Chapter 4

Marital status among transgender individuals in the US

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Marriage is a complex, historically dynamic institution and, like gender transition, an instantiation of human agency within structure (Settersten & Gannon, 2005). In its relatively modern, Western form, based primarily on ideologies of romantic love, heteronormativity, and culturally scripted choice (Martin & Kazyak, 2009; Swidler, 2001), marriage represents a social accomplishment achieved by individuals in the context of constraining normative and legal regulations. The social processes leading to a given current marital status – married, separated, divorced, widowed, never married – among transgender individuals are both similar to, and sometimes overlapping with, but also qualitatively different from those operating among cisgender individuals (see Chapter 8). They are also different from the social processes leading to partnership.

With the legalization of same-sex marriage, it has become possible for transgender individuals to marry whomever they choose. As such, they may marry an individual who self-defines and/or is defined by the state as "same sex" or "different sex," which may differ from the sex that was assigned to them at birth as a result of medical and/or legal processes. Prior to marriage equality, marriages involving transgender individuals were almost always achieved under laws and regulations that allowed only different-sex individuals – a cisgender man and a cisgender woman, based on sex assigned at birth as indicated on a birth certificate or another official document – to marry. In such circumstances, transgender identity and expression emerged and/or evolved during the marriage or after its termination. Sometimes issues related to gender identity and expression contributed to marital disruption and the achievement of a separated or divorced marital status. In fact, in their review article on the demographics of the transgender population, Meier and Labuski (2013, p. 315) disturbingly note that "researchers have been openly shocked that cisgender people would want to form or continue meaningful romantic and sexual relationships with trans people," and suggest that, historically, some people treated at gender clinics were encouraged to divorce prior to starting their gender transition. However, despite such bias and discrimination, many transgender individuals continue marriages

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contracted prior to their gender transition. Some ultimately divorce and remarry/re-partner, as do others who form new marriages/partnerships during or after gender transition (Boyd, 2007; Brown 2009; see Chapter 8).

To date, there has been relatively little research on the achievement of marital status and its consequences among transgender individuals (for an exception, see Liu & Wilkinson, 2017). Some studies of transgender individuals that are based on non-representative samples do not even include marital status as a sociodemographic variable of interest (e.g., Bradford, Reisner, Honnold, & Xavier, 2013; Meier, Pardo, Labuski, & Babcock, 2013), while others report limited information on marital status. For example, Bockting et al. (2013) use data from a sample of 1,093 male-to-female (MtF) and female-to-male (FtM) transgender people recruited online in 2003 and report in their sample description that 63.8% were never married, 19.7% were married or in a civil union, and 16.5% were previously married (separated, divorced, or widowed). These researchers also report significant differences by gender, with much higher rates of marriage/civil union and previous marriage among transgender women than among transgender men. Based on their non-representative sample, they report that 46.7% of transgender women and 87.0% of transgender men were single, never married (Bockting et al., 2013).

Until recently, relatively few population-representative studies have measured gender identity in any way and thereby allowed for the analysis of the experiences of transgender individuals (for an early exception, see the 2009–2010 National Adult Tobacco Survey, which included transgender as one of the response options in its sexual orientation question; https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/surveys/nats/pdfs/2009-2010-questionnaire.pdf). Existing population-representative studies draw on available data, primarily Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data, for a variety of purposes, but still provide limited information on the marital status of transgender individuals or how it varies within the population. Meyer et al. (2017) use 2014 BRFSS data and report no statistically significant difference in the marital status distributions of transgender and cisgender adults. The evidence presented in that study and other studies that use BRFSS data indicates that the prevalence of current and prior marriage among transgender people is actually quite high. For example, Lagos (2018) use 2014–2016 BRFSS data to study gender identity and health disparities, and report the following: 43.56% of transgender men, 52.71% of transgender women, and 44.48% of gender non-conforming individuals were currently married/partnered; 22.12% of transgender men, 18.15% of transgender women, and 17.22% of gender non-conforming individuals were ever-married (defined as currently separated, divorced, or widowed); and 34.12% of transgender men, 29.14% of transgender women, and 38.30% of gender non-conforming individuals were never married. In a study focused on gender identity and cardiovascular disease risk among adults, Caceres, Jackman, Edmondson,

& Bockting (2020) use 2014–2017 BRFSS data and document statistically significant gender identity-subgroup differences in marital status in a descriptive demographic characteristics table. However, they provide no further analysis of those differences. Other than in the notes to the table, the only discussion of the marital status estimates Caceres et al. (2020) present in the text reinforces the notion that transgender people are less likely to marry than cisgender people: "In addition, transgender men and gender nonconforming participants were more likely to have never married relative to cisgender participants" (p. 332).

