

# The Vow Factor:

Marriage, Divorce, and Family Formation and their Impact on Health and Well-being

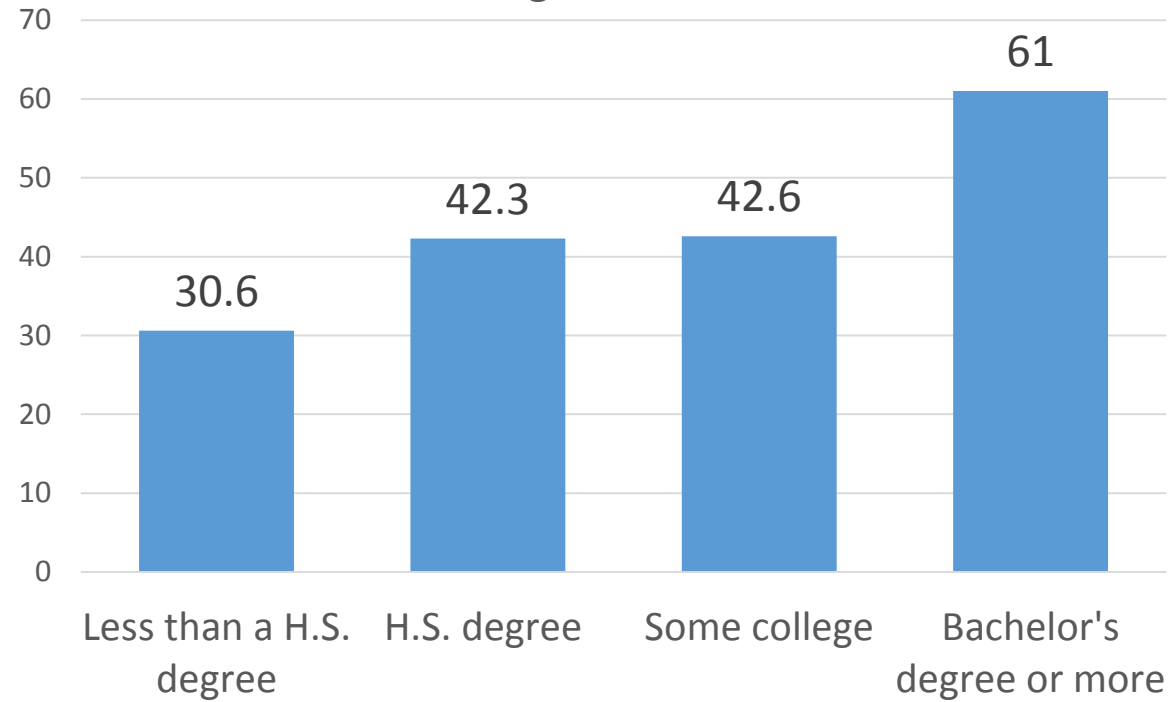


**Andrew J. Cherlin, Ph.D.**

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# The Marriage Gap

Percent Currently in a First Marriage, NLSY79  
