

COHABITATION

Consequences for Mothers and Children

by

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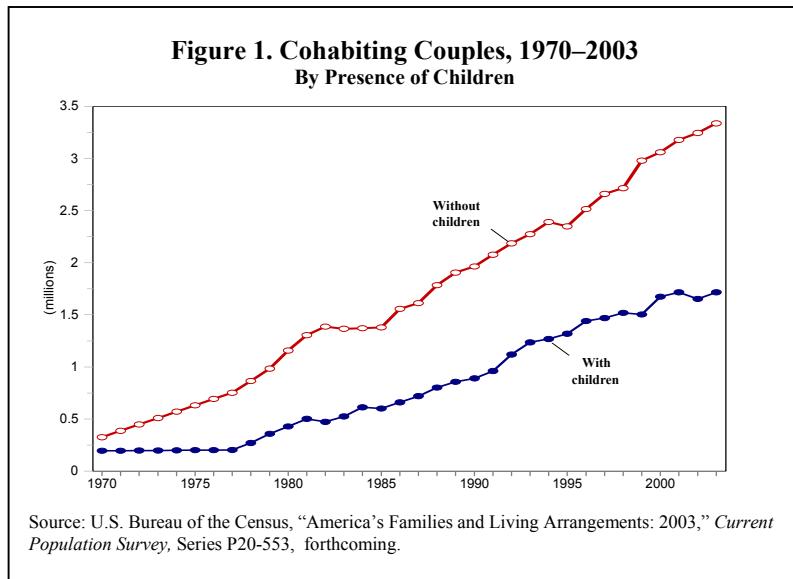
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I. Introduction

Census estimates of the number of couples “living together” without marriage in the United States is ten time larger today than in 1970¹ and far too many of those households include children.² This trend is producing a cultural transformation that has profound ramifications both for people and public policies. “The central place of marriage in our family system is eroding,” said sociologist Andrew J. Cherlin, but he does not see this development as a “cataclysmic” change.³ Other family scholars debate whether “change” represents a “decline.” In this paper, I argue that the changes in family structure are profoundly reshaping American society and that the ramifications of these changes are especially detrimental to the well-being of women and children, who are bearing the brunt of the cultural trends. A brief overview will indicate how living arrangements are changing.

II. An Overview of Historical Changes

From its founding, marriage has been integral to the American family. As the central institution of society, marriage has contributed to individual and societal well-being. Yet the marriage rate has dropped over 40 percent since 1960; fewer people are getting married and they are waiting later to get married.⁴ *The Washington Post* reported, “In 1940, less than 8 percent of all households consisted of people living alone. Now more than a quarter do.”⁵



nearly 90 married couples for every cohabiting couple, but by the year 2003 there were less than 12 married couples for every cohabiting couple. Sadly, by 2001 over 4 million children, 6 percent, lived in a cohabiting household. The demographic shift from marriage to cohabitation has significant ramifications for the well being of all citizens.

Increasingly, too, cohabitation precedes or replaces marriage. Nearly one quarter of American women born in the early 1950s first experienced sexual intercourse within marriage, but only 10 percent of those born in the late 1960s had first sex within marriage.

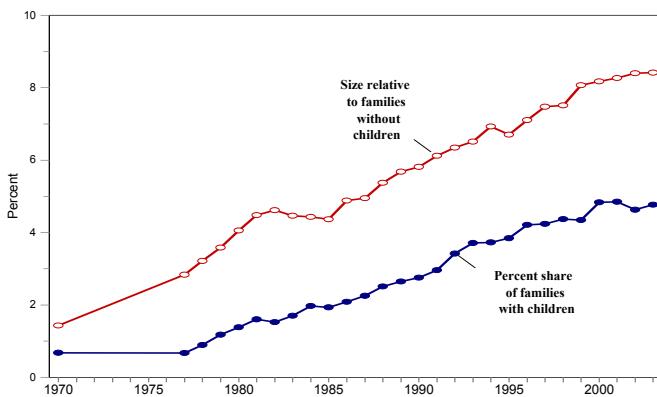
Researchers estimate that by the 1990s nearly 60 percent of unions began with cohabitation.⁶ Our Figure 1 graphically illustrates the upward trend in cohabiting households. In 1960 there were