Partly due to data limitations, we have only begun to develop rudimentary answers to simple questions regarding marital/partnership status among transgender individuals. These basic questions include: (1) What percentage of transgender individuals are in particular current marital and partnership statuses? (2) Do marital/partnership status distributions vary by gender-identity subgroup? and (3) What factors are associated with being in particular marital/partnership statuses among transgender individuals overall and by gender-identity subgroup? In this chapter, I address these questions using population-representative data from selected states that fielded the optional Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity module as part of their 2014–2019 BRFSS data collection efforts. Although the primary focus of this volume is same-sex marriage, it should be noted here at the outset that due to data limitations (e.g., a lack of information on sex assigned at birth and current sex for spouses/partners), many of the marriages captured in the results below are likely not same-sex marriages. Transgender people can and do marry individuals whose sex and/or gender are similar to and/or different from their own, but BRFSS data do not allow us to know this. As such, the results presented in this chapter cast light on marital/partnership status within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community and within and among transgender subgroups, but they should not be read as providing evidence about same-sex marriage per se.

Methods

For the analyses presented in this chapter, I use public-use data from the 2014–2019 BRFSS (https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/index.html). The BRFSS is an annual telephone (landline and cell phone) survey of all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. In each location, a standard core survey is fielded, and the core survey can be supplemented with one or more optional topic modules. Over the period from 2014 to 2019, 39 states and Guam included the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity module at least once, and most included it in three or more years. Although 11 states did not include this module, those that did represent a broad cross-section of states from every region of the country (e.g., Midwest, South), and include states with social and legal environments that are relatively inclusive and supportive

of transgender individuals (e.g., California, New York, Massachusetts), as well as those that are not (e.g., Kansas, Idaho, Texas).

The Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity module measures transgender identity with a series of questions that include skip patterns and explicit instructions for interviewers. Participants are first asked: "Do you consider yourself to be transgender?" If the participant answers "no," then that answer is recorded and the interviewer is instructed to move on. If the participant answers "yes," then interviewers are instructed to ask a follow-up question. Interviewers are further instructed about how to ask that question. Specifically, they are guided to read the three "yes" response options verbatim, including the number, so that the participant can respond with either the number or the text/words. The question asks: "Do you consider yourself to be 1. Yes, Transgender, male-to-female, 2. Yes, Transgender, female-to-male, 3. Yes, Transgender, gender non-conforming." The interview guide also includes guidance on what interviewers should say if participants have specific questions. Interviewers are instructed to answer a question about the definition of transgender by stating:

> Some people describe themselves as transgender when they experience a different gender identity from their sex at birth. For example, a person born into a male body, but who feels female or lives as a woman would be transgender. Some transgender people change their physical appearance so that it matches their internal gender identity. Some transgender people take hormones and some have surgery. A transgender person may be of any sexual orientation, straight, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

If a participant asks about the definition of gender non-conforming, the interviewer is instructed to say:

> Some people think of themselves as gender non-conforming when they do not identify only as a man or only as a woman.

For the analyses presented in this chapter, I limit the sample to those who answered "yes" to the first question above (unweighted $N = 5{,}056$). I also use the information obtained from the follow-up question noted above to identify gender-identity subgroups within the sample of transgender persons – MtF, FtM, and gender non-conforming, which I refer to as "non-binary" in the remainder of this chapter. I treat this gender-identity subgroup variable as the focal independent variable in the analyses that follow.

