to 34, the prime marrying ages. A race differential in the percent not working emerged during the late 1930s, and expanded in the post-war years.

Figure 4. Percent Employed in Agriculture: Black and White Men aged 20-34, 1920-1980

Source: Ruggles et al. 2015
The initial emergence of a race differential in employment between 1930 and 1950 resulted directly from the demise of the Southern black farm. After 1970, however, black farming had almost completely disappeared, but the race differential in employment nevertheless continued to grow. This doubtless at least in part reflects declining job opportunities for less educated men, especially in manufacturing, with the increase of globalization, outsourcing, and mechanization after the mid-1970s (Ruggles 2015).

The percentage of young men without a job more than doubled among both black and whites after 1970, to a shocking peak of 47% for blacks and 25% for whites in 2010 during the great recession. The economic recovery after 2010 led to some improvement over the
subsequent four years, but the absolute levels of non-employment among young black men remains at extraordinary levels.

Part of the growth in the race differential of employment in the 1980s and 1990 occurred because of the mass incarceration of young black men during that period. That change is reflected in Figure 6, which shows the percentage of young blacks and whites residing in institutions between 1940 and 2010. The percentage of blacks in institutions reached a peak of 12.3% in 2000, before dropping back to 9.2% by 2013.¹ These figures, of course, reflect only

![Figure 6. Percent Residing in Institutions: Black and White Non-Hispanic Men Age 20-34, 1940-2013](source: Ruggles et al. 2015)

¹ The sharp drop in the percent of young black men in institutions after 2000 resulted from a 50% decline in the state and federal incarceration rate among black men aged 20-29. Compare Harrison and Beck (2002), Table 16 with Carson (2015) Table 10.
the percentages of young men currently institutionalized; a vastly greater number have felony convictions, which creates further obstacles to employment.

The trends in the income of young men also show a dramatic racial divide. Figure 7 shows the median income for whites and blacks since 1960 in 2013 dollars.² Young black men have earned substantially less than young white men for the entire period. For both blacks and whites, median income of young men peaked in 1970 and have declined sharply over the next 40 years. In percentage terms, the drop was much steeper for blacks than for whites: Blacks

![Figure 7. Median Income: Black and White Non-Hispanic Men Age 20-34, 1910-2013](image)

² I used the Consumer Price Index Research Series (CPI-U-RS), which was designed to address concerns that the standard Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI-U) exaggerates inflation, especially in the late 1970s (Stewart and Reed 1999). CPI-U-RS is available only for the period from 1978 to the present; to inflate the earlier years, I calculated the ratio of CPI-U-RS to CPI-U in 1978, and used it to adjust the CPI-U from 1940 to 1977.
saw a 57% drop, compared with just a 35% drop for whites. Accordingly, among young men black income has dropped relative to white income. As shown in Figure 8, in 1970 young blacks median income was 64% of the median white income; in 2013 it was only 42%, almost ten points below the level achieved in 1950.

![Figure 8. Median Income of blacks as a percentage of white median income: Black and White Non-Hispanic Men Age 20-34, 1910-2013](chart)

Contrary to the interpretation of Raley, Sweeney, and Wondra (2015), these simple descriptive statistics make it clear that black men of marrying age are not doing better than they were 40 or 50 years ago. As they point out, median household income among blacks has
increased substantially since 1960. That statistic, however, has little relevance to the Wilson hypothesis. When we focus on the economic circumstances of men of the peak marriage ages, the story is far less rosy.

**Measures and Methods**

To quantify the extent to which race differentials in economic circumstances can account for race differentials in marriage, I turned to the methods of multiple standardization and demographic decomposition, following the Das Gupta (1978) framework. These techniques provide a simple approach for evaluating the impact of differing economic composition of the black and white populations on marriage while avoiding assumptions of additivity or linearity. All data come from IPUMS (Ruggles et al. 2015).

The dependent variable, shown in Figure 9, is the percent of 20-34-year-old men who were currently married between 1960 and 2013. This measure mostly reflects the timing and prevalence of marriage, but it is also affected by divorce and remarriage. During the past half century, the percentage married among whites was 10 to 17 percent greater than among blacks, with the largest difference occurring in 1990. The race differential in marriage it was not much greater in 2013 (11.8%) than it was in 1960 (9.3%). Relative to the drop in marriage rates over the past half-century—42.0 points for whites and 43.0 points for blacks—the differences between whites and blacks appear modest.

