THE DECLINE OF REMARRIAGE: EVIDENCE FROM GERMAN VILLAGE POPULATIONS IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES*

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Abstract: Family reconstitution data for fourteen German village populations permit the examination of remarriage during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The results provide compelling evidence for a secular decline in the tendency to remarry. Pronounced age and sex differentials in the likelihood of remarriage were evident: widows were far less likely to remarry than widowers, and the probability of remarriage declined rapidly with age, particularly for women. The probability of remarriage was also inversely associated with the number and age of children. There were, however, no clear differences in either the probability of remarriage or its tendency to decline over time among major occupational groups. The decline in remarriage probabilities was caused in part by declines in adult mortality, which gradually raised the ages of surviving spouses to levels at which remarriage has historically been rather unlikely. However, age-specific marriage probabilities also declined, affecting both men and women and all occupational groups, suggesting the presence of a social change of wide scope. Some comments on possible factors contributing to the decline of remarriage are presented. The need for a comprehensive explanation of remarriage trends and differentials remains an important challenge for family historians.

I. Introduction

The importance of a distinctive marriage pattern in preindustrial northwest Europe has been underscored in a number of important and influential studies (Hajnal, 1965, 1982; Laslett, 1977; Wrigley, 1981). Most investigations of nuptiality in western Europe during the period covering the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries have focused on the relatively late entry into first marriage for both sexes and the prevailing, substantial levels of celibacy defined as proportions never married. However, far less attention has been paid to patterns of marital dissolution and remarriage that were characteristic of prevailing socioeconomic and demographic systems despite their potential significance for the individuals and societies involved (Baulant, 1976; Smith, 1979; Bideau, 1980).

Recent scholarship on remarriage in Europe based on data on the composition

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of marriages by types has revealed a substantial decline in the proportion of marriages involving people remarrying, and a concomitant growth in the proportion of primary marriages (those between never-married men and women). In their analysis of English trends, for example, Schofield and Wrigley (1981:212) argue that while 25–30 percent of those marrying in the sixteenth century were remarrying, this proportion had declined to only 10 percent by the nineteenth century. Bellettini (1981:259–260) cites late nineteenth-century European figures, showing that there were substantial national differences in the relative importance of remarriage. However, he argues that the number of remarriages has undergone "progressive diminution" since the seventeenth century (1981:259). Data from local family reconstitution studies in France, including those by Cabourdin (1978, 1981) and Bideau (1980:29) confirm the existence of a trend towards the decreasing, proportional importance of remarriages from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

Although a wide body of current research points to a decline in the proportional importance of remarriages in European history, there has been considerably less work on actual probabilities and rates of remarriage (cf. Livi-Bacci, 1981; Dyrvik, 1981). In their history of the European family, Mitterauer and Sieder (1982:150) appear to assume that the probability of remarriage underwent a "continuous" decline over the last two centuries, although they provide no supporting evidence. Thus, most evidence to date on trends in remarriage over the last few centuries has dealt with the proportionate share of marriages that have been remarriages.

The finding that remarriages became a progressively smaller proportion of total marriages does not necessarily imply that individual probabilities of remarriage also declined. If widows and widowers constituted a smaller proportion of European populations in the nineteenth century compared to those of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, then the proportional importance of remarriage could decline while leaving individual probabilities of remarriage unaffected or even increasing.

The present paper examines the incidence of remarriage as well as probabilities of remarriage based on the experience of fourteen German village populations during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, studied with the use of family reconstitution data. The results provide compelling evidence for a secular decline in the tendency to remarry. The data also show that probabilities of remarriage were inversely associated with age and number of children and that women were far less likely to remarry than men. There were, however, no clear differences in either the probability of remarriage, or its tendency to decline over time among major occupational groups. Explaining the causes of this decline and the presence or absence of major differences in probabilities of remarriage is difficult, given the wide variety of socioeconomic and cultural causes that may have been at work.

II. Sources and Setting

The basic data for the present study are in the form of reconstituted family histories as available in village genealogies (*Orts-sippenbücher*), a source unique to Germany. A total of fourteen such genealogies has been selected for study. The nature and quality of these genealogies, as well as the historical background of the villages selected, have been discussed at length elsewhere (Knodel, 1975; Knodel and Shorter, 1976; Knodel, forthcoming). The fourteen villages are located in five different areas of Germany: four in

Baden, one in Württemberg, three in Bavaria, four in the former principality of Waldeck, and two in East Friesland. The four villages in Baden and the three in Bavaria were Catholic while the other villages were Protestant. All were rather small in population size. They represent a considerable range of demographic conditions as indicated by intervillage differences in child mortality, marital fertility, and age at first marriage and also show some diversity with respect to occupational distributions and inheritance systems. Thus, while they cannot be considered either a random or representative sample of rural Germany in any rigorous sense, they at least span a reasonable range of regional, demographic, and socioeconomic diversity and should provide an interesting variety of settings in which to explore marital dissolution and remarriage.

The data set on which the present study is based has been developed in connection with a broader study of demographic behavior in the past. For six of the fourteen villages, virtually all data for all families were coded and processed into machine-readable form. However, because coding the genealogies in full was extremely time-consuming and expensive, and because the emphasis of the broader study for which these data were processed is on reproductive behavior, for the remaining eight villages, only couples for whom at least some prespecified minimum amount of information was available were coded.

Specifically excluded are those couples for whom sufficient information is unavailable to permit their use for fertility analyses. Thus, with some minor qualifications, couples for whom the date of marriage, the age of the wife, the date of the end of the union, or the birth dates of any known child could not be determined are excluded. Also excluded are the few couples for whom divorce, separation, or marriage annulment were indicated. A detailed discussion of the criteria used is provided elsewhere (Knodel, forthcoming). In addition, a somewhat reduced coding scheme was applied to couples in these villages. Of particular relevance for the present study is the fact that for those villages for which the shorter coding scheme was used, the *event* of remarriage was coded for couples but the *exact date* of remarriage was not. Thus, for analyses requiring knowledge of the date of remarriage, we rely on the subset of six fully coded villages rather than the total sample of all fourteen villages. When the results are based on the complete sample of fourteen villages, the same set of selection criteria is applied to couples in all of the villages including the six fully coded ones. For the total sample, this eliminates approximately half of the couples in the genealogies, although this proportion varies substantially from village to village (Knodel, forthcoming).

One additional problem with the source material deserves mention since it is of relevance to our analysis. Information on marriage order in the genealogies is undoubtedly imperfect. The marital status of a bride and groom at the time of marriage is generally not stated explicitly, and unless there was an indication to the contrary, marriages were assumed to be first marriages for the purpose of the present analysis. For those individuals whose marriages all occurred within the villages, there was no problem in correctly classifying marriage order (barring gaps in registration and incorrect linkages between marriages). However, in cases where a widow or widower from outside the village remarried in the village, it is possible that their marriage order was incorrectly classified as first marriage. Even in these cases, the individual's marital status or some reference to a previous marriage was sometimes indicated. Thus, the extent to which higher-order marriages are in-

correctly classified as first marriages is probably not extensive.[1] This problem is not unique to village genealogies, but is present in all family reconstitution studies whenever they are based on marriage registers which do not state the marital status of brides and grooms as a matter of routine.

III. Marital Dissolution

Remarriage patterns are of necessity closely linked to prevailing patterns of marital dissolution. In German villages during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, divorce, separation, and annulment were rare events and almost all marriages persisted until the death of one of the spouses. Since marital dissolution was virtually synonymous with widow- or widowerhood, the exclusion of the few couples whose marriages ended otherwise creates no serious problem for the study of marital dissolution and remarriage for the time period covered by the present study. Given the close link between the two phenomena, we begin our analysis of remarriage patterns with an examination of marital dissolution.