The focal dependent variable of interest is current marital/partnership status. In the core interview, participants are asked if they are married, divorced, widowed, separated, never married, or a member of an unmarried couple. Although the focus of this chapter is marital status, I retain the partnered in the analysis and treat them as distinct from the currently

married, which is different than what is done in some other studies. In part, I did this because this edited volume focuses specifically on marriage. I also did this because the processes leading to marriage, and the effects of marriage, are quite distinct from those associated with even highly committed non-marital relationships. The divorced and separated are combined into one category because the separated category is small and preliminary analyses indicated that keeping them as a distinct category yielded no additional substantive insight. The widowed is also a small group, but I kept that category distinct because doing so yielded additional substantive insight.

I include a range of sociodemographic variables in the analysis (see Table 4.1 for details). When possible, I use BRFSS-provided variables. Some of these (e.g., age) include imputations. The sociodemographic variables I use in the analysis include age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, education, employment, veteran status, income, and whether there is at least one child present in the household. In the multivariate multinomial logistic regression analysis, I include as control variables state of residence and year of interview (ranging from 2014 to 2020, since some 2019 BRFSS interviews were completed in 2020).

I excluded from the analytic sample a small number of participants with missing data on one or more variable ($N = 261$). For some control variables, don't know/not sure and refused responses are retained as an analytic category. Because of the large number of participants with missing data on income, I include a "missing" category for income. All analyses are conducted on the same analytic sample ($N = 4{,}795$). All analyses are conducted using Stata 14.1. All analyses are weighted, and standard errors are adjusted for the complex sample design.

Results

Current marital status

Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of current marital/partnership statuses among transgender-identified individuals overall and by gender-identity subgroup. Overall, 37.5% are currently married, 13.2% are separated/divorced, 6.2% are widowed, and 36.2% are never married. Almost 7% report being currently partnered. For these individuals, in the absence of marital histories, it is impossible to know if they were previously married or have never married. Similarly, some individuals in each of the current marital statuses except the never married category may have been in one, or more than one, prior marriage. Again, the lack of information on marital histories is one of the key limitations of using BRFSS data to study the achievement of marital status among transgender individuals. Overall, summing the percentage currently married, separated/divorced, and widowed, at least 56.9%, and

Table 4.1 Population Description, Transgender-Identified Individuals, Overall and by Subgroup

	Total	*MtF*	*FtM*	*Non-binary*	*p*
	%	%	%	%	
Transgender identity					
MtF	45.2	100	---	---	
FtM	32.0	---	100	---	
Non-binary	22.8	---	---	100	
Age					
18–24 years	24.2	19.9	24.1	32.6	***
23–34 years	17.6	14.0	17.7	24.6	
35–44 years	14.0	14.7	16.1	9.6	
44–54 years	14.0	16.8	14.5	7.5	
55–64 years	14.9	18.2	11.2	13.8	
65 years or more	15.4	16.4	16.5	11.9	
Race/ethnicity					
White, non-Hispanic	56.0	55.9	58.3	53.0	
Black, non-Hispanic	14.3	13.7	15.2	14.2	
Other race, non-Hispanic	7.5	9.0	5.9	7.0	
Multiracial, non-Hispanic	1.9	1.7	1.4	3.1	
Hispanic, all races	20.2	19.7	19.2	22.7	
Sexual orientation					
Heterosexual/straight	58.1	62.0	64.1	41.9	***
Lesbian/gay	9.2	8.8	8.3	11.3	
Bisexual	17.7	14.9	16.7	24.5	
Something else	10.5	8.4	7.5	18.9	
Don't know/not sure/refused	4.6	6.0	3.4	3.4	
Education					
Less than high school	23.3	26.5	21.6	19.3	*
High school graduate	33.1	34.2	34.7	28.6	
Some college	28.6	25.5	29.3	33.7	
Graduated college	15.1	13.9	14.6	18.4	
Employment status					
Employed	50.9	52.5	51.2	47.4	*
Unemployed	8.5	10.3	6.0	8.5	
Not in labor force	28.2	24.2	31.3	31.9	
Unable to work	12.4	13.1	11.6	12.2	
Veteran status					
Yes	10.8	14.0	6.9	10.0	***
No	89.2	86.0	93.1	90.0	
Income					
Less than $15,000	15.7	17.5	14.5	14.0	
$15,000–$24,999	20.1	20.8	19.2	19.9	
$25,000–$34,999	10.6	9.7	11.8	10.9	
$35,000–$49,999	8.3	9.0	8.1	7.3	
$50,000 or more	29.4	27.9	29.4	32.3	
Missing	15.9	15.2	17.0	15.7	
Child in household					
Yes	31.0	26.2	38.6	30.1	***
No	69.0	73.9	61.4	69.9	

