Utilizing Data to Examine Marital Patterns in the U.S.

Learning Objectives:

1. Use, analyze, and interpret sociological data to investigate changing family patterns.

2. Describe changes in U.S. family patterns over the past several decades.

3. Assess and describe differences in patterns by race, education, and age.

4. Use course material to explain why patterns have changed and why they vary by race, education, and age.

Instructions: Navigate to the following website: https://ssdan.net/datacounts/webchip/. Follow the instructions below to obtain the relevant data for each section. Fill in each table and then address the question prompts.

1. **Marital Status in the U.S., 1950-2016**

Using the WebChip website listed above, do the following:

- For collection, select "acs2016trend".
- For dataset, select "Marital".
- Under choose variables, place "Marital" in the rows and "Year" in the columns.
- Generate a table using "Percent Down".

Using the obtained information, fill in the following table:

Table 1: Marital Status by Year								
	Year							
Marital Status	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2008	2016
Married								
Widowed								
Divorced								
Separated								
Never Married								

Based on the information in this table, answer the following questions:

1. What patterns emerge from these data? In other words, how have the percentages in each marital status category changed over time?

2. Using assigned course readings, what factors may have contributed to changes observed over time in the percentage of U.S. adults who were married? Be sure to cite specific course readings to defend your responses.

2. **Marital Status by Education, 2022**

Using the WebChip website, do the following:

- For collection, select "acs2022".
- For dataset, select "MarEduc".
- Under choose variables, place "Marital" in the rows and "Educ" in the columns.
- Generate a table using "Percent Down".

Using the obtained information, fill in the following table:

Table 2: Marital Status by Education, 2022				
	Highest Level of Education			
Marital Status	Less than high school	High school	Some college	College or more
Married				
Widowed				
Divorced				
Separated				
Never Married				

Based on the information in this table, answer the following questions:

1. What patterns emerge from these data? How do the education groups compare to each other with regards to marital status?

2. Drawing on the assigned Cherlin 2004 reading, describe how sociologists might explain the education differences in the percentage currently married. Be sure to cite appropriately.

3. **Shifts in Marital Status by Age and Year**

Using the WebChip website, do the following:

- For collection, select "acs2016trend".
- For dataset, select "Marital".
- Under choose variables, place "Marital" in the rows and "Year" in the columns.
- Under control variables, click the box for "Age".
- Generate tables using "Percent Down".

Using the obtained information, fill in the following tables:

Table 3a: Marital Status by Year, Ages 55-64								
	Year							
Marital Status	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2008	2016
Married								
Widowed								
Divorced								
Separated								
Never Married								

Table 3b: Marital Status by Year, Ages 65+								
	Year							
Marital Status	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2008	2016
Married								
Widowed								
Divorced								
Separated								
Never Married								

Based on the information in the tables, answer the following questions:

1. Among those ages 55-65 and 65+, how have the percentages of individuals divorced and widowed changed over time?

2. Using course readings and lecture material, explain what factors may have contributed to these changes over time. Be sure to cite appropriate course material in your response.

4. **Marriage by Race and Gender**

Using the WebChip website, do the following:

- For collection, select "acs2016trend".
- For dataset, select "Marital".
- Under choose variables, place "Marital" in the rows and "Year" in the columns.
- Under control variables, click the boxes for "Race".
- Generate tables using "Percent Down".

Using the obtained information, fill in the table with the percentage currently married:

Table 4: Percentages of Currently Married NonBlacks and Blacks by Year								
	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2008	2016
NonBlack								
Black								

Based on the information in the tables, answer the following questions:

1. How has the percentage currently married changed over time among NonBlacks? How has it changed for Blacks? How does the percentage currently married among NonBlacks compare to Blacks?

2. Using course readings and lecture material, explain what factors may have contributed to these changes over time. Be sure to cite appropriate course material in your response.