Of all marriages 1700–1899, 48 percent ended through the death of a wife and 52 percent through the death of a husband. The mean age of surviving husbands and wives at the time a marital union ended is presented in Table 1 for different marriage cohorts of the combined sample of fourteen villages. Results are shown for all marriages combined and for first and last marriages (of surviving spouse) separately. These estimates are probably bi-

ased downward to some extent because they are based only on couples for whom the marriage date and both death dates are known. Since the main reason death dates would not be known is out-migration from the village and since the longer a couple lived the longer they would be at risk of out-migration, the sooner after marriage a spouse died, the greater is the chance the couple would be included in the analysis.[2] The risk that such a bias distorts the trend over time is less serious, provided major changes in the extent to which this bias operated did not occur.[3]

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[1]To the extent that all marriages of an individual are included in the genealogy, remarriages of different orders can also be distinguished. For the total sample of all villages, approximately 11 percent of marriages involving a remarriage included a spouse, generally the husband, who had already previously remarried. In the analysis, we do not treat this group separately from those who remarry for the first time.

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[2]The age at the end of marriage for couples who move in from elsewhere should be biased in the opposite direction. However, such couples are generally excluded from the analysis since their marriage dates are unknown. Moreover, unless their age at burial or at some other event occurring in the village is given, their age at the time of marital dissolution is also unknown.

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[3]If out-migration of married persons varied over time, the trend could be affected. Another potential bias, however, may also affect the trend. Calculations of the age at the end of union for family reconstitution data are potentially biased downward for the initial decades following the establishment of parish records relative to later periods, to the extent ages at death are determined by linking the death of a spouse to the spouse's birth date. The reason for this is that older persons marrying and dying during this period will have been born prior to the start of the birth register and thus their age will not be known, while younger persons will be more likely to have been born after the start of the register. While part of the increase in the age at marital dissolution between the cohorts married during the first and second halves of the eighteenth century might be attributable to this bias, the rising trend is probably genuine, since age at death was often included in death entries in the parish registers, thus eliminating the potential truncation bias referred to above. In addition, for a number of the villages, the birth registration began considerably before the eighteenth century, thus eliminating any problem for calculations of age at end of union. The problem would be more severe if the tabulations were made according to year of marital dissolution

TABLE 1. MEAN AGE OF SURVIVING SPOUSE AT END OF MARRIAGE.[a]

	All Marriages		First Marriage		Last Marriage	
	Surviving Husband	Surviving Wife	Surviving Husband	Surviving Wife	Surviving Husband	Surviving Wife
1700–1749	50.2	48.7	49.3	48.1	59.3	53.7
1750–1799	53.1	50.9	52.4	50.4	60.6	55.1
1800–1824	52.3	51.0	51.5	50.7	59.5	54.8
1825–1849	53.5	52.9	53.0	52.7	61.2	56.0
1850–1874	54.7	53.8	54.1	53.7	62.5	55.8
1875–1899	56.1	56.2	55.6	56.3	63.8	58.1
1700–1899	53.1	52.4	52.9	52.2	61.4	55.8
Total N[b]	4615	5333	3957	4897	2839	4445

NOTE: Results are restricted to couples for which both death dates are known.

[a]By sex and year of marriage, combined sample of all villages. All the tables that follow, except for Table 5, are a combined sample of all villages.

[b]The number of cases for the individual cohorts range from 208 surviving husbands of last marriages 1700–1749 to 1246 surviving wives of all marriages 1750–1799.

For marriages of all orders, the average age of a surviving wife and a surviving husband at the time of the end of the union was quite similar and increased generally with successive marriage cohorts. For surviving husbands, the improvement represents a six year increase while for wives, a seven-and-a-half year increase is evident.

Trends in the average age at the end of a union for all marriages are potentially influenced by the changes in the age at marriage, the extent of remarriage, and the level of adult mortality. The average age at the end of a union tends to be higher when age at marriage is later, remarriage more frequent, and adult mortality lower. Since age at marriage was relatively stable (see Table 4), it is unlikely to have exerted much influence.[4] To elimi-

rather than by year of marriage. Since we are considering only marriages which occurred no earlier than 1700, we are dealing almost entirely with persons born at the earliest in the second half of the seventeenth century, and indeed predominantly those born after the third quarter of the seventeenth century.

[4]For trends in the age at first marriage, see Knodel, 1983.

nate the possible effect of changing probabilities of remarriage on the age at the end of the union, we can examine the age at the end of first marriages which is, of course, free of any influence of remarriage. Changes in the age at marital dissolution for surviving spouses in first marriages differ only modestly from the results for all marriages, indicating that changing remarriage probabilities had only a moderate impact on the latter. The somewhat greater increase in the mean age at the end of first marriages compared to all marriages reflects the decline in the probability of remarriage examined in Section IV. The reason for this is as follows: the average age at the end of remarriages is virtually always older than the average age at the end of first marriages. Since a decline in the probability of remarriage generally reduces the proportions of marriages that are remarriages, the compositional shift tends to lower the age at the end of all marriages, other things being equal. Hence, changes in the probability of remarriage dampen the observed increase in the age at the end of union for all marriages.

Undoubtedly, the predominant factor responsible for the increase in the age at

marital dissolution was an improvement in adult mortality. Unfortunately, direct estimates of the level and trend in adult mortality (in contrast to infant and child mortality) from family reconstitution data are methodologically difficult and have not been attempted for the present analysis (see Wrigley, 1968). However, the fact that child mortality at ages above infancy declined during much of the period under study is consistent with the suggestion of improving adult survivorship in the sample villages (Knodel, 1983). Scattered evidence from various areas of Germany also provides support for the hypothesis of improvements in mortality past infancy (Imhof, 1981; Lee, 1980).

Increases in the age at dissolution of the surviving spouse's last marriage are also of interest as they indicate the age at which permanent widow- or widowerhood began. However, these figures are particularly sensitive to the declining chances of remarriage (especially since they include first marriages not followed by a remarriage). This explains why the age at the end of last marriage increased somewhat less than for all marriages and considerably less than for first marriages. In contrast to the average age at the end of a first marriage, which was almost identical for surviving spouses of both sexes, surviving husbands were consider-

ably older than surviving wives at the end of last marriages. This is most likely a reflection of the greater likelihood of husbands in last marriages to have been previously married and thus for their last marriage to be a remarriage. For example, among all last marriages during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, 21 percent involved remarriages for husbands compared to only 10 percent for wives. In general, the results (whether for all, first, or last marriages) indicate that over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both husbands and wives remained in marital unions until reaching progressively older ages. This, in turn, had important implications for trends in remarriage.

In the absence of divorce, annulment, or separation, the average duration of a marital union is determined by the age at entry into marriage and the age at marital dissolution. Since the average age at dissolution was increasing while the age at marriage remained relatively stable, the average duration of a marital union generally increased during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This is shown in Table 2, which indicates the average duration of marital unions by age at marriage for both spouses. As would be expected, the average duration of a marital union was inversely related to the age of entry

TABLE 2. AVERAGE DURATION OF MARITAL UNIONS AT TIME OF DISSOLUTION.

Age at Marriage	Husbands				Wives			
	1799–1799	1800–1849	1850–1899	Total	1700–1799	1800–1849	1850–1899	Total
Under 25	26.5	27.0	29.3	27.4	25.0	26.1	29.1	26.7
25–29	24.5	25.4	28.8	26.5	22.9	23.1	27.1	24.5
30–34	23.4	22.5	26.5	24.1	18.9	20.3	22.9	20.6
35–39	19.5	21.5	22.8	21.2	16.4	19.0	19.2	18.1
40–49	16.9	15.9	18.1	16.9	14.8	15.8	16.6	15.6
50+	11.8	11.8	13.4	12.2	10.3	11.3	–	10.4
All ages	23.2	23.3	26.7	24.4	22.4	23.2	26.7	24.0

NOTES: Results are limited to marriages for which the date of the end of the union is known with certainty. Results based on fewer than 20 cases are omitted.

into the union. At the same time, for all age-at-marriage categories, the average duration of marital unions increased for both husbands and wives between the eighteenth century and the second half of the nineteenth century.

Only rarely did both spouses die at the same time. Thus, the dissolution of a marriage was typically followed by a period during which the surviving spouse lived as a widow or widower, or if remarriage occurred, as the partner of a new spouse. During this period, the surviving spouse's living conditions undoubtedly changed substantially, particularly if remarriage did not occur, as he or she would no longer function as part of a conjugal unit. In cases where remarriage occurred, the period of widowhood was curtailed and the surviving spouse once again functioned as part of a single conjugal unit until the death of one of the spouses again disrupted the marriage. While family reconstitution data are not suited for determining with whom, if anybody, a widow or widower lived following the dissolution of a marriage, they can shed light on the duration of widowhood and the process of remarriage.