Adults Ages 46-54, in 2010



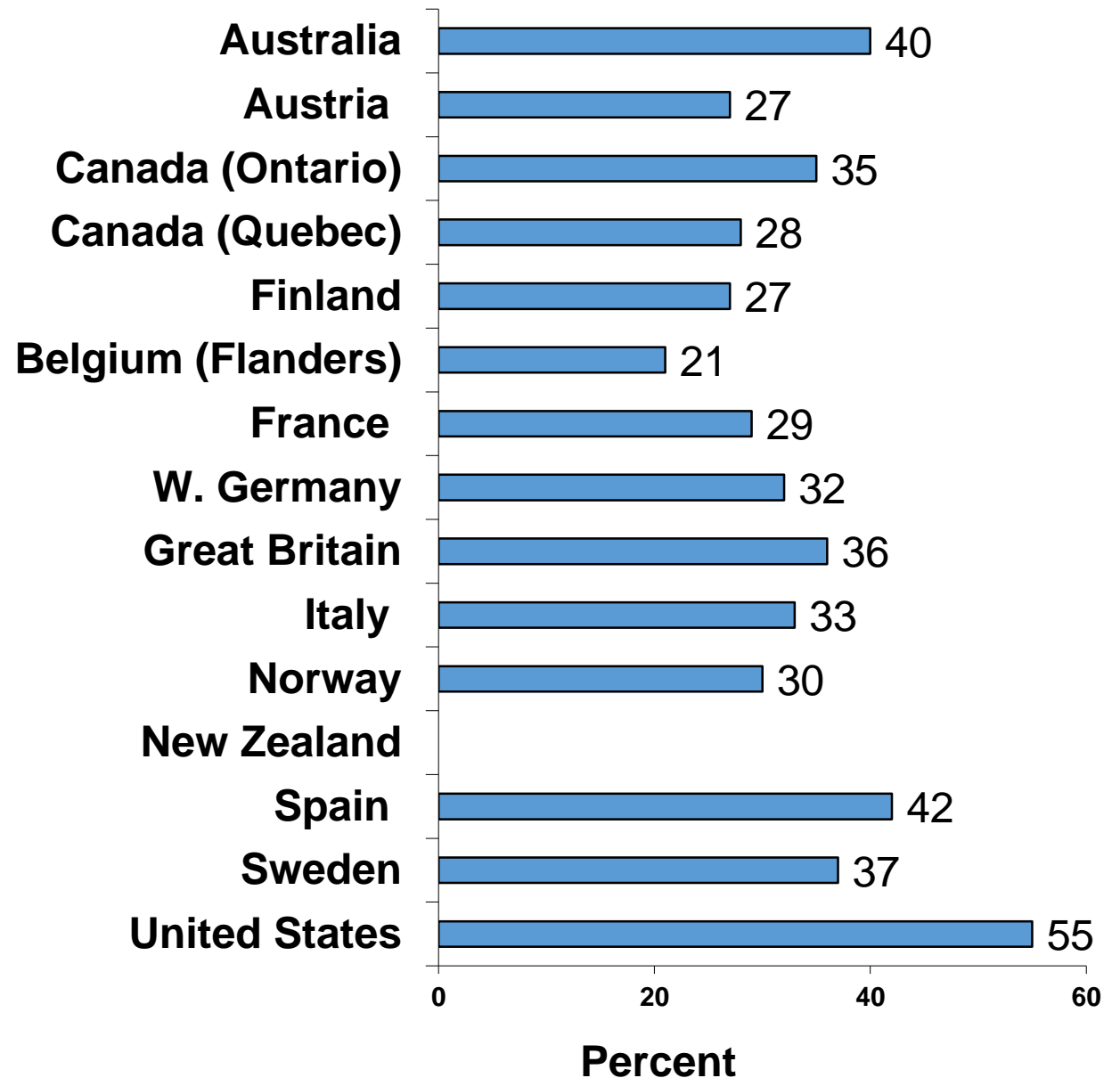
Source: Auginbaugh et al, *Monthly Labor Review*, October 2013.

Why do we care about the marriage gap?

## Percent of cohabiting relationships disrupted after 5 years.

Source: Cherlin, The Marriage-Go-Round Knopf, 2009.