Today, living together has become the “normative experience,” with nearly 50 percent of young adults aged 20-40 cohabiting.⁷ The number of marriages preceded by cohabitation rose from about 10 percent in 1965 to over 50 percent by 1994. And the percentage of women in their late 30s who said that they had cohabited at least once reached 48 percent in 1995.⁸

Perhaps one of the most significant ramifications of the changes in attitudes toward marriage in the United States in the last three decades can be seen in the number of nonmarital births, which have increased by 242.6 percent between 1970 and 2003. In that same time period, the number of single-parent families increased by 203 percent, and the number of unmarried couples went up by 744 percent. While a

little more than two-thirds of children still lived in a married couple family in the year 2002, the overall ratio of out-of-wedlock births rose to 34 percent; among black children, more than two-thirds are born out of wedlock and the ratio is even higher in many cities. As can be seen in our Figure 2, the proportion of cohabiting couples with children continues to be more than four times as high as it was in 1970, though the proportion has dipped slightly in the past two years.

**Figure 2. Proportions of Cohabiting Couples, 1970–2003
By Presence of Children**



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, “America’s Families and Living Arrangements: 2003,” *Current Population Survey*, Series P20-553, forthcoming.

childhood living in the household of a cohabiting couple. Among children born to a single (i.e., never-married) mother, the proportion likely to see a parent move in with an unmarried partner is 76 percent; in contrast, for children born to married parents, the proportion is 20 percent.⁹

III. Marriage versus Cohabitation

There are those who see no problem with this change in household arrangement and family structure. Some, like Chernin, argue that it simply reflects peoples’ indulgence, now that they enjoy affluence, in individualism and a preference for independence. Others say that marriage is unnecessary and irrelevant. They argue that the quality of relationships in a household is more important than the “piece of paper” that constitutes, in their minds, the only difference between marriage and cohabitation.¹⁰ Family structure, in other words, is irrelevant, they believe.

Certainly the attitude — marriage is irrelevant and cohabitation is normal — is prevalent on college campuses. In the book, *Closed Hearts, Closed Minds*, Norval Glenn, research director, reviewed 20 college textbooks on marriage and family. These books, characterized by “glaring errors, distortions of research, omissions of important data, and misattributions of scholarship,” are used in marriage and family courses on 8,000 college campuses around the nation. The books are a “national embarrassment,” describing marriage pessimistically as more a problem than a solution for society. Marriage was presented in very bleak terms; one could be forgiven for thinking that marriage exists to perpetuate violence against and oppression of women. In fact, as depicted in the textbooks, marriage is “dangerous” and “psychologically stifling.” Cohabitation, same-sex unions and single parenthood, though, were extolled as “equally acceptable and equally productive adult relationships.”¹¹

Such negative influences are having an impact. Many young people have bought into the myth that cohabitation is a good way to “test the waters.” Plus, more and more young adults don’t believe in lasting love or in marriage because they have seen too much divorce and too many miserable marriages. Josh McDowell,¹² author of numerous books targeted to young adults, interviewed 500 individuals asking them to tell him about the marriage they most admired. Nearly half could not recommend even a single healthy, exemplary marriage.

Yet, ancient Rome’s great orator and statesman, Cicero, declared that marriage was the “first bond of society.” Indeed, throughout history, marriage has been the bedrock of civilized societies and sexual promiscuity has been destructive of civilization. Reo Christenson studied more than 80 early societies and found a strong correlation between sexual restraint and social progress. “Cultures that were more sexually permissive,” he found, “displayed less cultural energy, creativity, intellectual development and individualism, and a slower general cultural ascent.”¹³

