

ONE LAST LOOK
FREDERICK DOUGLASS

What's Love Got to do With it?

Analyzing the Attitudes of Black College Students
on Marriage and How They Affect African
American Marriage Rates

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Introduction

- **Marriage decline in U.S. over the last 50 years**
- **Severity of decline in African American Community**
 - In 1950 marriage rates among African Americans fell almost three times behind those of Caucasians (Besharov, 2004)
- **Why is it so?**

Reasons for the Decline

- Government financial aid
- Family background
- “Marriageability” among Black men
- Unbalanced college population
 - Disproportionate marriage markets

??Question??

“Do the attitude, views, and perceptions that African American college students hold for marriage and family actively affect marriage rates in the Black community?”

Methodology

- Sample= Class of 16 African American College Students
- Enrolled in Marriage and Family Summer Course (2003) at Morris College in Sumter, SC
- Survey taken before and after course was completed
- Nine Questions taken from the survey for analytical review

List of Questions

- 1) Do you believe in roles within marriage? Please explain.**
- 2) In your opinion is there a problem with marriages in the United States? Explain.**
- 3) Is the idea of marriage outdated? Explain.**
- 4) Do you want to be married? Why or why not.**
- 5) Do you believe in cohabitation? Why or why not.**
- 6) Do you believe people should live together before getting married?**
- 7) In your opinion why do marriages fail?**
- 8) Why is there such a high divorce rate in the U.S.?**
- 9) Should couples divorce if they are not happy? Explain.**

Results

Question A: "In your opinion is there a problem with marriages in the United States? Explain."

Before: 87.5%=Yes

Explanations: Wrong reasons, Not taken serious, Communication, Trust, Lost Values, Easy divorce

After: 100%=Yes

Explanations: Commitment, Not taken serious, Changing values, Easy divorce

*How did the class come to this conclusion?

Results

Question B: “Do you want to be married? Why or why not.”

Before: 81.3%=Yes

Explanation: Life partner, To enjoy marriage, Fear of loneliness

After: 62.5%=Yes

Explanations: Life partner, To enjoy marriage, Fear of loneliness, Model after parents

*Why don't we want to marry anymore?

Results

Question C: “Do you believe in cohabitation? Why or why not.”

Before: 37.5%=Yes

Explanations: To learn about mate, Indicates unconditional love

After: 56.3%=Yes

Explanations: To learn about mate, Don't want to be married or alone,
Short term, Learn process before marriage

*Why did the opinions shift?

Results

Question D: “Should couples divorce if they are not happy. Explain”

Before: 43.8%=Yes

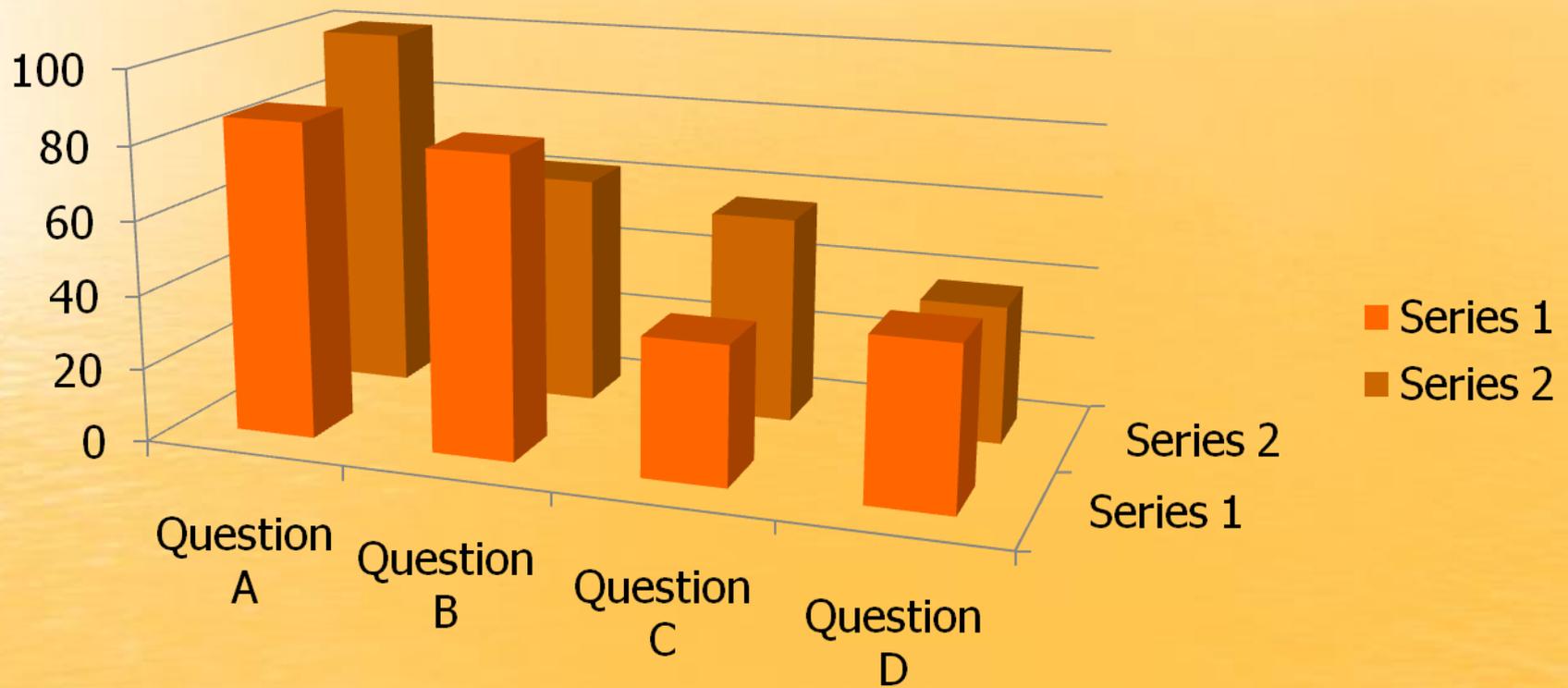
Explanations: Find happiness elsewhere, As a last resort, Alleviate emotional pain

After: 37.5%=Yes

Explanations: Find happiness elsewhere, Avoid latent mistakes, Avoid wasting time

*56.3% of the sample said no both before and after the course and unanimously agreed that couples should work out their problems

Review and Comparison



Summary

- More people did not want to marry and were in favor of cohabitation after the study than before
- More than half the sample disapproved of divorce both before and after the course was completed

What does it all mean?

- College students don't get married because the idea of cohabitation is becoming more and more acceptable
- College students are wising up to the amount of discipline and hard work it takes to maintain a successful marriage

Other areas to investigate

- Age
- Family background (intensely)
- Ethnicity
- Region/Location

Thank You!