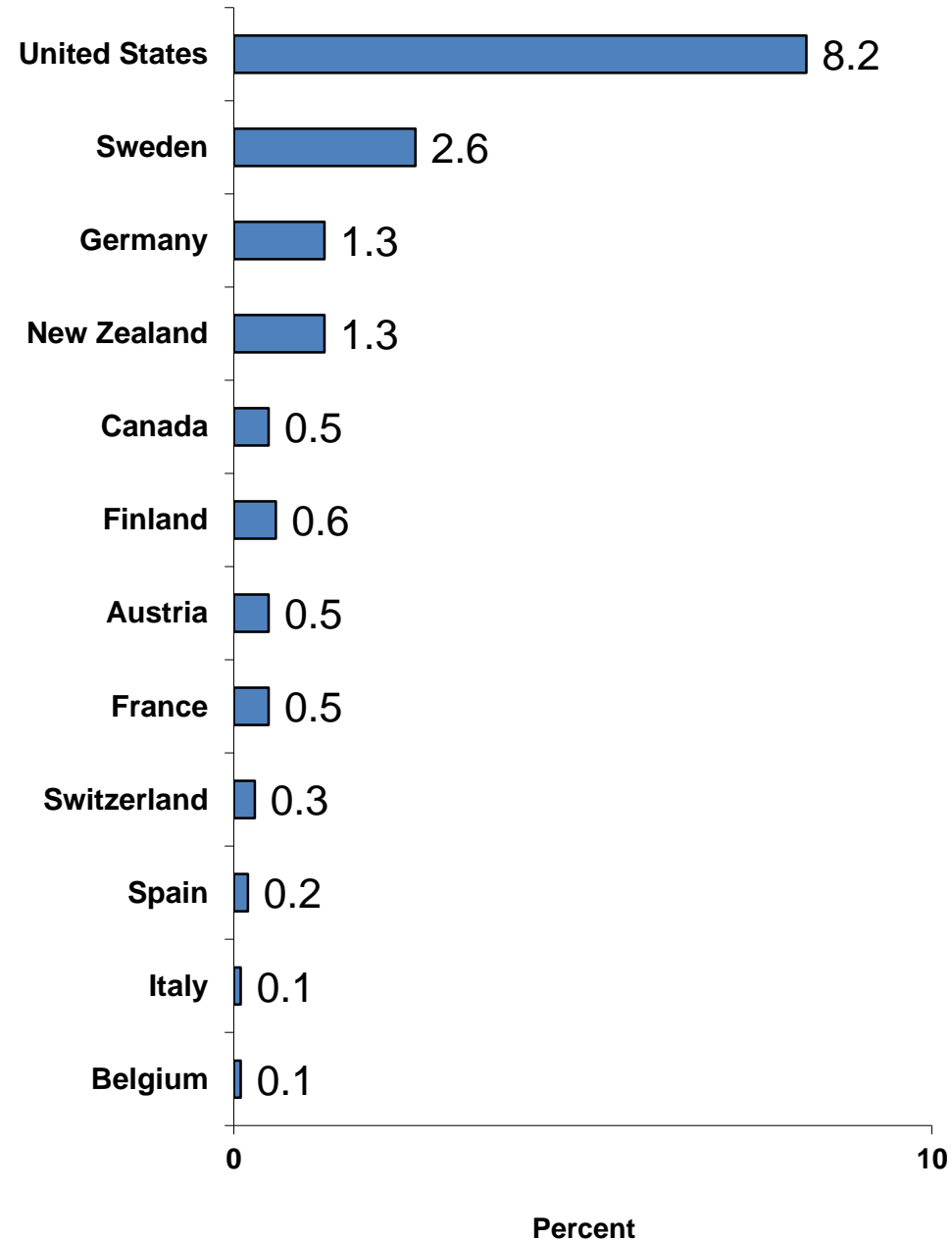
For U.S.: National Survey of Family Growth, U.S. National Center for Health statistics.



# Family Instability

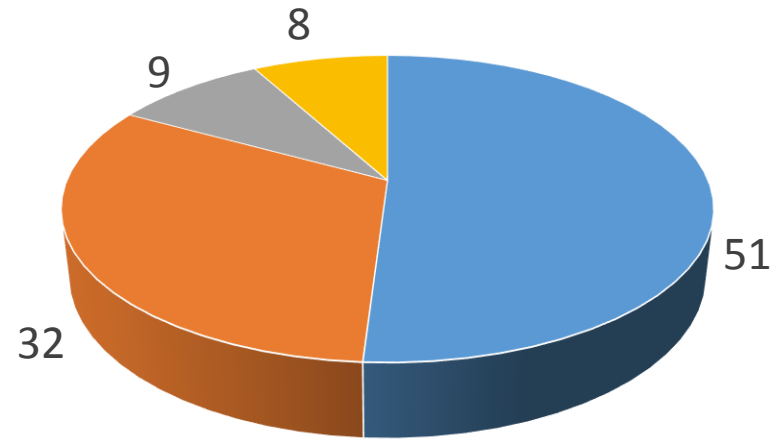
**Percentage of children , living with their mothers, who experience **three or more** maternal partnerships by age 15.**

Source: Jeffrey Timberlake, unpublished tabulations subsequent to P. Heuveline, J. Timberlake, and F. F. Furstenberg, “Shifting Childrearing to Single Mothers: Results from 17 Western Countries,” *Population and Development Review* 29 (2003): 47-71.