IV. Research Overview

Contemporary research still proves the validity of Cicero’s and Christenson’s remarks. In fact, research findings follow a general pattern regardless of nationality, age of partners, or income of the couple: Across cultures and over time, cohabitation is distinctly different from marriage and it produces distinctly different — and decidedly inferior — outcomes for children. Researchers across the philosophical, ideological and theological perspectives have come to the same conclusion regarding the family structure that is best for children: As weak as the marriage bond has become in the era of no-fault divorce, on average the harmony, stability and longevity of marital unions are still far superior to that of cohabiting couples. The whole truth put simply is: Marriage is not merely good for kids; it is best for them!¹⁴

Many studies show that a household structure not anchored by one’s own biological parents is damaging to the long-run life chances of children and that cohabitation and out-of-wedlock births are bad for the individuals involved and for society in general. One study was blunt: “[T]he practice of cohabitation among unmarried couples does not serve the best interests of adults, children, society, or governments.” The study continued, “Cohabitation typically leaves in its wake a trail of broken relationships, unstable homes, children at risk, domestic violence, poverty, and thus a weakened society.”¹⁵

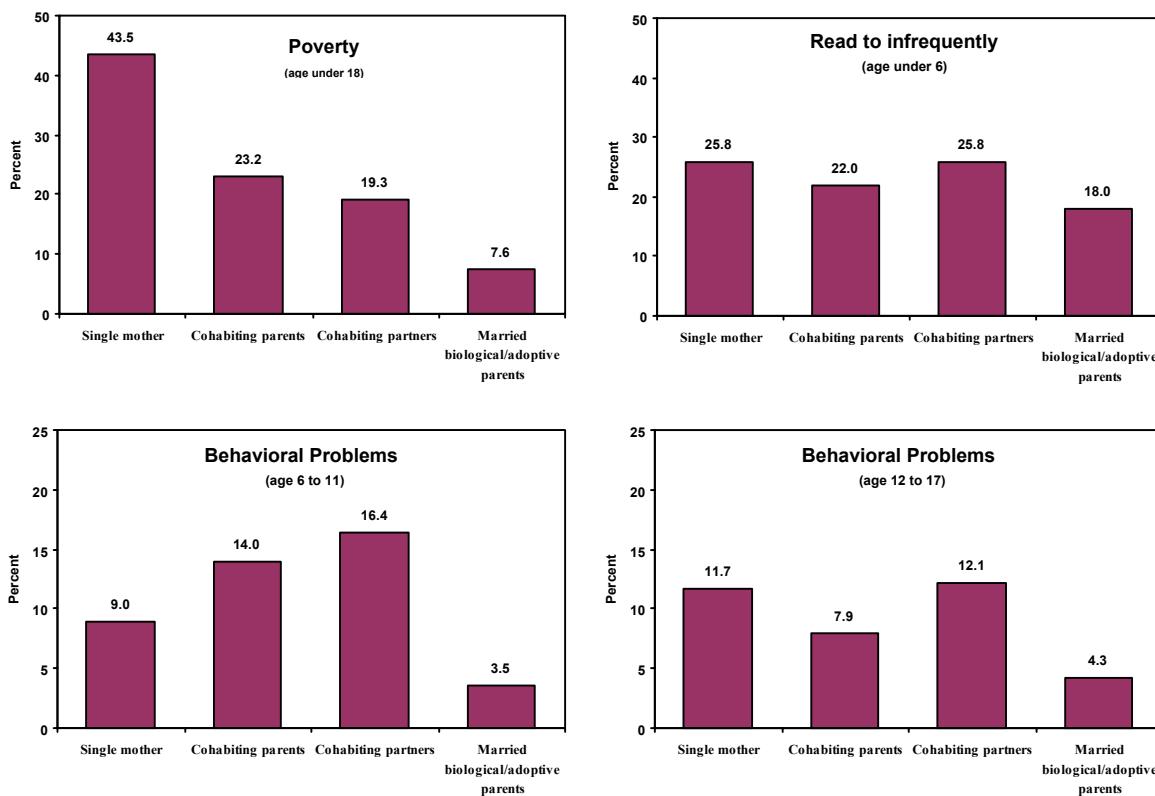
V. Children’s Well-Being

General agreement in the research community has begun to emerge as more and more data confirm the essential role of marriage. Recent studies show that family instability, measured by transitions into and out of married-couple households is strongly associated with negative outcomes for children. There has been a dramatic decline in the well-being of children — children in non-intact families have roughly twice the risk of social and behavioral problems compared with children in married-parent families.¹⁶