The independent variables, or components, are total income, occupation, employment status, group quarters residence, central city residence, and age. These variables are described in Table 1. Each of these variables had a substantial impact on marriage, and there are major differences in their distributions between blacks and whites and across time.

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3 Median household income for blacks went up almost 50% from 1960 to 2000, but has fallen about 10% since that peak (DeNavis Walt & Proctor 2014).

4 The analysis used the open-source DECOMP software (Ruggles 1989).
The first component is total income. I pooled the weighted datasets, calculated income as a percentile, and classified each case into deciles of the combined dataset. In every census year, there was a close linear association between decile of income and marriage, with about four times as much marriage in the highest decile as in the lowest. The second component is occupation. In all periods, the men with craft occupations were most often married. These jobs—carpenters, machinists, mechanics, painters, and plumbers—are less frequent among blacks than among whites, and have declined dramatically since 1960. The occupational groups least often married in both periods were the service workers and laborers—most common among black men—and their frequency has almost doubled. The third component is employment characteristics and group quarters status. There are three categories: (1) employed
and at work; (2) unemployed or not in the labor force; and (3) resident in group quarters. Central
city status is the only measure of urban residence that is consistently available across census
years, and is intended to capture the impact of urbanization resulting from eviction of blacks
from the rural south. The final component is age, divided into five-year categories.

The analysis is based on a cross classification of these five variables with time and race,
creating a matrix of 20,160 cells. The multiple standardization weights the matrix to show the
percentage of whites and blacks who would be married in each period if the distribution of
economic characteristics were held constant. The decomposition shows the amount of the race
differential in marriage that can be attributed to compositional differences in each independent
variable. For each component, the analysis yields a composition effect, representing how much
of the change is attributable to changes in the distribution of that component, net of other
components. The decomposition also generates a rate effect, representing the change in
marriage that is unaccounted for by the components (Das Gupta 1978).

Because of the large matrix, the method requires a large number of cases; if there are
any empty cells for one race, any cases in the comparable cell for the other race must be
excluded from the analysis. For the preliminary analysis, I used the 1% 1960 census microdata
sample, three 1% 1970 samples, 5% samples for 1980, 1990, and 2000, and 1% ACS samples
for the period 2008-2013 (Ruggles et al. 2015). These datasets include a total of 5.2 million
white and black men aged 20-39. I anticipate that a new 5% 1960 sample now in preparation at
the Minnesota Population Center will be available soon; substituting this sample for the 1%
1960 sample will virtually eliminate excluded cells and permit some additional detail in the
independent variables.
Table 1. Percent currently married and distribution of characteristics by selected factors: Non-Hispanic men age 20-34, 1960 and 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent Married</th>
<th>Population Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>Whites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(%tiles of combined datasets)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>67.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>72.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>86.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>78.7</td>
<td>89.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-99</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>90.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, proprietors</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical and sales</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>64.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafts</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>73.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operatives</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>74.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No occupation for 5+ yrs</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment/institution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>76.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed/NILF</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalized</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central city</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>62.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/unknown</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>70.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>76.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>84.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of men age 20-34 in samples (unweighted) 13,697 104,246 26,324 131,263
Decomposition Analysis

In the decomposition exercise, I analyzed four components of change, described in Table 1, and compared young black men with young white men in 1960 and 2013.

The preliminary results of the decomposition for 1960 and 2013 appear in Table 2. The total race difference in marriage was 9.3 percentage points in 1960 and 11.8 percentage points in 2013. The compositional effects for each component indicate how much of the race difference would disappear if the socioeconomic composition of young men population was the same for blacks and whites. The right column in each year, labeled “index” expresses the effects of each component as a percentage of the total race difference in marriage.

In 1960, the combined effect of factors is greater than the total population difference. In other words, if whites and blacks in 1960 had the same distributions of economic circumstances, blacks would have had more marriage than whites. The major factor is income, which by itself accounts for almost 100% of the race difference. Occupation and employment/group quarters were also important.

Table 2. Components of race differential in the percentage married:
U.S. non-Hispanic white and black men age 20-34, 1960 and 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1960 Components</th>
<th>Index</th>
<th>2013 Components</th>
<th>Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total race difference in marriage</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of compositional factors:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>99.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment/institution</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>-12.9</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined effect of factors</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>148.5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>61.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate effect</td>
<td>-4.5</td>
<td>-48.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Age had a negative effect, because the white population was somewhat older than the black population.