# Family Instability, Cohabitation, and Marriage

## Unmarried Parents' Relationship at Birth



■ Cohabiting ■ Visiting ■ Little or no contact ■ Friends

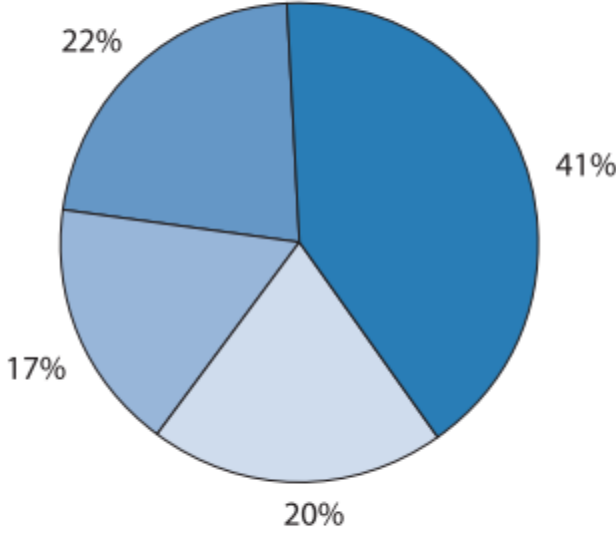
Five years later:

- Half of the cohabiting couples were no longer living together.
- Three-fourths of the couples in visiting relationships were no longer together.
- By the child's third birthday:
  - two-thirds of mothers had experienced at least one partnership change,
  - more than a third had experienced at least *two* changes,
  - and nearly 20 percent had experienced *three or more* changes.