Notes

* = p<.05; *** = p<0.001

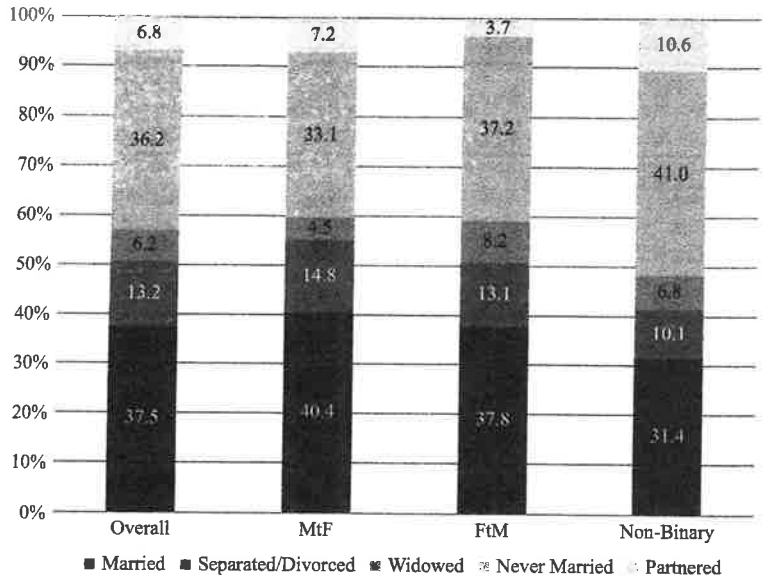

Figure 4.1 Current Marital/Partnership Status Distribution Among Transgender-Identified Individuals, Overall and by Subgroup

possibly as many as 63.7% (depending on the prior marital status of the currently partnered), of transgender-identified persons have been married at least once.

The association between transgender-identity subgroup and current marital/partnership status is statistically significant ($p < .001$). However, it is notable that the current marital/partnership status distributions of the MtF and FtM subgroups are very similar to one another and the overall distribution. In each of those gender-identity subgroups, about 60% have been married at least once (and maybe more depending on the marital history of the currently partnered group) and about one-third have never married. Small differences are apparent, but they are on the order of a few percentage points or less. By contrast, the current marital/partnership status distribution of the non-binary subgroup is distinct from the overall pattern and that of the other two gender-identity subgroups. The non-binary group has the lowest percentage currently married (31.4%) and separated/divorced (10.1%), and the highest percentage never married (41.0%) and currently partnered (10.6%). Overall, summing the currently married, separated/divorced, and widowed, at least 48.3% of the non-binary group (and maybe more depending on the marital history of the currently partnered group) have been married at least once (compared to about 60% of the other two subgroups).

Population and subgroup characteristics

The similarities and differences in the marital/partnership status distributions across the subgroups of transgender-identified people may in part reflect differences in their sociodemographic characteristics. Table 4.1 presents a description of the population represented by the BRFSS sample of transgender-identified people overall and by gender-identity subgroup.

Overall, 45.2% identify as MtF, 32.0% identify as FtM, and 22.8% identify as non-binary. The modal age category is 18–24 years old (24.2%), which is a young group that has had limited opportunity to marry. However, the population includes persons of all ages. Each of the other age categories includes 14.0%–17.6% of the population. Fifty-six percent identify as White, non-Hispanic, 14.3% identify as Black, non-Hispanic, and 20.2% identify as Hispanic (all races combined). About 58% identify as heterosexual, and 17.7% identify as bisexual. About equal percentages identify as lesbian/gay (9.2%) or something else (10.5%). More than half have a high school education or less. Just over half are employed, while 28.2% report themselves to be out of the labor force and 12.4% report themselves to be unable to work. Approximately 11% are veterans. The modal income category is $50,000 or more (29.4%); however, it is noteworthy that 35.8% report incomes below $24,999. Approximately one-third have at least one child living in their household.