In 2013, the results were similar, but the magnitudes of every component were smaller. In total, the analysis suggests that 61% of the race difference in marriage in 2013 would disappear if blacks and whites had an identical distribution of characteristics.

**Multiple Standardization Analysis**

To understand why so few blacks are married today, it makes sense to assess long-run trends and differentials from the perspective of the black population in the current era. Multiple standardization is ideally suited to this: it allows us to assess what percentage whites and blacks would be married in each period if all these groups had the same combination of economic characteristics that black men do today.

Figure 10 is the same as Figure 9, except that it is simultaneously standardized by income, occupation, employment status, group quarter residence, and age, using ordinary direct multiple standardization. The standard population is black men age 20-34 in 2013. In essence, Figure 10 shows what the percent married would be among whites and blacks in all periods, if they shared the same distribution of characteristics that black men experienced in 2013. On average, if these characteristics are held constant the race differential in marriage from 1960 to 2013 declines 88.5%. The multiple standardization also reduces change over time by 36% for whites and 21% for blacks.

**Discussion**

This analysis provides strong support for a Wilsonian interpretation (Wilson 1987). As noted in the introduction, Raley, Sweeney, and Wondra (2015) challenged Wilson’s interpretation on two main grounds. First, they argued, black marriage rates fell at the same time that racial discrimination was declining and black men’s wages were growing. Second, they
argued that the race differential in marriage persists when the population is classified by educational attainment, and therefore that differential cannot be ascribed to economic factors.

Neither of these criticisms stands up under scrutiny. As my analysis demonstrates, the economic circumstances of young black men relative to young white men deteriorated markedly between 1960 and 2013. In addition, when we use more subtle measures of economic status than broad categories of educational attainment, they can account for most of the race differential in marriage. Indeed, if young black and white men had shared the same economic circumstances over the past 50 years, there would have been little difference in their marriage behavior.

My analysis does not account for all the potential structural explanations for lower black marriage. The shortage of marriageable black men is accentuated by their racial heterogamy:
black men are much more likely than are black women to marry a non-black partner (Crowder & Tolnay 2000). Moreover, there are many aspects of economic circumstances that this analysis omits. As noted, the analysis accounts for institutionalization, but not the impact of a felony record, which is much more common among blacks than among whites. We know that job insecurity is greater for blacks than for whites, but the decomposition cannot capture that. We have information about current income and occupation, but nothing about the perceived future prospects of workers, which must be less bright for young black men than for young white men. The census cannot tell us if young people are optimistic about their prospects or if their jobs are insecure. Moreover, the decomposition analysis also does not account for the shifting economic position of women. Thus, the real impact of economic circumstances is probably even greater than this analysis suggests. Indeed, if it were possible to control for all influences on the marriageability of men, we would probably find that net of those characteristics marriage is more popular among blacks than it is among whites.5

In the early decades of the twentieth century, most of the black population worked as sharecroppers or tenant farmers. Many cultivated the same land that their parents or grandparents had worked under slavery. Blacks had few educational opportunities, and they lived under apartheid enforced by violence (Bailey & Tolnay 2015). Marriage was a central element of this system, because farms were family enterprises. In many instances, marriage was a formal requirement of tenant contracts. In this environment, blacks married earlier and more frequently than did whites.

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5 I have not discussed chronological change. The standardization analysis suggests that a substantial portion of the decline of marriage probably results from the declining economic position of men, as Oppenheimer and others have argued (Oppenheimer 1988, 1994; Carbone & Cahn 2014; Cherlin 2014). I recently argued that if we measure income of young men relative to the income of their fathers’ generation, we can actually account for the majority of the decline in marriage between 1960 and 2013 just by controlling the characteristics of young men (Ruggles 2015). It is not clear, however, if there is any way to operationalize such an analysis separately for whites and blacks.
A century later, few blacks are engaged in agriculture. Educational opportunities and civil rights have improved, and millions of blacks have achieved economic success. Nevertheless, the economic prospects of many young black men are not conducive to marriage. In 2010, almost half of black men in the peak marrying ages were without a job, and almost one in ten were incarcerated. Median income of young black men has declined for the last four decades, both in absolute terms and relative to the income of whites. Accordingly, the shortage of marriageable black men Wilson identified in 1986 has become much more pronounced in the subsequent three decades, and the sharp decline in the frequency of marriage among the black population should come as no surprise.
References


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