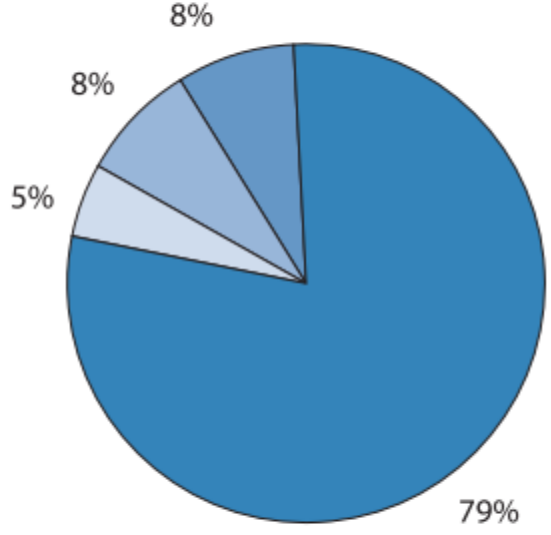
# Family Complexity

**Figure 1: Prevalence of Multipartnered Fertility Among Unmarried Couples**



Neither has MPF
  Father has MPF Only

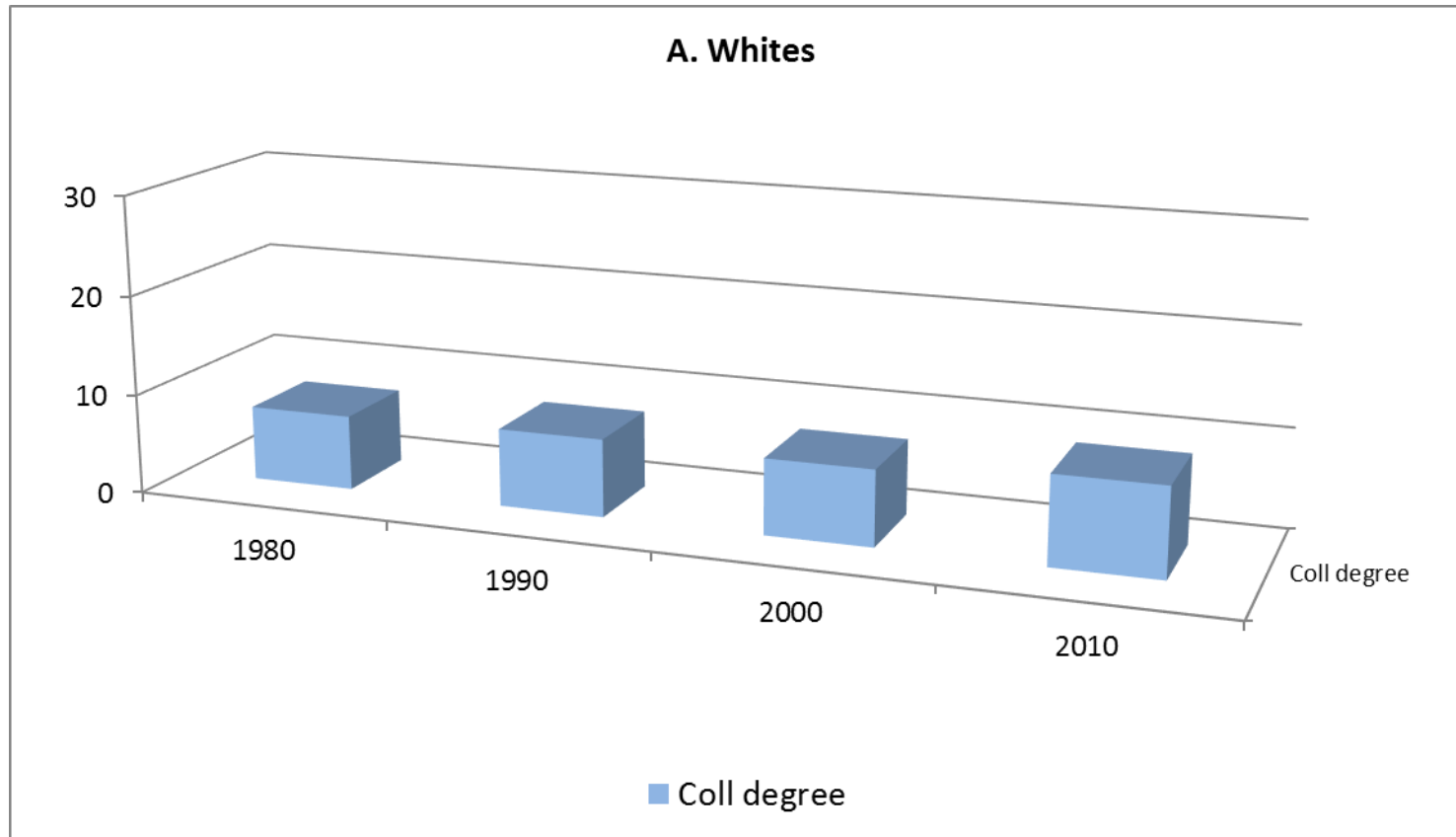
**Figure 2: Prevalence of Multipartnered Fertility Among Married Couples**