The mean number of years lived by the surviving spouse following both first and last marriage is shown in Table 3. The latter category includes both first marriages of persons who have married only once (since their first marriage was also their last marriage) and the last marriages of persons who remarried. In the cases of both first and last marriages, the period of survival is simply the interval between the death dates of the two spouses. Thus, following the end of the first marriage, the survival interval includes any time spent by the surviving spouse in a remarriage. The number of years spent between the end of the last marriage and the death of the surviving spouse refers exclusively to a period when the surviving spouse was no longer part of a conjugal unit but rather a permanent widower or widow until his or her own death.

As the results indicate, the surviving spouse, whether husband or wife, lived between sixteen to nineteen years on the average following the death of his or her first spouse. There appears to be little difference either over time or between the sexes in this respect. There is also no clear trend over time in the mean duration of survival following last marriage. The lack of a difference in the lengths of husbands' and wives' survival interval following a first marriage is consistent with the

TABLE 3. MEAN NUMBER OF YEARS LIVED BY THE SURVIVING SPOUSE.

Year of Marriage Dissolution	Years between End of First Marriage and Death of Surviving Spouse[a]		Years between End of Last Marriage and Death of Surviving Spouse	
	Husband Survives	Wife Survives	Husband Survives	Wife Survives
1700–1749	16.5	19.0	9.5	13.9
1750–1799	18.1	18.8	11.2	14.9
1800–1824	17.8	17.7	11.8	14.3
1825–1849	17.1	17.0	11.5	14.5
1850–1874	16.6	16.4	11.2	14.7
1875–1899	17.0	17.1	10.9	16.0
1700–1899	17.3	17.5	11.2	14.9

NOTES: Results include marriages prior to 1700 that ended 1700 onwards. Results are restricted to couples for whom both death dates are known.

[a]Including periods during which a remarriage may have occurred.

TABLE 4. PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF MARRIAGES AND MEAN AGE AT MARRIAGE BY PRIOR MARITAL STATUS.

| | Prior Marital Status of Spouses | | | | |
	Bachelor and Spinster	Widower and Spinster	Bachelor and Widow	Widower and Widow	Total
	% Distribution Across				
1700–1749	66.9	18.4	10.3	4.5	100
1750–1799	72.0	15.5	8.5	4.0	100
1800–1849	74.1	15.8	7.2	2.9	100
1850–1899	81.4	13.2	4.0	1.4	100
1700–1899	75.2	15.2	6.8	2.8	100
	Age at Marriage for Men				
1700–1749	27.7	40.6	28.9	(47.7)	30.8
1750–1799	27.8	40.6	30.1	47.9	30.6
1800–1849	28.6	41.8	31.4	50.4	31.5
1850–1899	28.8	40.5	32.1	51.5	30.8
1700–1899	28.4	40.9	30.9	49.4	31.0
	Age at Marriage for Women				
1700–1749	24.6	27.9	36.3	43.1	27.2
1750–1799	24.9	29.5	35.5	43.9	27.3
1800–1849	25.5	31.4	35.1	43.8	27.7
1850–1899	25.5	30.4	34.6	41.3	26.7
1700–1899	25.3	30.1	35.3	43.3	27.2

NOTES: Results in parentheses are based on fewer than 50 cases.

similar average ages of surviving spouses of both sexes at the time the first marriage ended, and indicates a concomitant similarity in average age at death for men and women who survived their first marriage. The average number of years survived by a husband following the end of his last marriage, however, was less than for a wife following her last marriage. This reflects differences in the average age of widows and widowers at the end of last marriages, which in turn was due to men's higher propensity to remarry. The fact that first marriage survivors of either sex had similar ages at death indicates that mortality differences between the sexes were relatively unimportant compared to differences in remarriage chances in accounting for the differences in the duration of widowhood following last marriage.

IV. Remarriage

a. The distribution of marriage types

The evolution of the distribution of marriages by marriage order combinations is shown for the combined sample of all villages in Table 4, along with the mean age at marriage according to the prior marital status of the spouses. There was a steady increase in the proportion of primary marriages (bachelors with spinsters) which rose over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from approximately two-thirds to four-fifths of all marriages while the proportion of remarriages, particularly those involving a widow, decreased. Since divorces are excluded from these tabulations, and indeed were virtually nonexistent, they have no effect on the figures.

Bideau (1980) has argued that remarriages between widowers and spinsters gradually became the dominant form of remarriage, with the proportion of widow/bachelor remarriages undergoing the greatest decline in the period from the late seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century, while the incidence of widower/widow remarriages remained rather stable. Our data tend to confirm Bideau's findings. Considering only remarriages, we find that while widower/spinster marriages rose from 56 to 71 percent of all remarriages over the four periods, bachelor/widow marriages declined from 31 to 22 percent of the total. Widower/widow remarriages declined somewhat, too, falling from 14 to 8 percent of the total. If we shift our perspective slightly to examine the previous marital status of people whom widowers and widows chose to marry, we find that over the four time periods, a higher percentage of both widowers and widows chose single people as their partners in a remarriage. The percentage of remarrying widows who chose a bachelor as their new husband increased from 69 to 75 percent, while the percentage of remarrying widowers who chose a spinster increased from 80 to 91.

The average age at marriage for both men and women in each of the prior marital status categories remained relatively constant over the period under observation. There was only a very slight increase in the average age of men entering primary marriages and an even less pronounced increase for women entering primary marriages. For men, a slight increase in the age at marriage is evident over the period covered for other prior marital status combinations as well, but due to the increasing share of primary marriages, which occur at younger ages than other types of marriages, the average age of men for all marriages was identical for the first half of the eighteenth century and the second half of the nineteenth century. A similar, modest compositional effect due to the increasing share of primary marriages affected the average age of women for all marriages, which was slightly lower at the end of the period under observation than at the beginning.

b. Probabilities of remarriage

Following marital dissolution, the surviving spouse is subject to the competing risks of remarriage and death. For this reason, life table techniques are well suited for a detailed examination of the probability of remarriage. The life table approach specifically allows for the fact that the surviving spouse is at risk of remarriage only up until the time that remarriage actually occurs or until the time at which the surviving spouse dies, whichever comes first. The surviving spouses who do not remarry prior to death are eliminated from the denominator of the probabilities of remarrying following their death, while those who do remarry are eliminated from the denominator following their remarriage. For example, imagine two populations with equal probabilities of remarriage at each duration following marital dissolution for surviving spouses but different probabilities of surviving to a given duration. Under such circumstances, a lower proportion of the survivors at the time of dissolution would remarry in the higher mortality population because greater proportions would die prior to having found a new marriage partner. Life table analysis, however, would reveal that the probability of remarriage at any given duration since dissolution for those who continue to survive was equal in the two populations.

To apply life table techniques, information is needed on the date of dissolution of the union and the date of death of the