As seen in Table 4.1, each of the sociodemographic variables except race/ethnicity and income varies significantly in relation to the gender-identity subgroups. Notably, MtF-identified individuals tend to be older than the other two subgroups, while non-binary-identified individuals tend to be younger than the other two. Specifically, 34.6% of the MtF-identified subgroup is 55 years or older, compared to 27.7% of the FtM-identified subgroup and 25.7% of the non-binary-identified subgroup. Conversely, 57.2% of the non-binary-identified subgroup is between the ages of 18 and 34 years, compared to 41.8% of the FtM-identified subgroup and 33.9% of the MtF-identified subgroup.

With respect to sexual orientation, non-binary-identified individuals are much less likely than the other two subgroups to identify as heterosexual: 41.9% versus 62.0% for MtF- and 64.1% of FtM-identified individuals. Non-binary-identified individuals are more likely to identify as bisexual (24.5% compared to 14.9% for MtF- and 16.7% for FtM-identified persons) and something else (18.9% compared to 8.4% and 7.5%, respectively, for the other two subgroups).

With respect to socioeconomic indicators, non-binary-identified individuals are the most highly educated, even though they are the youngest. More than half of them have some college or more, compared to 39.4% of the MtF- and 43.9% of the FtM-identified. Slightly more than half of MtF- and FtM-identified individuals are working (52.5% and 51.2%, respectively).

While 11.6%–13.1% of each subgroup is unable to work, more non-binary- and FtM-identified individuals report being out of the labor force (31.3% and 31.9%, respectively) than MtF-identified individuals (24.2%). This may be because more non-binary- and FtM-identified individuals are students. A higher percentage of MtF-identified people are veterans (14.0%) than is the case for FtM- (6.9%) and non-binary-identified people (10.0%). As noted above, there is no significant variation in income across gender-identity subgroups.

Compared to the other two subgroups, FtM-identified individuals are more likely to have at least one child in the household than the other two subgroups. Specifically, 38.6% have a child in the household, compared to 26.2% of MtF- and 30.1% of non-binary-identified individuals.

Multinomial logistic regression analysis of marital/partnership status

Table 4.2 presents the results from a multinomial logistic regression analysis of the influence of transgender identity and sociodemographic factors on marital/partnership status. Never married is the reference category to which all other marital/partnership statuses are compared. A statistically significant positive coefficient (b) indicates that the specific category of the gender-identity subgroup variable or the sociodemographic variable increases the log odds of being in that marital/partnership status (as opposed to the never married category) relative to the omitted category of the gender-identity subgroup or sociodemographic variable. A significant negative coefficient indicates the opposite (i.e., a reduction in the log odds of being in that marital/partnership category relative to being never married). Estimates of association in the log odds scale are additive and can be converted into relative risk ratios by exponentiating the coefficient.

Focusing first on being currently married relative to being never married, there is no significant variation by gender-identity subgroup. However, each of the other variables is significantly associated with being currently married. Specifically, there is a clear and expected age pattern; compared to 18–24 year old persons (the omitted group), each older age group is significantly more likely to be currently married, and the size of the influence gets larger with increasing age. Non-Hispanic Blacks are significantly less likely than non-Hispanic Whites to be currently married. There is also a significant association with sexual orientation, which is consistent with prior research. Compared to heterosexually identified individuals, those identified as lesbian/gay, bisexual, or something else, respectively, have significantly lower log odds of being currently married than being never married. There are numerous associations with the socioeconomic indicators, as well. Compared to those with less than a high school education, the log odds of being currently married are significantly lower for those who graduated

Table 4.2 Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis of Marital/Partnership Status by Transgender Identity and Sociodemographic Characteristics