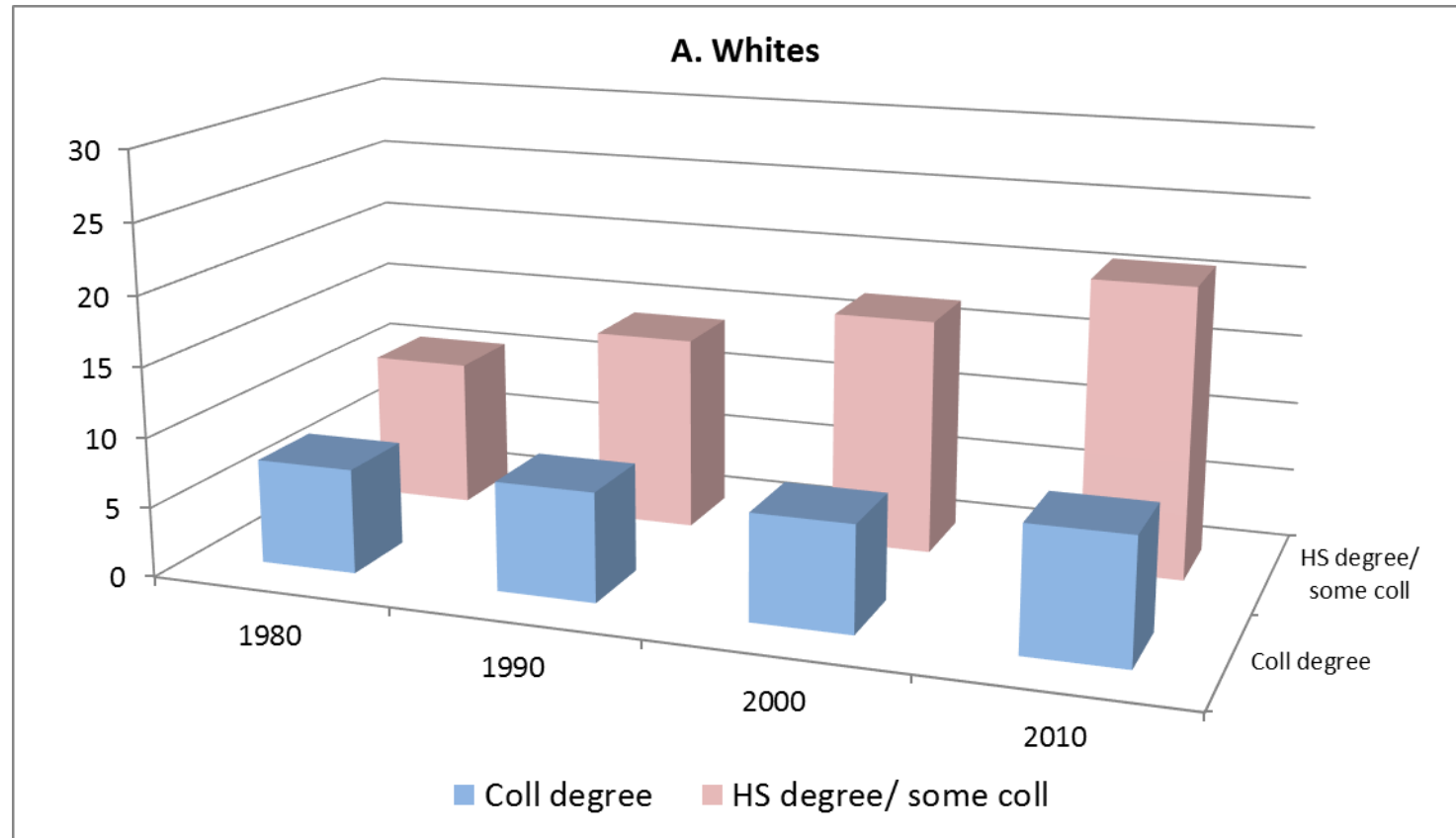
Mother has MPF Only
  Both have MPF

# Family Inequality

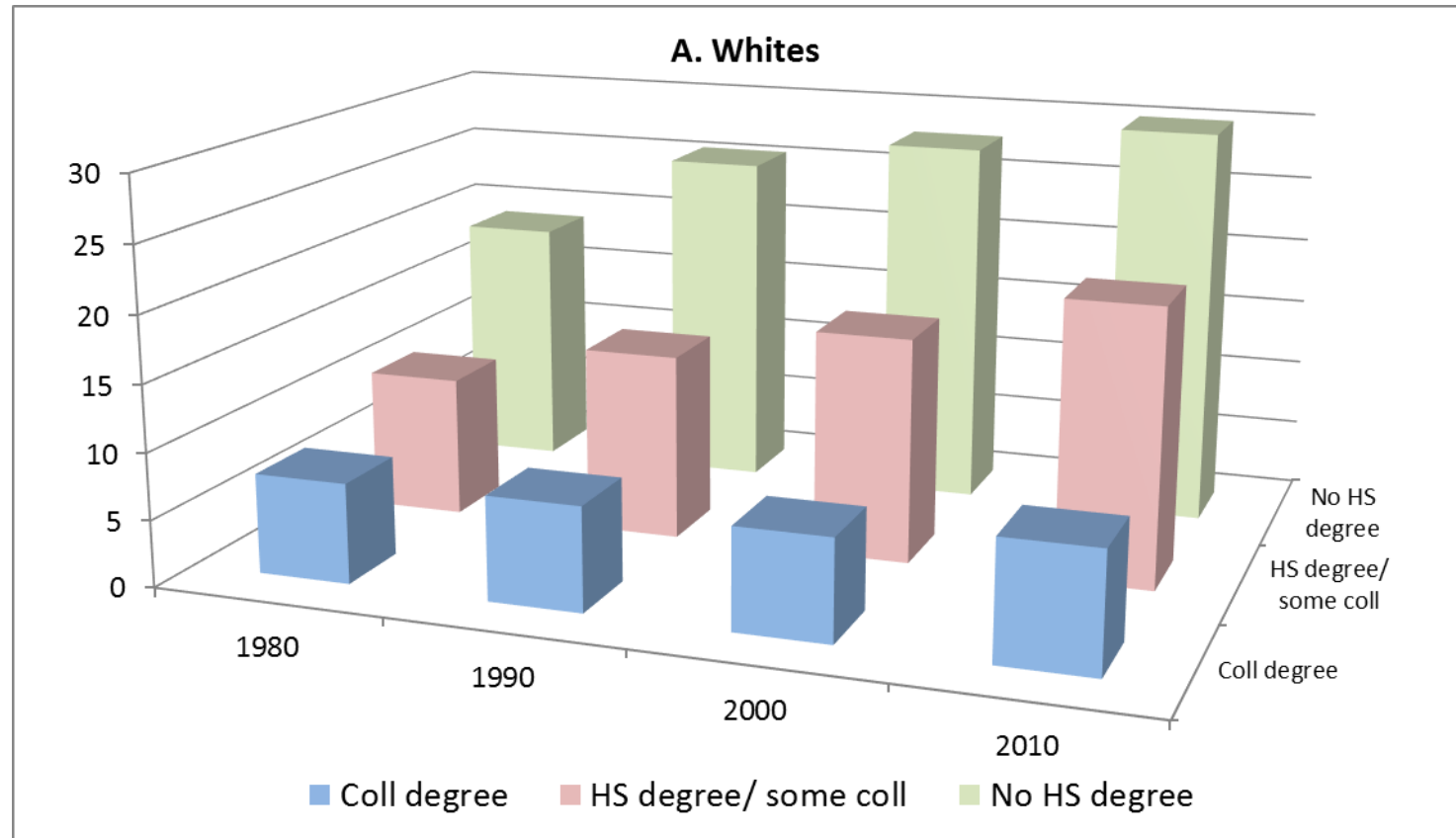
Percentage of Children Living with Unmarried Mothers, by Mother's Education, 1980 – 2010. (Source: Special tabulations pursuant to Stykes and Williams, 2013, from the IPUMS database.)