Also, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of children today living with problems that researchers have identified as associated with broken families — emotional upheaval and struggles with anxiety, depression, eating disorders and other psychosocial difficulties.¹⁷ These outcomes should not be surprising because the parenting role of a cohabitating partner toward children of the other person is vaguely defined, making the cohabitating household an unstable, high-conflict and often volatile living arrangement for children. The cohabitating partner has no legal, financial, parental/custodial rights over the children, and therefore discipline and relationship building is tenuous at best.¹⁸

The Urban Institute, a research think tank located in Washington, D.C., evaluated the well-being of the children living in cohabiting families. The researchers found that older children 6 to 11 years of age exhibited the highest number of behavioral problems living in cohabiting-partner households (16.4 percent); cohabiting-parent households were next highest at 14 percent, with single-parent households at 9 percent as compared with only 3.5 percent among those living with married parents. For teens, the situation is similar — cohabiting and single-parent households produce several times more behavioral problems in teens than are exhibited in teens living with their married-parent families.¹⁹

Figure 3. Outcomes for Children by Living Arrangements, 1999



Source: Urban Institute calculations of the 1999 NSAF.

Notes: "Children living with cohabiting parents" are those living with both of their parents who are not married.

"Children living with cohabiting partners" are those living with one parent and that parent's boy/girlfriend.

As can be seen in our Figure 3 above, all household arrangements are inferior to married biological or adoptive parents in terms of outcomes for children. Less than 8 percent of the children living in a married biological/adoptive family are poor, as compared to poverty rates of nearly 20 to 43 percent for those who are in cohabiting or single-mother households. Around a quarter of the children in other household arrangements are seldom read to, as compared to less than 20 percent in married families. Less than 5 percent of children in married families have behavior problems, but among other types of households it is at least double that number.

VI. The Impact of Cohabitation

In short, the mass of sociological evidence suggests that cohabitation is an inferior alternative to the married, intact, two-parent family; it confirms that marriage works best in terms of the well-being of all the persons involved and that cohabitation is damaging to the social well-being of women and children and a considerable strain on the units of government that deal with social, correctional and welfare issues.²⁰

In this paper, we will look at some of the problems related to cohabitation and how cohabitation affects the children living in those situations. The first and overwhelming problem with cohabitation is that it is a tentative arrangement that lacks stability; no one can depend upon the relationship — not the partners, not the children, not the community nor the society. Such relationships contribute little to those inside and certainly little to those outside the arrangement.

VII. The Instability of Cohabiting Relationships

Cohabiting relationships are experimental in nature, tenuous at best, and tend to dissolve at about twice the rate of marriages; hence, children living in such situations are twice as vulnerable to the anguish and hardships associated with separation from a parent. Further, cohabiting relationships do not usually end in marriage.

Numerous studies of college students have found that men typically cohabit because it is “convenient.” Women, on the other hand, expect that “cohabitation will lead to marriage.” Authors of various studies commented similarly: such relationships exhibit an imbalance of power that puts women in a perilous position.²¹ A college professor described a survey that he conducted over a period of years in his marriage classes. He asked guys who were living with a girl, point blank, “Are you going to marry the girl that you’re living with?” The overwhelming response, he reports, was “NO!” When he asked the girls if they were going to marry the guy they were living with, their response was, “Oh, yes!” The professor asked, “Why?” The girls usually replied, “Because we love each other and we are learning how to be together.” The guys, however, explained that they would not marry the girl they were living with because, “She was easy for me. How can I trust her to be faithful in marriage?”²²