FIGURE 1. CUMULATIVE PROPORTIONS REMARRYING AS ESTIMATED BY LIFE TABLE TECHNIQUES, FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES OF MARRIAGES ENDING 1700–1899.
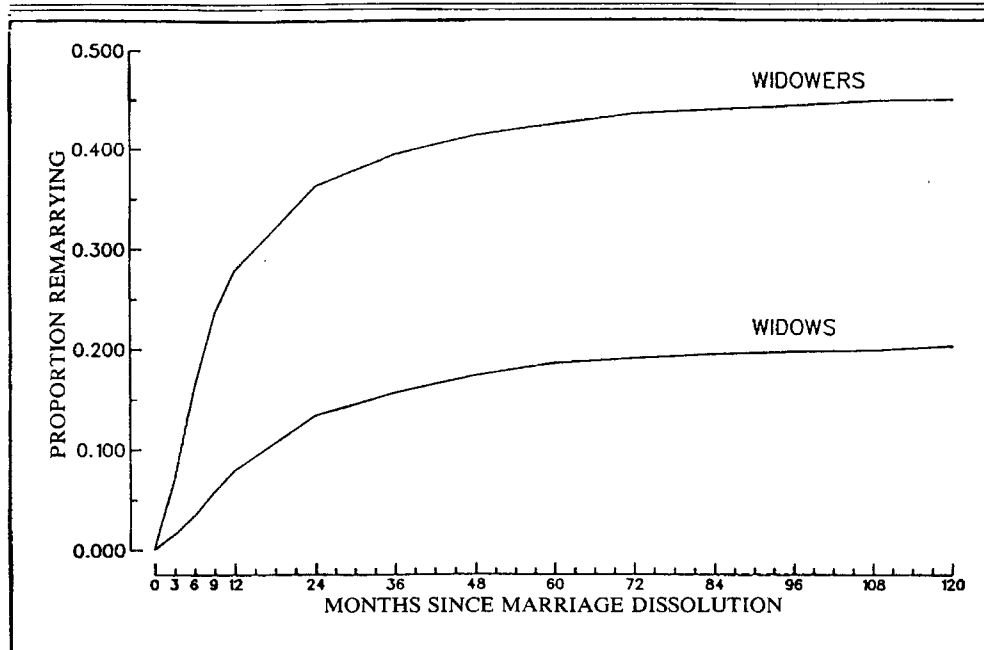
NOTES: Results are limited to the six fully coded villages and to couples for whom both death dates are known. Marriages ending in annulment or divorce in which migration of the surviving spouse is indicated are excluded.

surviving spouse or the date of remarriage, whichever comes first. Family reconstitution data typically contain such information. For the present study, however, the date of remarriage was coded only for the six fully coded villages and not for the remaining eight for which the abbreviated scheme was applied. Thus, full life table techniques can be applied only to the six fully coded villages. For the remaining villages, however, information on whether or not a remarriage occurred was coded. Thus, a somewhat less detailed analysis of remarriage is possible for all fourteen villages in the sample. Before turning to the complete set of fourteen villages, we examine the probability of remarriage in detail based on an application of life table techniques to the six fully coded villages.

The cumulative proportions of widows and widowers remarrying according to the number of months since marital dissolution as estimated by the life table approach are shown in Figure 1 for the combined sample of the six fully coded villages. The results clearly show a striking difference in the probability of remarriage for men and women. Widowers were far more likely to remarry than widows. For the six villages taken together during the period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the probability of remarriage during the ten years following the end of a union was more than twice as high for men as for women. Moreover, widowers who remarried tended to do so more quickly than widows who remarried.

For both sexes, the probability of

remarriage tapered off substantially by the end of five years following marital dissolution. Thus, for men, the probability of remarriage within the first five years after the end of a previous marriage was approximately 42 percent, increasing to only 45 percent by the end of ten years. For women, the probability of remarriage within the first five years following marital dissolution was approximately 19 percent, increasing to only 20 percent by the end of ten years. Indeed, these life table calculations show that among those husbands who remarried by the end of ten years, more than half did so by nine months following marital dissolution. For those women who remarried within the first ten years, more than half remarried by the end of the first year following marital dissolution.

Table 5 indicates the probability of remarriage estimated by the life table approach for the six fully coded villages according to the year of dissolution as well as for each village separately and according to the age at dissolution. A clear time trend in remarriage probabilities is evident, with a sharp reduction in the proportions remarrying occurring from the eighteenth century onward. Since all marriages were coded for the fully coded villages including those occurring after 1900, it is possible to extend the analysis into the twentieth century, although much of our discussion focuses on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

TABLE 5. LIFE TABLE ESTIMATES OF THE PROPORTION OF WIDOWERS AND WIDOWS REMARRYING.[a]

	Widowers					Widows				
	Proportion Remarrying within					Proportion Remarrying within				
Year of Dissolution	3 mo.	6 mo.	1 yr.	2 yr.	10 yr.	3 mo.	6 mo.	1 yr.	2 yr.	10 yr.
1700–1799	.071	.244	.398	.494	.586	.039	.085	.153	.203	.321
1800–1849	.042	.148	.243	.324	.409	.005	.013	.066	.128	.210
1850–1899	.033	.105	.206	.283	.365	.000	.003	.022	.047	.086
1900–1924	.003	.048	.104	.162	.294	.000	.000	.003	.021	.086
1700–1899	.070	.163	.278	.362	.448	.015	.034	.079	.133	.202
Village (Dissolutions 1700–1899)										
Kappel	.143	.243	.341	.391	.443	.051	.093	.146	.181	.255
Rust	.100	.241	.363	.462	.555	.014	.044	.106	.174	.253
Oeschelbronn	.012	.071	.173	.232	.341	.000	.000	.020	.080	.114
Braunsen	.023	.084	.285	.431	.419	.000	.000	.056	.145	.243
Massenhausen	.024	.117	.293	.423	.502	.000	.011	.087	.143	.182
Middels	.000	.014	.085	.180	.305	.000	.000	.010	.040	.124
Age at dissolution (Dissolutions 1700–1899)										
Under 30	(.077)	(.314)	(.595)	(.843)	(.955)	.016	.071	.261	.507	.777
30–39	.149	.395	.603	.741	.887	.025	.072	.184	.324	.473
40–49	.081	.200	.377	.500	.622	.019	.030	.059	.092	.137
50–59	.027	.050	.126	.175	.241	.000	.000	.003	.008	.013
60+	.007	.011	.019	.029	.034	.000	.000	.000	.000	.003

[a]Combined sample of six fully coded villages.

NOTES: This table is limited to couples for whom both death dates are known. Marriages ending in annulment or divorce or in which migration of the surviving spouse is indicated are excluded. Results in parentheses are based on fewer than 100 persons entering into the initial life table calculation.

It is evident that the trend that was already strongly apparent before 1900 continued at least until the first quarter of the twentieth century.[5] For husbands whose marriage ended in the death of the wives during the eighteenth century, the probability of remarrying within two years following marital dissolution was almost 50 percent and close to 60 percent by the end of ten years. In contrast, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the probability of remarrying within two years dropped to less than 30 percent and within ten years to only a little more than one out of three. By the first quarter of the twentieth century these probabilities dropped substantially further. For women, there was an even greater proportional decrease in the probability of remarriage. For those widows whose husbands died in the eighteenth century, approximately one-fifth married within two years following marital dissolution and almost a third by the end of ten years. In contrast, by the end of the nineteenth century only 5 percent remarried within two years and less than 10 percent by the end of ten years.

The changing nature of remarriage is also reflected in the declining pace at which remarriage occurred. During the eighteenth century, widows and widowers remarried far more rapidly than in subsequent periods. For men, the life table estimates indicate that the proportion who remarried within six months, among all who remarried within ten years following marital dissolution, declined from 42 percent in the eighteenth century to only

16 percent by the first quarter of the twentieth century. For women, an even more drastic reduction in the pace of remarriage occurred. The proportion of those women remarrying within ten years of marital dissolution who did so by the end of the first year, declined from almost half in the eighteenth century to only 3 percent by the first quarter of the twentieth century. This decline in the proportion who remarried at all, as well as the sharp reduction in the pace of remarriage, has been suggested by other historical studies (Flandrin, 1979:115–116; cf. Lee, 1981:96).

The probabilities of remarriage in the six fully coded villages show considerable variation. For men, remarriage was least common in the East Frisian village of Middels and, moreover, occurred at a relatively slow pace there. For women, remarriage was also relatively uncommon in Middels, although a similar pattern was evident for the village of Oeschelbronn as well. The pace of remarriage for widows was also very slow in Middels relative to the other villages. It is interesting to observe that the remarriage patterns did not correspond strictly to religious differences among the villages. While both Oeschelbronn and Middels, the two villages characterized by the least remarriage, are Protestant, the Waldeck villages of Braunsen and Massenhausen are also Protestant and yet had considerably higher rates of remarriage. The two Catholic villages of Kappel and Rust in Baden were also characterized by high rates of remarriage, but not noticeably higher than those for the two Waldeck villages.