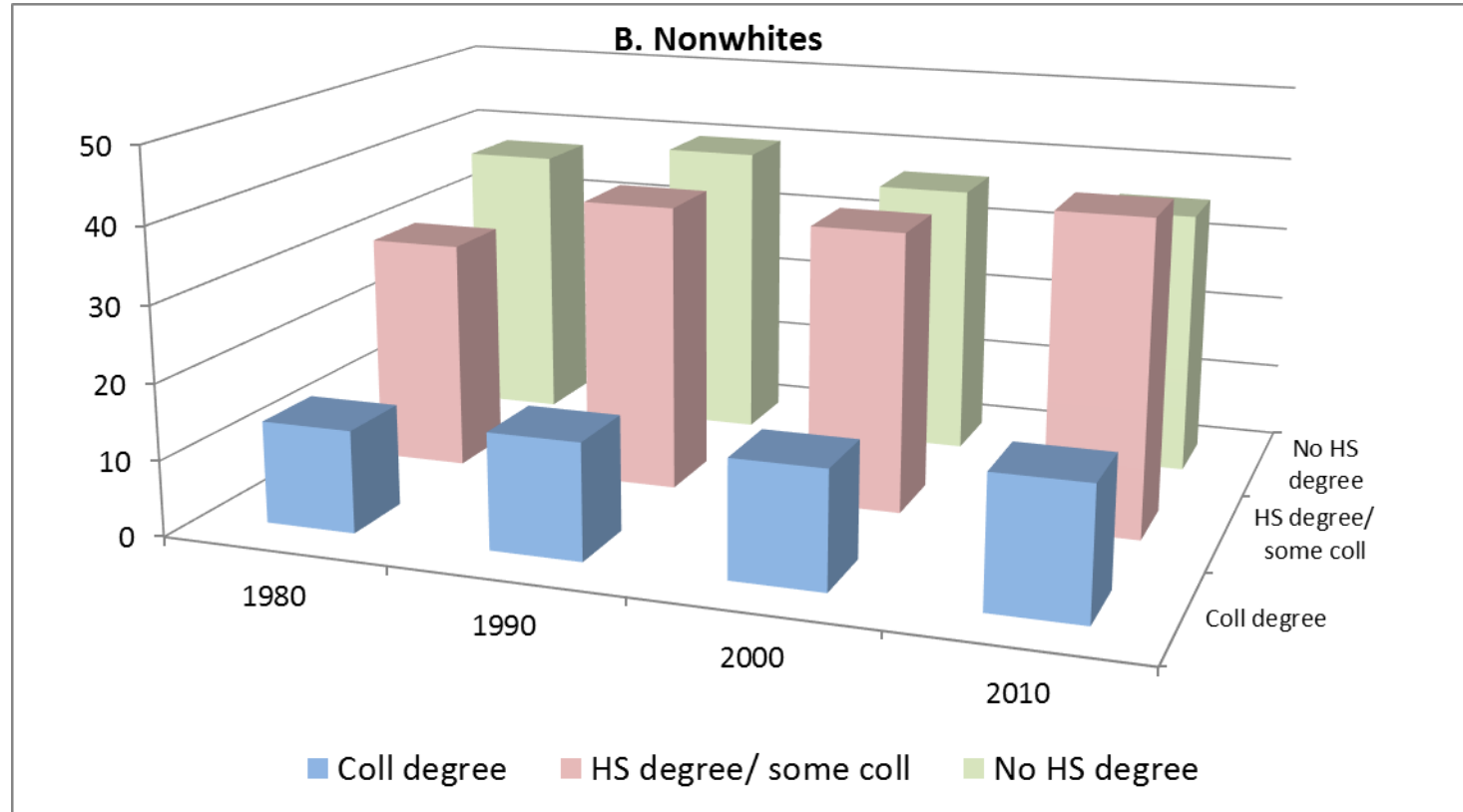
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What difference does not living with two parents make for children?

Effects seem to be larger on emotional problems than on cognitive development.

Effects seem to be larger for boys than for girls.

Source: Sara McLanahan, Laura Tach, and Daniel Schneider. 2013. "The Causal Effects of Father Absence." *Annual Review of Sociology*.



What are the effects of divorce and cohabitation dissolution on adults?

Economic effects of divorce on women have declined.

Economic effects of the end of cohabitation on women have increased.

Source: Laura Tach and Alicia Eads. 2015. "Trends in the Economic Consequences of Marital and Cohabitation Dissolution in the United States." *Demography*.

What are the benefits of marriage for men and women?

Marriage seems to provide men with a boost in earnings and health.

The benefits are smaller for women.

Source: Alexandra Killewalda and Margaret Gough. 2013. "Does Specialization Explain Marriage Penalties and Premiums?" *American Sociological Review*.

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