During the 1970s, about 60 percent of cohabiting couples married each other within three years, but this proportion has since declined to less than 40 percent.²³ Sometimes couples choose to live together as a substitute for marriage, indicating that, in case the relationship goes sour, they can avoid the trouble, expense and emotional trauma of a divorce. With such a weak bond between the two parties, there is little likelihood that they will work through their problems or that they will maintain the relationship under pressure. It is more likely that one or the other will ‘cut and run’ when conflict arises, since each person’s individuality is more likely stronger than their relationship together.²⁴

Research shows that cohabiting relationships in the United States tend to be fragile and relatively short in duration; less than half of cohabiting relationships last five or more years.²⁵ Typically, they last about 18 months.²⁶ Not surprisingly, partners in a cohabiting relationship are more likely to be unfaithful to each other than married couples: The National Sex Survey (polling 3500 people) reported that men in cohabiting relationships were four times more likely to be unfaithful than husbands and that women cohabiters were eight times more likely to cheat than were wives.²⁷

Many couples say that they want to live together to see if they are compatible, not realizing that cohabitation is more a preparation for divorce than it is a way to strengthen the likelihood of a successful marriage. A study on premarital cohabitation conducted by researchers from Yale University, Columbia University and the Institute for Resource Development at Westinghouse revealed that the divorce rates of women who cohabit are nearly 80 percent higher than the rates of those who do not.²⁸ Another study, conducted by University of Michigan researcher Pamela Smock, discovered that “premarital cohabitation tends to be associated with lower marital quality and increased risk of divorce.”²⁹

Obviously, such unstable relationships are not healthy, secure places for children. Children whose mothers cohabit are likely to experience unusual amounts of instability in their lives. Yet, living in such arrangements is standard fare for far too many children. Early research established that family transitions are highly stressful for children and further research indicated that the negative effects are cumulative over time and over the various transitions.³⁰ Researchers have found that children’s experiences in the early 1990s imply that the average child can expect to experience 0.63 family changes due to marriage or the dissolution of marriage by age 12.³¹ “For whites, the cumulative number of transitions increases 30 percent from 0.69 to 0.90 when cohabitation is included. For blacks, the measure of instability increases much more, 115 percent from 0.55 to 1.18.”³² Thus, those researchers found that “ignoring cohabitation obscures a substantial amount of instability.”³³ In fact, they concluded “that adding transitions into and out of cohabitation increases . . . family instability by about 30 percent for White children and over 100 percent for Black children.”³⁴

Thus, the instability of cohabiting relationships is a fundamental problem for the couple involved and, especially, for the children living in such households. These problems also affect the broader society not only in terms of the direct material costs entailed, but more importantly perhaps by their impact on the community’s quality of life and its ability to function productively.

As the accumulated research shows, the negative impacts of cohabitation on children are predictable and well-documented.

The following sections of this paper will address the major problems associated with children living in cohabiting households: poverty and health; social and behavioral problems; and abuse and violence.

VIII. The Problems Associated with Cohabitation: Poverty and Health

Poverty: Compared to children with married parents, three to four times (depending upon economic conditions) as many children in cohabiting homes live in poverty.³⁵ In the mid-1990s, the poverty rate for children in cohabiting households was 31 percent, whereas that for children living in married couple families was about 6 percent.³⁶ Thus, poverty is one of the harshest results of the breakdown in traditional marriage and family with women and children bearing the consequences most severely. Children living with cohabiters are more likely to be poor, food-insecure, read to infrequently, and to exhibit behavioral problems than children living with married couples.³⁷

While cohabitation increases the number of children in poverty across the racial spectrum, it affects black children more than white children. One researcher estimates that if family structure had not changed between 1960 and 1998, the black child poverty rate in 1998 would have been 28.4 rather than 45.6 percent, and the white child poverty rate in 1998 would have been 11.4 percent rather than 15.4 percent.³⁸

And, while both women and children suffer more poverty after a cohabiting relationship breaks up, there is typically an economic imbalance in favor of the man *within* such relationships, too. While couples who live together say that they plan to share expenses equally, more often than not the women support the men. Studies show that women typically contribute more than 70 percent of the income in a cohabiting relationship. Likewise, the women tend to do more of the cleaning, cooking and laundry. If they are students facing economic or time constraints requiring a reduction in class load by one partner, it is almost invariably the woman, not the man, who drops a class.³⁹