	Married	*p*	*Partnered*	*p*	*Separated/ Divorced*	*p*	*Widowed*	*p*
Variable (Reference)	*b*		*B*		*b*		*b*	
Transgender identity (MtF)								
FtM	−.08		−.89	**	−.03		.72	**
Non-binary	.09		.01		−.10		.61	*
Age (18–24 years)								
23–34 years	1.38	***	−.12		2.11	***	.93	
35–44 years	2.06	***	.11		2.74	***	1.60	**
44–54 years	3.40	***	−.24		4.29	***	3.53	***
55–64 years	4.19	***	.16		4.97	***	4.81	***
65 years or more	4.87	***	−1.29	*	5.47	***	6.59	***
Race/ethnicity (White, non-Hispanic)								
Black, non-Hispanic	−.72	*	−.71		−.29		−.30	
Other race, non-Hispanic	.46		−.28		−.54		.36	
Multiracial, non-Hispanic	.42		.30		.46		−.38	
Hispanic, all races	−.19		.51		.33		.92	**
Sexual orientation (Heterosexual/straight)								
Lesbian/gay	−1.17	***	.04		−.71		−.81	
Bisexual	−1.17	***	.55		.01		−.27	
Something else	−.76	**	.04		−.14		.19	
Don't know, etc.	−.23		.86		−.72		−1.73	**
Education (Less than high school)								
High school graduate	−.97	***	−.34		−.40		−.73	*
Some college	−.73	*	.60		−.36		−.77	*
Graduated college	−.68	*	−.04		−.25		−.65	
Employment status (Employed)								
Unemployed	−.53		−.04		−.70	*	−.34	
Not in labor force	−.18		−.84	**	−.71	**	−.26	
Unable to work	−.86	**	−.24		−.11		−.63	
Veteran status (No)								
Yes	.79	**	−1.16		.27		.91	*
Income (Less than $15,000)								
$15,000–$24,999	.33		.06		−.34		.12	
$25,000–$34,999	.75	*	.34		−.45		−.25	
$35,000–$49,999	.93	*	−.71		−.32		−.58	
$50,000 or more	1.94	***	.26		−.36		−.76	
Missing	.00		−.06		−1.12	**	−.95	**
Child in household (No)								
Yes	2.06	***	.29		1.08	***	1.91	***

Note

* = $p < .05$; ** = $p < 0.01$; *** = $p < 0.001$.

high school, had some college education, and had graduated from college, respectively. Compared to individuals who are employed, the log odds of being currently married are significantly lower among persons who are unable to work. The log odds of being currently married are significantly higher among veterans than nonveterans. They are also significantly higher among individuals with higher incomes ($25,000–$34,999, $35,000–$49,999, and $50,000 or more, respectively) than those with an income less than $15,000. Finally, the log odds of being currently married are significantly higher among individuals who have at least one child in the household than among those who do not.

Influences of the transgender identity and sociodemographic variables on other marital/partnership statuses (relative to being never married) are fewer and vary across marital/partnership statuses. This may in part be because these are less frequently occurring statuses, which increases the degree of error in the estimation and makes it harder to obtain statistical significance.

Focusing next on partnership, only three variables have statistically significant associations: gender-identity subgroup, age, and employment status. Specifically, the log odds of being partnered, as opposed to never married, are significantly lower for FtM- than MtF-identified individuals. Compared to the youngest age group (18–24 years), the log odds of being partnered are significantly lower for those aged 65 years or more. The log odds of being partnered are also significantly lower among those not in the labor force than they are among the employed.

Focusing next on the separated/divorced, four variables have statistically significant associations: age, employment status, income, and having at least one child in the household. Similar to the pattern for marriage, the log odds of being separated/divorced, as opposed to never married, increase significantly with age. They are also significantly lower among those who are unemployed and not in the labor force, respectively, compared to the employed, and among those for whom income is categorized as missing relative to those with incomes less the $15,000. Finally, the log odds of being separated/divorced are significantly higher among people with at least one child in the household than among those with no child in the household.

Finally, focusing on the widowed, eight variables have significant associations. Specifically, even though they tend to be younger, the log odds of being widowed, as opposed to never married, are significantly higher among FtM- and non-binary-identified individuals, respectively, than among MtF-identified individuals. As is the case with being married and separated/divorced, respectively, older age (exposure) is significantly associated with an increase in the log odds of being widowed as opposed to never married. The log odds of widowhood are significantly higher for Hispanic individuals (all races combined) than non-Hispanic individuals. For both sexual orientation and income, the log odds of being widowed rather than never married are significantly lower among participants who "refused" to answer or had missing information than among the omitted groups (the heterosexually identified and persons with incomes less than $15,000, respectively). The log odds of being widowed are significantly lower among those who graduated high school and had some college educational attainment, respectively, than among those with less than high school education. The log odds of widowhood are significantly higher among veterans than nonveterans, and among those with at least one child in the household than among those without a child in the household.