A number of historical demographic studies have established a strong negative association between the probability of remarriage and the age of the surviving spouse at the time of marital dissolution (e.g., Bideau, 1980:34–35; Cabourdin, 1978:318–319). This same relationship is

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[5]Given the increasing importance of divorce as a source of marital dissolution during the twentieth century, the present analysis, which is limited to studying remarriage following marital dissolution as a result of death, is not extended beyond the first quarter of the twentieth century even for the fully coded villages for which such data are available.

apparent in German villages during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As indicated by the life table estimates for the six fully coded villages, the probability of remarrying following marital dissolution declined sharply with age for both men and women. For men, the large majority who were under age fifty at the time of marital dissolution remarried within ten years while only a small percentage did so if they were age sixty or above at the time of the death of their wife. For women, the large majority remarried only among those who were under thirty at the time of the death of their husband, although almost half of those who were in their thirties at the onset of widowhood remarried as well. Only a very small percentage of women over age forty at the time of marital dissolution remarried and almost none over age fifty did. From the point of view of the reproductive potential lost through marital dissolution, it is of interest to note that a substantial proportion of women who became widows in their prime reproductive ages did remarry and have an opportunity to resume their reproductive careers. Thus, the low rates of remarriage for women above age forty, while perhaps having a substantial impact on the social circumstances of the women involved, had little demographic significance.

While it is not possible to use the life table approach to calculate the full set of remarriage probabilities by duration (since marital dissolution) for the combined sample of fourteen villages, it is nevertheless possible to estimate the proportion who ever remarried. As with the life table estimates for the fully coded villages, it is necessary to restrict calculations to those couples for whom both death dates are known, in order to maximize the likelihood that the surviving spouse was under observation for the full period between marital dissolution and

death. While in some cases this involves surviving spouses who moved out of the village and died elsewhere, in all likelihood if the death date were available to the genealogist, information on whether or not that spouse had remarried was also available.

The life table approach applied to the fully coded villages had the advantage of estimating the probability of remarriage by duration since marital dissolution, after allowing for the competing probability of death. Because the date of remarriage has not been coded for the complete set of villages, it is not possible to calculate probabilities of remarriage net of the probability of death as is true with the life table approach. Thus, results are influenced not only by the probability of remarriage but also by the probability of death. In order to minimize the impact of the competing risk of death from the estimates for the complete set of all villages, we have made separate estimates of the probability of remarriage for those surviving spouses who lived at least five years after marital dissolution. As noted in connection with the life table analysis of remarriage in the fully coded villages, the vast majority of remarriages took place within five years following marital dissolution. Thus, by restricting calculations to those who survived at least five years, we can achieve a close approximation to the probability of remarrying independent of the competing probability of death.

Estimates of the proportion remarrying among all survivors and among those surviving at least five years for both men and women are presented in Table 6 for the full set of fourteen villages combined. As expected, estimates of remarriage based on spouses surviving at least five years are substantially higher than estimates of remarriage among all survivors. Given the larger number of cases available for

TABLE 6. PROPORTION OF WIDOWERS AND WIDOWS REMARRYING BY YEAR OF MARITAL DISSOLUTION.

Year of Marriage Dissolution	Among All Survivors		Among Those Surviving at Least Five Years	
	Widowers	Widows	Widowers	Widows
1700–1749	.644	.390	.740	.446
1750–1799	.536	.300	.617	.350
1800–1824	.466	.227	.527	.270
1825–1849	.396	.183	.462	.210
1850–1874	.399	.110	.472	.128
1875–1899	.334	.073	.418	.083
1700–1899	.445	.200	.521	.233

NOTES: Results include marriages prior to 1700 that ended in 1700 or later. Results are restricted to couples for whom both death dates are known.

analysis from the entire set of fourteen villages compared to the subset of six fully coded villages, it is possible to trace trends in probability of remarriage in greater detail.

Whether we consider all survivors or only those surviving at least five years, the results indicate that the probability of remarriage for both men and women declined steadily during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Since the full sample of all villages is based only on marriages occurring through 1899, estimates of the probability of remarriage during the twentieth century would be seriously biased due to sample censorship and thus are not indicated.[6] Results of

both the subset of fully coded villages and the complete sample of all villages do agree, however, in indicating a very substantial reduction in the probability of remarriage during the period under observation. In general, the results based on the sample of all villages suggest somewhat higher probabilities of remarriage for any given period of time than do the results based on the subset of six fully coded villages. This is apparent from the fact that the proportion remarrying among those surviving at least five years in the combined sample of all villages was generally higher for equivalent time periods than the probability of remarriage within ten years following marital dissolution based on the life table results for the six fully coded villages.[7]

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[6]Since only marriages prior to 1900 are included in the data set for the full sample, marriages ending during successive years in the twentieth century would be to couples that on average would be progressively older simply because couples who were younger at the time of dissolution during the twentieth century would be more likely to have married during the twentieth century. Given that the probability of remarriage is strongly related to the age at which marital dissolution occurs, such a selection of cases would seriously bias downward the probability of remarriage for marriages dissolving during the twentieth century if based only on marriages contracted prior to the twentieth century. The reverse

problem is not present at the beginning of the eighteenth century, since the results are based on marriages regardless of whether they were contracted prior to or subsequent to the turn of the eighteenth century.

[7]These two estimates are of course not precisely equivalent. Those based on the life table approach as applied to the fully coded villages estimate the probability of remarriage only within the first ten years following marital dissolution and thus do not incorporate the fact that a small proportion of persons

TABLE 7. PROPORTIONS OF WIDOWERS AND WIDOWS REMARRYING BY AGE AT DISSOLUTION AND YEAR OF DISSOLUTION.

	Age of Surviving Spouse at End of Union				
	Under 30	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+
Among all survivors					
Widowers					
1700–1749	(.875)	.938	(.761)	.491	(.050)
1750–1799	(.939)	.875	.696	.321	.102
1800–1849	.897	.839	.635	.254	.074
1850–1899	.932	.874	.582	.233	. 022
1700–1899	.916	.866	.639	.275	.054
Widows					
1700–1749	(.800)	.707	.410	.089	.000
1750–1799	.870	.631	.277	.050	.023
1800–1849	.785	.536	.145	.035	.000
1850–1899	.671	.307	.071	.010	.000
1700–1899	.781	.511	.184	.032	.003
Among those surviving at least five years					
Widowers					
1700–1749	(.952)	.966	(.780)	(.511)	–
1750–1799	.932	.899	.743	.345	.163
1800–1849	.934	.868	.647	.271	.098
1850–1899	.970	.897	.626	.272	.030
1700–1899	.948	.893	.671	.301	.076
Widows					
1700–1749	(.814)	.722	.437	.109	(.000)
1750–1799	.918	.667	.289	.063	.038
1800–1849	.816	.558	.159	.032	.000
1850–1899	.688	.323	.074	.011	.000
1700–1899	.813	.536	.195	.035	.006

NOTES: Results in parentheses are based on 20–49 cases; results based on fewer than 20 cases are omitted. Results include marriages prior to 1700 that ended 1700 onwards. Results are restricted to couples for whom both death dates are known.

will remarry after ten years. In contrast, the estimates based on the set of all villages incorporate remarriages at any duration including those occurring after ten years. On the other hand, the life table estimates eliminate from the probability of remarriage the competing risk of dying during any time prior to the ten-year period subsequent to marital dissolution, while those based on the complete set of villages eliminate only the competing risk of dying during the first five years following marital dissolution. Since little remarriage occurs after five years and even less after ten years, and since these biases are in opposite directions, it is unlikely that they have a serious effect on the comparability of the two sets of results.

The probabilities of remarrying according to the age of the surviving spouse at the time of marriage dissolution as well as according to the year of marital dissolution are shown in Table 7 for the combined sample of all villages. Again, results are presented both for all survivors and for those who survived at least five years following the time of marital dissolution.

As was true for the subset of the six fully coded villages, the results for the combined sample of all villages show a very strong relationship between age at end of union and probability of remarriage.

Moreover, this is true throughout the entire period under observation. At any given age at the time of marital dissolution, the probability of remarriage for a man was greater than for a woman. Sex differences were particularly pronounced at the older ages. For men or women who were widowed under age thirty, the vast majority remarried, although during the nineteenth century there was a noticeable decline in the probability of remarriage even among widowed women under thirty. For both sexes, remarriage was not common after age sixty, even after controlling for the competing probability of death by limiting consideration to those who survived at least five years. For surviving spouses who were in their forties at the time of marital dissolution, remarriage was quite common for men but relatively rare for women, except during the first half of the eighteenth century. In addition, while a significant proportion of men who were in their fifties at the time of marital dissolution remarried, only a very small minority of women of the same age did so.