Health: Cohabitation, in contrast to marriage, is also destructive to the health of those involved in the relationship. A University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) survey of 130 published empirical studies revealed that marriage was considerably healthier than living together; marriages preceded by cohabitation were more prone to problems like drug and alcohol use, more permissive sexual relationships, and an “abhorrence of dependence” than were marital relationships that were not preceded by cohabitation. Both alcoholism and problem drinking are more prevalent among the unmarried than the married — 70 percent of all chronic problem drinkers are unmarried versus only 15 percent married.⁴⁰

The increase in sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) tracks the increase in cohabitation. It is no great surprise that about 40 percent of men in cohabiting relationships are unfaithful; thus endangering not just themselves, but the women who are living with them. In fact, the biggest health risk in cohabitation is sexually transmitted diseases.

The data from the Centers for Disease Control⁴¹ are alarming:

- Nearly 65 percent of STDs appear in people who are under 25 years of age and more than 20 percent of all AIDS cases are among college-age young people.
- Approximately 15 million new cases of STDs occur every year in the United States. This is an epidemic that should be producing outrage and dismay, but is barely causing a ripple of concern.
- Not only is the number of cases increasing — they have tripled in just six years — but, the types and deadliness are also growing.
- Whereas in 1960 there were only three STDs, currently there are over two dozen STDs that are ***incurable!***
- The fastest-spreading STD, human papillomavirus — commonly called HPV — causes over 90 percent of cervical cancer and kills about 5,000 American women every year.
- The number of STD cases among cohabiting women is six times higher than among married women.
- One doctor has estimated that a person having three or more sexual partners in a lifetime increases the odds of cervical cancer 15 times.

In summary, while cohabitation is detrimental to the partners’ health, marriage can literally save a husband and wife’s life.⁴² Unmarried couples, even when living together, have a higher mortality rate than married couples: 50 percent higher among women and an amazing 250 percent higher among men.⁴³

IX. The Problems Associated with Cohabitation: Social and Behavioral Problems

The range of social and behavioral problems that are associated with children who live in cohabiting households is predictable. The trauma to children that comes from the disruption, uncertainty and instability that is typical in the family life of a cohabiting household is well-documented. It is little wonder that there has been such a dramatic decline in the well-being of children — children in non-intact families have roughly twice the risk of social and behavioral problems compared with children in married-parent families.⁴⁴

Academic achievement suffers: Children who live in cohabiting households are less inclined to care about school and homework performance, and their academic performance tends to be poorer than that of children living with their married biological parents.⁴⁵ One study examined the well-being of teens living with their mother and their mother's boyfriend rather than their biological father. White and Hispanic teens were found to be more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems and be suspended or expelled from school than even teens living with a single mother alone. Blacks are no better off in such cohabiting families than they would be living with a single mother.⁴⁶

Ability to get along with others is compromised: Children in cohabiting households tend to have more emotional and behavioral problems, such as not getting along with peers, experiencing difficulty in concentrating, and feeling sad or depressed. Among adolescents ages 12-17, one study found that the percentage of those exhibiting emotional and behavioral problems was six times greater in cohabiting stepfamilies than in married biological-parent families.⁴⁷

Early premarital sexual activity is likely: Children from married homes are less likely to engage in early, premarital sex and have less discipline problems than those who live in unmarried homes.

Often, adolescents convicted of crime come from cohabiting households: In 1998, a study of adolescents convicted of homicide in adult court found that, at the time of the crimes, 43 percent of their parents had never been married, 30 percent were divorced, and 9 percent were separated.⁴⁸ Delinquency is more frequent among children from cohabiting couples. Another survey revealed that nearly three-fourths of the children involved in criminal activity were living in a cohabiting household at the time while only one-fourth lived in a married-couple family.⁴⁹

X. The Problems Associated with Cohabitation: Abuse and Violence

It is commonly acknowledged that children in cohabiting households are at greater risk for sexual abuse and violence than are children in married families. Aggression is at least twice as common in cohabiting households as it is among married families. One study reported that during a one-year period, about 35 out of every 100 cohabiting couples experienced physical aggression, compared to 15 out of every 100 married couples.⁵⁰

The data are very clear and compelling; the accumulating body of research sends an urgent message that family organization is very important for child well-being. Some researchers estimate that child abuse is increasing by more than 10 percent a year; many believe that the increase is related to the changing family structure. There is agreement in the research — the most dangerous place for a child is where the mother is living with a boyfriend rather than the child's biological father – the typical cohabiting household.