Although not shown in Table 4.2, the models include controls for survey year and state of residence. It is noteworthy that, across the set of marital/partnership status equations, there is a limited amount of statistically significant variation by year and a substantial amount of variation by state of residence.

Discussion

The descriptive, population-representative results presented in this chapter make several key contributions to the existing social science research on transgender marriage. First, because they are based on BRFSS data through 2019, the estimates presented in this chapter update results from other BRFSS studies that have described the marital status of transgender individuals (Caceres et al., 2020; Lagos, 2018; Meyer et al., 2017). While not nationally representative, the inclusion of additional years of BRFSS data increases the sample size and the population covered to the extent that new states are added. Results presented in this chapter differ somewhat from prior studies that combined the currently married and partnered together into one category (Caceres et al., 2020; Lagos, 2018). While that is a reasonable choice in some contexts, I chose to keep the currently married separate from the currently partnered given the focus of this edited volume and because the social and legal processes organizing marriage and partnering are so different. Thus, the estimates of the percent of transgender individuals who currently married overall and by gender-identity subgroup that are presented in this chapter are somewhat lower than the estimates presented in some previous BRFSS studies.

Second, one of the primary contributions of this chapter is that it focuses attention on the fact that overall, and within each gender-identity subgroup, about half or more of transgender individuals have been or are currently married. Many classified as never married are quite young and will eventually marry. Prior research has tended to focus attention on the somewhat higher rate of non-marriage in this population than in the cisgender population (Caceres et al., 2020) or to let data presented in a descriptive table suggest as much (Lagos, 2018). While these empirical estimates are worthy of careful consideration and important as a possible indication of the discrimination

and stigma transgender individuals experience in forming romantic relationships and marrying, the tendency to focus on non-marriage or to allow evidence of non-marriage to go without a qualifying comment shifts attention away from the high level of participation in marriage by transgender individuals. Overall, as documented in this study, 56.9% of transgender individuals were or had been married (i.e., currently married, separated/divorced, widowed combined) at some point in their lives. The percentage ever-married among the MtF- and FtM-identified subgroups was 59.7% and 59.1% respectively. Although lower, almost half of the non-binary-identified subgroup was also ever-married (48.3%). In the MtF- and FtM-identified subgroups, currently married is the modal category in the marital status distribution. In the non-binary-identified subgroup, currently married is second to never married (31.4% versus 41.0%). However, it is important to note that the non-binary subgroup is substantially younger than the other subgroups and that many non-binary-identified individuals have had less opportunity to marry. Focusing more attention on the high levels of marriage among transgender individuals opens up a range of questions that are worthy of systematic attention by researchers.

Third, although some prior non-representative (Bockting et al., 2013) and population-representative (Caceres et al., 2020) studies have described marital status distributions among subgroups of the transgender population, a contribution of this chapter is its systematic focus on gender-identity subgroups specifically, as well as the overall transgender population. Results indicate that the MtF- and FtM-identified subgroups have similar marital status distributions. The non-binary-identified subgroup is less likely than the other two subgroups to be married or previously married, and more likely to be never married or partnered, respectively. However, the sociodemographic characteristics of these subgroups explain much of the variation apparent in bivariate analyses. In multivariate analyses, there is relatively little evidence of gender-identity subgroup differences in marital/partnership status. After controlling for other sociodemographic variables, the only statistically significant differences are that FtM-identified persons are less likely than MtF-identified persons to be partnered and that FTM- and non-binary-identified persons, respectively, are more likely than MtF-identified persons to be widowed. These associations between gender-identity subgroup and widowhood were unexpected and suggest the need for additional research to explore how widowhood intersects with FtM and non-binary gender identities.