As indicated above, the average age of the surviving spouse at the time of marital dissolution increased during the period under observation. Given the fact that there is a strong negative association between age at dissolution and probability of remarriage, the increasing age at end of union would contribute to a decline in the overall probability of remarriage even if no changes in age-specific probabilities of remarriage occurred. As is evident in Table 7, however, such a compositional effect can explain only a part of the decline in the overall probability of remarriage that occurred during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in German villages. With the sole exception of men under thirty, the probability of remarrying for each age group of surviving spouses declined during the period.

For both men and women, the proportionate decline in the probability of remarriage was directly related to the age of the spouse at the end of the union. A much greater proportionate decline in the probability of remarriage occurred for both men and women at older ages than for those who were younger at the time of marital dissolution. For men under thirty, the probability of remarrying remained virtually unchanged during the two centuries. Moreover, there was only a modest decline for men who were in their thirties at the time of the end of the previous union. However, our results indicate a very substantial reduction in the probability of remarriage for men who were older when their marriage ended. For women, there was a similar relationship between the proportionate decline in the probability of remarrying and the age at the time of marital dissolution although, unlike men, women in their thirties experienced a substantial reduction in remarriage probabilities. Indeed, the proportion of women in this group remarrying during the second half of the nineteenth century was less than half of the proportion remarrying during the first half of the eighteenth century. For women above age fifty, the probability of remarrying was reduced to very close to zero by the end of the nineteenth century.

c. Remarriage, occupation, and social status

The proportion remarrying for the combined sample of all villages among men and women surviving at least five years following the death of a spouse is shown in Table 8 according to the occupational group, occupational subcategory, and village leadership status of the husband.[8]

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[8]A detailed description of the occupational and village leadership status categories and how they were coded is provided elsewhere (Knodel, Forth-

coming, Appendix C). It should be stressed that there are a number of difficulties in constructing meaningful occupational groupings for past populations from limited information derived from parish registers: some occupational titles refer to occupations which no longer exist or are local expressions which are difficult to interpret; the social significance of any particular designation may vary over time and space; even within the same village and time period the same designation can encompass a variety of situations. Moreover, changes in occupations over the lifecourse create additional difficulties since the occupational designations derived from a marriage or burial entry may not represent a lifetime occupation. Thus, occupational designations as given in the village genealogies are necessarily imprecise and incorporate a variety of ambiguities.

The more than 1000 different occupational designations included in the genealogies comprising the sample were coded into 12 categories including a residual category for all those that did not fit conveniently into the other 11 (see Table 8). Categories either correspond to an occupational grouping which, on the basis of theoretical considerations or previous empirical research, is expected to be associated with demographic behavior or because they correspond to frequently mentioned occupations or occupational clusters in the genealogies. Moreover, they were chosen in such a way that they could be combined into three broader groups thought to reflect, at least to some modest extent, common social and economic circumstances. Nevertheless, there is clearly variation within the categories themselves and, even moreso within the broader groups with respect to social and economic standing.

Farmers form both a category and a broad grouping. Their presumed distinguishing feature is that they earn their livelihood primarily through agricultural pursuits on land which is essentially under their control. This category undoubtedly incorporates a variety of different situations even among persons with identical occupational designations. The problem is reduced in villages where farmers and cottagers can be distinguished and assigned to different categories. The second broad grouping is labeled Proletarians and is intended to embrace workers who depend for survival on the sale of their labor power and who do not have extensive control over property or the means of production (see Tilly, 1981, Chapter 7). This grouping includes cottagers on the presumption that many cottagers needed to supplement their income either by selling their services as agricultural laborers or in some other way. The other categories subsumed under Proletarians are day laborers, other unskilled, sailors, weavers, and other home industry. The third broad grouping, Ar-

Given the strong association of remarriage probabilities with age at the time of marital dissolution and the decline in remarriage chances over the two century period under observation, results are shown adjusted by use of multiple classification analysis for both of these influences. For the four broad general occupational groupings, the probability of remarriage for both men and women was remarkably similar whether or not adjustment is made for age at and year of dissolution. Even for the occupational subcategories, the probabilities of remarriage were generally fairly similar, with only a few exceptions.

Among all occupational subcategories, the unadjusted probability of husbands remarrying was at least 45 percent and in only one subcategory exceeded 60 percent. After results are adjusted for age at and year of dissolution, considerable similarity remains in the probability of remarriage, although two groups, sailors and professionals, fell below the 40 percent level. The results for sailors may be in part a result of the small number of cases involved.

Regardless of their former husbands' occupation, the women's probabilities of remarriage were far lower than men's. In most cases, both unadjusted and adjusted results indicate a probability of remar-

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tisans and Skilled, includes artisans, fishermen, businessmen, and professionals. All others, including unknowns and those with two occupations not in the same broad grouping, were placed in a fourth residual category.

In each village genealogy, information about a small number of husbands indicated that they held some position of leadership in the village administration or in the local church. Presumably these positions were largely honorary and involved the most prominent and respected members of the community. This information was used to determine a simple indication of village leadership status. Approximately 5 percent of all husbands were categorized as village leaders.

TABLE 8. PROPORTION OF WIDOWERS AND WIDOWS REMARRYING, BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUP, OCCUPATIONAL SUBCATEGORY, AND STATUS IN VILLAGE.

	Unadjusted		Adjusted for Age at Dissolution and Year of Dissolution	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Occupational group				
Farmer	.50	.26	.51	.26
Proletarian	.53	.20	.52	.22
Artisans and Skilled	.53	.24	.51	.23
Mixed, Other, Unknown	.53	.24	.51	.23
Occupational subcategory				
Farmer	.50	.26	.51	.26
Cottager	.49	.20	.51	.23
Day Laborer	.55	.18	.54	.21
Other unskilled	.56	.13	.48	.15
Sailor	(.50)	(.23)	(.38)	(.13)
Weaver	.51	.23	.53	.24
Other home industry	.58	.27	.52	.30
Artisan	.53	.23	.51	.23
Fisherman	.55	.42	.54	.33
Businessman	.55	.22	.51	.20
Professional	.45	.18	.39	.17
Farmer-Artisan[a]	.58	.22	.57	.27
Farmer-Proletarian	.50	.15	.49	.21
Proletarian-Artisan[b]	.62	.23	.59	.25
Other	(.54)	.19	(.52)	.17
Unknown	.49	.30	.45	.23
Status in village				
Village leader	.55	.09	.57	.18
Nonleader	.52	.24	.51	.24
All couples	.52	.23	.51	.23

NOTES: Results include marriages prior to 1700 that ended after 1700 and are restricted to couples for whom both death dates are known. Results in parentheses are based on fewer than 50 cases. Adjustment for age at marital dissolution was made through Multiple Classification Analysis and was done separately for men and women. Unadjusted results for widowers include cases in which the age at dissolution is unknown while the adjusted results are based only on widowers for whom age at dissolution is known. In the case of widows, since age at dissolution is known for all, adjusted and unadjusted results are based on the same number of cases.

[a] Includes some who were both farmers and fishermen, businessmen or professionals.

[b] Includes some who were both proletarians and fishermen, businessmen or professionals.

riage for women well below 30 percent. The most notable exception is the unusually high probability of remarriage of wives of fishermen, which, although reduced, remained higher than for other groups even after adjustment. A somewhat lower-than-average chance of remarriage for women in the proletarian group is partially eliminated by adjustment. Thus, there appears to be little systematic variation in patterns of remarriage according to husband's occupation. It is worth noting that proletarian husbands did not suffer the same disadvantage as their wives in terms of chances of remarriage.

A comparison of the unadjusted probability of remarriage according to the husband's village leadership status reveals roughly similar probabilities of remarriage for those who were leaders and those who were not, but considerably lower probabilities of remarriage for the wives of village leaders. The lower remarriage chances of wives of village leaders prior to adjustment undoubtedly reflects, in part, their more advanced age at the time of dissolution compared to wives of non-leaders (56.7 versus 49.9 respectively). Interestingly, there was far less difference in the age at the end of marriage between the village leaders and nonleaders themselves if they survived their wives (52.9 versus 51.4 respectively) and adjustment has considerably less effect. Even after adjustment, widows of village leaders remarried somewhat less than widows of nonleaders, perhaps reflecting a shortage of appropriate candidates for remarriage for women in the more privileged strata of

the village, if such women hesitated to marry men who were from less advantaged positions than their former husbands. In contrast, village leaders themselves may have been in a particularly favorable position to remarry as their presumably more privileged status in the village might have made them particularly attractive candidates even when they were somewhat older.