Rates for serious abuse of children are lowest in the intact family, six times higher in stepfamilies, 14 times higher in the always-single-mother family, 20 times higher in cohabiting biological-parent families, and 33 times higher when the mother is cohabiting with a boyfriend.⁵¹

Linda Waite, University of Chicago professor of sociology, found that “men and women who cohabit are more likely than married people to express partner abuse and infidelity and less likely to receive assistance from family members than married couples.”⁵² Waite’s research showed that 16 percent of cohabiting women reported that arguments with their partners became physical last year, while only 5 percent of married women had similar experiences. The surveys also showed that 20 percent of cohabiting women reported they had secondary sex partners, while only 4 percent of married women reported they did.⁵³

Clearly, cohabiting households are not safe for women. The United States Department of Health and Human Services (1994) reported that unmarried women were three to four times more likely to be abused by their boyfriends while pregnant than married women by their husbands.⁵⁴ The Department of Justice reports similar findings. It estimates that women are 62 times more likely to be assaulted by their live-in boyfriends than they are if living with their husband.⁵⁵

Similarly, Dr. Jan Stets of Washington State University found that aggressive behavior is twice as common among cohabiting partners as among married couples. She found that approximately 14 percent of those who live together admit to hitting, shoving or throwing things at their partner compared to only 5 percent among married people.⁵⁶ Other studies, such as the Family Violence Research Program at the University of New Hampshire, duplicate the finding that cohabiting partners are more violent than married couples.⁵⁷ The United States Justice Department Victimization Study found that a boyfriend or ex-husband committed 65 percent of violent crimes against women , while only 9 percent were committed by husbands.⁵⁸

Children, too, are at risk. Numerous studies report that children are 20 times more likely to suffer abuse when the mother is cohabiting than when she is married to the father of the child. Two researchers at Pennsylvania State University compared cohabiting relationships with marriage and found that couples who live together without marriage are more apt to argue, shout and hit than married couples.⁵⁹

XI. Final Overview

As we saw in Figures 1 and 2, the number of cohabiting couples with children leveled off in 2002 and 2003 and the proportion declined slightly — a hopeful sign that the research is starting to have an impact. But, we must face the irrefutable fact that the number of cohabiting couples without children continues its steep upward trend in both absolute and relative terms.⁶⁰ By the middle of the 1990s half of all persons under age 40 had lived in a cohabiting relationship. In 1960, citizens spent a large proportion of their life (62 percent) living with a spouse and children; by 1985, the percentage had dropped to 43 percent, the lowest in United States history.⁶¹

That trend won’t likely change anytime soon, but the most recent data on family living arrangements give a small measure of hope that the research — combined with just a plain common-sense understanding of what is good for children —may be taking hold. Certainly, as has been said, marriage has an “irreplaceable role in childbearing and in generational continuity; it is society’s most important institution for protecting child well-being, turning children into good citizens, and fostering good behavior among adults.”⁶²

XII. Conclusion

As we conclude this paper, let's review how we got to this point.

First came the philosophers and theologians debating among themselves in their ivory towers about their “discovery” that “*God is dead*.” Then movie stars and entertainers glamorized a life free of moral constraints on their illicit sex and drugs. They used their celebrity status to flaunt lifestyles of irresponsible personal gratification. Their selfish self-indulgence was papered over by the glib claim that when two people love each other, they don’t need a marriage license; it is, after all, just a piece of paper. They also argued that moving in together is less of a bother than marriage because if things don’t work out, cohabiting avoids the messy hassle of a divorce. Their refrain was “move out” and “move on.”