A final contribution of this chapter is its focus on the characteristics that are associated with being in a particular marital status overall and among gender-identity subgroups. The results indicate substantial influence by sociodemographic characteristics and point to various social structural influences on marriage among transgender individuals that are similar to those operating among cisgender individuals. For each of the marital statuses, but not for partnership, age is strongly associated with an increased likelihood of being in that status rather than never married. This suggests that increased, age-related exposure to the social, cultural, and economic influences on marriage, separation/divorce, and widowhood over the life course is associated with an increased chance of achieving these statuses. This association also likely reflects the fact that older people are from cohorts in which marriage was more universal than it is among more-recent cohorts. The same age pattern is not observed for partnership, although older transgender individuals (age 65+) are less likely than younger transgender individuals to be partnered. Consistent with prior research on the lower rates of marriage among Blacks than Whites (Raley, Sweeney, & Wondra, 2015), I find that non-Hispanic Black transgender individuals are significantly less likely than those who are non-Hispanic White to be currently married. Also, consistent with prior research showing that entry into a first different-sex marriage is significantly lower among individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (London & Hoy, 2021), results of this study indicate that transgender individuals who identify as lesbian/gay, bisexual, or something else, respectively, are significantly less like than those who identify as heterosexual to be currently married. The influence of socioeconomic status variables on the marital status of transgender individuals is variable. Higher education reduces the likelihood of being currently married, while higher income increases the likelihood. Transgender individuals who are unable to work are less likely to be currently married than those who are employed, while those who are not in the labor force are less likely to be partnered or separated/divorced and those who are unemployed are less likely to be separated/divorced. Veterans are both more likely to be currently married and widowed, which is consistent with prior research that documents how military service is associated with marriage and family formation (Burland & Lundquist, 2013). Individuals with at least one child are more likely to be currently married or widowed, and less likely to be separated/divorced. These patterns, including both the ways they are similar to and different from patterns observed in the cisgender population, merit additional research attention to understand their causes and consequences.

The results reported in this chapter are limited in many ways. Because they are based on cross-sectional data and do not include information on status changes over time, it is not possible to determine if currently married individuals are in first or higher-order marriages, or how many prior marriages previously married (separated/divorced and widowed) and partnered individuals have had. It would be informative to have marital history data in data sets that contain measures of gender identity and expression, and to obtain information related to the timing and sequencing of marriages in relation to gender transition and transition-related experiences. Additionally, in order to inform discussions of same-sex marriage, we need

information on sex assignment at birth and current sex for both spouses. In the absence of such information, the results presented in this chapter do relatively little to inform our understanding of the nexus between transgender identity and same-sex marriage. Although they do paint a picture of marriage among one sub-group within the larger LGBT community, they do not reveal much about same-sex marriage specifically, as it is unclear from the available data how many of these marriages are "same-sex" or "different-sex." Indeed, expanding our focus beyond cisgender individuals throws into sharp relief the limits of the categories "same-sex" and "different-sex" when researching and discussing marriage (see also Chapters 2 and 8). There is considerable complexity in marriages involving transgender individuals and their partners that cannot be easily reduced and categorized as "same-sex" or "different-sex" or even "same-gender" and "different-gender." Still, despite these limitations, the primary contribution of the results presented in this chapter is to showcase the fact that the majority of transgender-identified individuals marry at some point in their lives, whether these marriages are in some way classifiable as same-sex, different-sex, or a mix of the two.

New and better data that includes nuanced information about both partners' experiences with sex assignment at birth, current sex, gender identity, gender expression, and embodiment are critical for analyzing transgender individuals' experiences with marriage in a culturally appropriate manner. As discussed in greater detail by London et al. (Chapter 8), each of the five life-course principles – linked lives, lives in time and place, lifelong development, human agency, and timing and sequencing of events and transitions – is a useful and interesting lens through which to examine marriage in relation to gender transition. There is considerable complexity at the nexus of gender identity and marital biography that existing data cannot parse out. Individuals may marry someone of a different or same sex/gender prior to identifying as transgender and initiating their gender transition. In such circumstances, the person's gender transition may lead to separation or divorce, although such disruption of the marriage is by no means inevitable as many spouses stay in marital relationships and support their partner's gender transition. Whether never- or previously married, some individuals may form a new marriage or partnership during or after their gender transition. There may or may not be overlap in prior and new relationships, and the new spouse may be cisgender, transgender, or non-binary and identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, or something else. Continuing and new marriages may be "same-sex" or "different-sex," and that might change over the course of the relationship. Taking these possibilities into account raises questions about the adequacy of the data we have available. They also raise questions about the categories "same-sex" and "different-sex" marriage, which are not easily resolved by simply shifting terminology from "sex" to "gender."

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