Time trends in the probability of remarriage also show little consistent difference by occupation. As shown in Table 9, the decline in the proportions remarrying occurred in each major occupational grouping. Results are shown both unadjusted and adjusted for age at dissolution. While adjusting for the changing average age at dissolution over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries diminishes the extent of the decline in remarriage, it by no means eliminates it. For women, the adjusted results indicate a remarkably similar magnitude of decline between the first

TABLE 9. PROPORTION OF WIDOWERS AND WIDOWS REMARRYING, BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND YEAR OF DISSOLUTION.

	Unadjusted for Age at Dissolution				Adjusted for Age at Dissolution			
	Farmers	Prole-tarians	Artisans and Skilled	All (including unknown)	Farmers	Prole-tarians	Artisans and Skilled	All (including unknown)
Widowers								
1700–1749	.71	(.87)	.74	.74	(.60)	(.67)	(.57)	.61
1750–1799	.59	.69	.60	.62	.59	.58	.50	.56
1800–1849	.48	.52	.51	.49	.50	.51	.49	.50
1850–1899	.42	.41	.48	.45	.46	.47	.51	.48
Widows								
1700–1749	.45	.45	.44	.45	.39	.37	.36	.38
1750–1799	.37	.33	.39	.35	.36	.29	.32	.32
1800–1849	.28	.22	.27	.24	.27	.20	.23	.23
1850–1899	.15	.07	.08	.11	.17	.14	.14	.15

NOTES: Results include marriages prior to 1700 that ended from 1700 onwards and are restricted to couples for whom both death dates are known. Results in parentheses are based on 20–49 cases. Husbands, and wives of husbands with two occupations in different groups were coded in a separate mixed category not shown but are included in the results that refer to all husbands or wives. Adjustment for age at marital dissolution was made through Multiple Classification Analysis and was done separately for men and women. Unadjusted results for widowers include cases in which the age at dissolution is unknown, while the adjusted results are based only on widowers for whom age at dissolution is known. In the case of widows, adjusted and unadjusted results are based on the same number of cases since age at dissolution is known for all.

half of the eighteenth and second half of the nineteenth centuries for all three major occupational groups.

d. Remarriage and the number of children

Among the circumstances that might substantially affect the changes of remarrying is the number of children that the widow or widower has at the time of widowhood. A thorough analysis of this would take into account not only the number of surviving children, but also their ages, since we might expect quite different effects on chances of remarriage if children are still young and dependent compared to situations where the children are already old enough to be in the labor force and thus provide support for the widowed parent. Because of the way in which the data have been coded for the present study, we relate the probability of remarriage to the number of children surviving to age five who had been born to the couple prior to marital dissolution. It should be noted that some of these children who were born

more than five years prior to marital dissolution might have died before the end of the parents' marriage but given the relatively low mortality of children past age five, this number is bound to be quite small.

Table 10 shows the percent remarrying according to the number of children who survived to age five, controlling for age at widow- or widowerhood. Though marriage probabilities were universally higher for men than for women of the same age group and with the same number of children, a similar inverse association characterized both sexes in each age group. In every age group, those with no children surviving to age five were the most likely to remarry and indeed, except for widowers under forty and widows under thirty, the reduction in the chances of remarrying between those with no children and those with just one or two children is quite pronounced. It is interesting to note further that a strong negative association between age at dissolution and remarriage persists within each category of number of children.

TABLE 10. PROPORTION OF WIDOWERS AND WIDOWS REMARRYING, BY AGE AT MARITAL DISSOLUTION AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN SURVIVING TO AGE FIVE, MARRIAGES ENDING 1700-1899.

Surviving Partner and Number of Children	Age at Time of Dissolution					
	Under 30	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	Total[a]
Widowers						
None	97	93	82	51	29	72
1-2	92	91	67	30	7	63
3-4	–	88	69	27	3	49
5+	–	80	57	22	4	31
Total	95	89	67	30	8	52
Widows						
None	84	72	32	11	2	31
1-2	82	58	23	4	0	34
3-4	}77	51	16	1	1	22
5+		43	16	2	0	12
Total	81	54	19	4	1	23

NOTES: Results include marriages prior to 1700 that ended after 1700 and are restricted to couples for whom both death dates are known. Results based on fewer than 20 cases are omitted.

[a]Total for widowers includes cases in which the age at dissolution is unknown; in the case of widows, age at dissolution is known for all.

While we are not controlling directly for age of children at the time of marital dissolution, presumably most if not all of the children of widowers or widows under age forty would still be in dependent ages. In contrast, most of the children of parents who became widowed after age fifty would likely be old enough to make significant contributions to the support of the surviving parent, either in terms of labor to the household if they were still living with their surviving parent or through remittances if they were old enough to leave home as a servant, in some other employed status or to set up a household of their own. We do not have any direct evidence that assistance was in fact provided, but the fact remains that such assistance would only be possible from children who had passed childhood. While the negative association between probability of remarriage and number of children holds at all ages, for both widows and widowers, it is noticeably weaker for widowers under age forty and widows under age thirty.

In Table 11, we examine the association of remarriage and number of children for different time periods. Given the importance of age at marital dissolution for the chances of remarrying and the fact that the age at marital dissolution increased over the time period being covered, we present results that are statistically adjusted for age at marital dissolution. When the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are broken into four half-century periods, in the last three a substantial negative association between number of children and chances of remarriage is evident. In contrast, for the first half of the eighteenth century, no consistent association appears. This may imply that at that time, and earlier on, having children was not a discouragement to remarriage. However, these results for the first half-century period need to be regarded with some caution since they are based on fewer cases than the subsequent half-centuries. Moreover, for each of the subsequent half-centuries, the negative association is fairly similar and there is no trend toward a strengthening relationship, as would be expected if the nature of the relationship were evolving in a linear fashion over time.

TABLE 11. PROPORTIONS OF WIDOWERS AND WIDOWS REMARRYING AMONG THOSE SURVIVING AT LEAST FIVE YEARS AFTER MARITAL DISSOLUTION, BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN SURVIVING TO AGE FIVE, ADJUSTED FOR AGE AT TIME OF DISSOLUTION.

Sex and Surviving Spouse and Number of Children	Year of Marital Dissolution			
	1700–1749	1750–1799	1800–1849	1850–1859
Widowers				
0	(.59)	.69	.62	.60
1–2	.52	.56	.50	.50
3–4	(.71)	.51	.48	.49
5+	(.67)	.48	.43	.40
Widows				
0	.31	.42	.30	.26
1–2	.43	.36	.28	.17
3–4	.30	.27	.22	.14
5+	.39	.24	.15	.13

NOTES: Results include marriages prior to 1700 that ended after 1700 and are restricted to couples for whom both death dates are known. Results in parentheses are based on fewer than 50 cases. Adjustment for age at marital dissolution was made through Multiple Classification Analysis, treating age as a covariate (in continuous form), and was done separately for men and women.

Given these various relationships between year of marital dissolution, age at marital dissolution, and number of children at the time of marital dissolution, it is useful to examine the probability of remarriage within a limited multivariate framework incorporating all three of these variables. Table 12 presents the results of a multiple classification analysis in which the probability of remarrying is related to each of these three variables adjusting for the effects of the other two. The analysis is done separately for widowers and widows. While, for each variable, the association with the probability of remarriage is reduced by statistically adjusting for the other two variables, substantial associations still persist in all three cases. Thus, the probability of remarriage declines over time even after adjusting for age at marital dissolution and number of children. The inverse association between age at marital dissolution and remarriage persists after adjustment for year of dissolution and number of children; and the inverse association between remarriage and number of children is still evident after year of dissolution and age at marital dissolution are controlled.

V. Discussion

A number of clear and interesting results have emerged from the analysis. The secular decline in probabilities of remarriage over the course of two centuries in the German villages was accompanied by an increase in the average age of both husbands and wives at the time death terminated their marriages. Since the age of

TABLE 12. UNADJUSTED AND ADJUSTED PROPORTIONS OF WIDOWERS AND WIDOWS REMARRYING, BY YEAR OF DISSOLUTION, AGE AT DISSOLUTION, AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN SURVIVING TO AGE FIVE.

	Widowers		Widows	
	Unadjusted	Adjusted	Unadjusted	Adjusted
Year of marital dissolution				
1700–1749	.73	.61	.45	.37
1750–1799	.61	.56	.35	.32
1800–1849	.49	.50	.24	.23
1850–1899	.44	.49	.11	.16
Age at marital dissolution				
Under 25	(.91)	(.79)	.90	.83
25–29	.95	.88	.78	.74
30–34	..93	.90	.65	.63
35–39	.86	.85	.43	.43
40–49	.67	.67	.19	.19
50–59	.30	.31	.04	.04
60+	.08	.10	.01	.03
Number of children surviving to 5				
0	.73	.61	.31	.31
1–2	.61	.56	.34	.25
3–4	.49	.50	.22	.21
5+	.44	.49	.12	.20

NOTES: Results include marriages prior to 1700 that ended after 1700 and are restricted to couples for whom both death dates are known. Results in parentheses are based on fewer than 50 cases. Adjustment was made through Multiple Classification Analysis, and was done separately for men and women. Adjusted results for each variable are adjusted for the other two.

entry into marriage was relatively stable, this meant that the average duration of a marital union also increased. The frequency and pace of remarriage following the death of a spouse declined substantially. Moreover, pronounced age and sex differentials in the likelihood of remarriage were evident: widows were far less likely to remarry than widowers, and the probability of remarriage declined rapidly with age, particularly for women.

The decline in remarriage probabilities was doubtless caused in part by improvements in adult mortality, which gradually raised the ages of surviving spouses to levels at which remarriage has historically been rather unlikely. However, declines in adult mortality cannot account for the substantial declines that were also evident in age-specific probabilities of remarriage.

The fact that declines in age-specific marriage probabilities affected both men and women as well as all occupational groups in our sample of German villages suggests the presence of a social change of wide scope. Previous scholars have suggested several explanations for the decline in remarriage which range from the economic to the psychological. Mitterauer and Sieder (1983:150), for example, argue that declines in remarriage are linked to aggregate trends in the European economy, particularly to the decline of the family as the primary unit of production, and the advent of capitalist economies. Their analysis is based on the idea that the preindustrial, rural household was one in which the entire family formed an integral economic unit of production, and as such required that the two central adult roles, one male and one female, be filled (Mitterauer and Sieder, 1982; Sieder and Mitterauer, 1983). When the unit was broken, it was difficult for the surviving spouse to continue operations effectively, especially if he or she was left with small children. Often, they hypothesize, the most realistic alternative under such circumstances was prompt remarriage.

They further argue that the pressure to remarry for both widows and widowers subsided as a "consequence of the decrease in the social and economic importance of filling the central positions in the family, which has allowed for a greater number of 'incomplete' families" (Mitterauer and Sieder, 1983:150). Widow- and widower-headed families became more viable as the larger European economy changed from one based on domestic production to a more capitalistic economy based on larger units of production.

According to Mitterauer and Sieder's view, the pressure to remarry would have weighed most heavily on widows and widowers with children, especially small children. Interestingly, however, data from the German villages indicate a clear inverse association between the number of children and the chances of remarriage for both widows and widowers. Thus, those widowed persons who would appear in most need of a new spouse were precisely those least likely to remarry (see also Schofield and Wrigley, 1981:218–219). Data on remarriage by number of children suggest that understanding the possible economic or social *pressures* to remarry provides only a partial explanation of the decline in remarriage.

Though family reconstitution data do not permit an assessment of the population at risk to marry, changes in the structure of local marriage markets over two centuries may well have played a part in reducing the likelihood of remarriage, given prevailing marriage customs. A number of studies have shown that the new spouses of both widows and widowers were typically bachelors and spinsters. In fact, as we have demonstrated, there was an increase over time in

the proportion of remarriages that allied widows and widowers to never-married persons. This trend may, of course, have been the simple result of the fact that there was a greater proportion of single than previously married people in the marriage "market." However, the fact that widowed persons with few children were also most likely to remarry even after age is controlled suggests that these two phenomena—the marriageability of both single persons and widows and widowers with few children—may be related. As Bideau (1980:39) has argued, both single people and widows or widowers with few children may have been sought out as partners for remarriage because of the difficulties of integrating two sets of children into one household. Furthermore, there could also be difficulties in resolving complex questions of inheritance among different sets of children.

If our assessment of the importance of never-married people (or those with no or few children) as the most frequent remarriage partners of widows or widowers is correct, then a decline in the availability of single people or those with few children would, all else being equal, reduce the probabilities of remarriage for widows and widowers. In fact, there is some evidence from the village genealogies that emigration from the countryside may have reduced the number of single persons of both sexes from rural marriage markets, particularly in the course of the nineteenth century (Knodel, forthcoming).

The effects of the lower availability of single persons may also have been exacerbated by a growing reluctance on their part to marry widows or widowers, particularly those much older than themselves. A possible growth of sentiment in marriage and a rise in the ideal of a companionate marriage, as hypothesized by some scholars, may gradually have reduced the desire of young, single people to enter into marriage with a widow or a widower. It is noteworthy that analysis of the age gap between spouses in the sample of villages shows a considerable reduction in the proportion of marriages in which spouses were of sharply disparate ages (Knodel, forthcoming).

Mitterauer and Sieder (1983:62), as well as Jean-Louis Flandrin (1979:115) have argued that the historic growth of stronger affective bonds between husbands and wives over the course of marriages that were themselves of longer duration contributed to the decline of remarriage and to the growth of intervals between widowhood and remarriage for both men and women. However, the growth in marriage duration over the entire period under study was rather modest for our sample village populations.

In populations where high rates of death or divorce lead to the frequent dissolution of marriage before the end of the reproductive span, remarried persons have the potential to contribute measurably to the overall level of fertility and therefore to have a noticeable, if not large, demographic impact (Coale, 1981). Given the fact that remarriage in our sample villages during most of the period under observation was relatively common for women under age forty, the extent to which marital dissolution through the early death of a husband reduced the reproductive capacity of the population was considerably mediated, at least until the late nineteenth century. At the same time, the low probabilities of remarriage for women forty or over had little or no impact on reproduction because such women were either already terminally sterile or past their most fecund years.

The reasons underlying the widely documented, sharp differences between widows and widowers in probabilities of

remarriage clearly merit further exploration. If it is true that a substantial sexual division of labor and the typical economic functioning of rural couples during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries required both a man and a woman to function efficiently, one might expect that women would be under the same pressures to remarry as men (Baulant, 1976; Kennedy, 1973). It may have been easier for women to take on the male tasks for themselves than for men to take on female tasks (Segalen, 1981:69). Segalen has also suggested that the cultural association between marriage and childbearing may have reduced the likelihood of remarriage for women past the childbearing age (1981:68). Nevertheless, this argument would not explain the significant decline in remarriage probabilities for women between ages 30 and 39, unless nascent fertility control was already lowering women's and men's idea of the proper age for women to end childbearing (see Knodel, 1983).

The phenomenon whose explanation presents the greatest challenge, however, is the secular decline in remarriage itself. Although there is reason to believe that the decline was larger than a purely rural phenomenon, the continuous decline of remarriage probabilities there seems most puzzling, given the longer persistence of domestic systems of production. In particular, we might expect that peasants and artisans were groups within which the family functioned more and longer as a productive unit in comparison to proletarians. Yet there is little difference in the levels of remarriage of these two groups. Given the fact that the changing nature of the economy must have affected occupational groups differently, their similar patterns of decline in the probabilities of remarriage lead us to believe that more than just economic changes lay behind these trends. As our discussion has

suggested, future analyses of this important subject should take into consideration not only pressures to remarry, but changes in the structure of local marriage markets and the values and attitudes towards marriage of single and previously married people.

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