Then along came the radical feminists saying that women didn’t need men. As Gloria Steinem famously said, “A woman needs a man, like a fish needs a bicycle.” Men were beasts; they were the enemy. Patriarchy was the source of all women’s misery. If a woman really wanted to do the “baby thing,” she was counseled to visit the nearest sperm bank for artificial insemination.

Finally came the academic researchers, the sociologists and demographers who waved their magic wands and declared that all family structures were equally viable, that marriage is not essential because it is the quality of the relationship that really matters. Such ideas negated thousands of years of experience and reinforced the adage: a little learning is a dangerous thing. In regard to cohabitation, however, extensive learning in the service of bias and ideology was a disaster. This type of “science” is not a pursuit of truth. Instead, it is a broad road leading to harm and pain.

The second half of the twentieth century has been disastrous time for the family in the western world. The fallout — no-fault divorce, promiscuous sex, out-of-wedlock birth, abortion, and cohabitation have been ripping at the fabric of our civilization.

We have sowed the wind and we are reaping the whirlwind.

In the long run, the quality of the relationship between a man and woman depends upon the nature of the structure within which they interact. Marriage and cohabitation have very different structures; they produce different outcomes.

For decades researchers turned a blind eye to the injury inflicted on children by the breakdown of marriage and family. We heard again and again how resilient children are, how adept they are at adjusting to new circumstances. Finally, honest reporting is establishing a mass of evidence that family structure is important, especially for the children being raised in these very different living arrangements.

Ordinary people understand that the wise “build their house upon a rock” so that when the floods come — as they always do in life — the house is not swept away by the torrent. Wise men and women not only build on a rock, they chose the strong fortress of marriage to protect them and their children instead of the flimsy sand castle of cohabitation. The wise understand that marriage produces positive outcomes based on the nature of what men and women need in order to live in harmony: order, stability, continuity, security, community acceptance and support. All these things are provided by marriage, with its wedding ceremony and legal recognition.

Just living together, on the other hand, because it is at variance with our human nature, is prone to have negative consequences: conflict-laden uncertainty, insecurity, instability, absence of community acceptance and support.

The notion that “if a couple is in love, they don’t need a piece of paper” certainly doesn’t hold up in the long run in the face of issues like paternity, authority to make decisions in life threatening situations, inheritance, etc. Instead of a marriage license and the presumption of paternity, cohabitation offers court-ordered DNA tests to establish paternity.

A “piece of paper” turns out to be very important after all.

In her book, *Experiments in Living*, Rebecca O’Neill reported, “The social fabric, once considered flexible enough to incorporate all types of lifestyles, has been stretched and strained. Although a good society should tolerate people’s right to live as they wish, it must also hold adults responsible for the consequences of their actions. The weight of evidence indicates that the traditional family based upon a married father and mother is still the best environment for raising children, and it forms the soundest basis for the wider society.”⁶³

G.K. Chesterton wrote, “If we wish to preserve the family, we must revolutionize the nation.”

Given the seriousness of the decline in marriage, and the ramifications that are so harmful to everyone, let the revolution begin!

#

ENDNOTES

¹ The data used in our estimates and figures comes from official U.S. Census Data. As stated in *Historical Estimates of Cohabitation*, a publication of the Population Division of the U.S. Bureau of the Census (Working Paper #36 by Lynne M. Casper, Philip N. Cohen and Tavia Simmons), “For consistent historical estimates of cohabitation prevalence, the CPS and Decennial Census remain the only available datasets.”

² *Christianity Today* reported an increase of 850 percent since 1970 in the number of cohabiting households with children. [“Go Figure,” *Christianity Today*, September 2003]

³ Andrew J. Cherlin, Professor of Sociology, Johns Hopkins University, as quoted from an interview with D’Vera Cohn, “Married-with-Children Still Fading,” *The Washington Post*, May 14, 2001, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A26160-2001May14.html.

⁴ Janice Shaw Crouse, *Gaining Ground: A Profile of American Women in the 20th Century*, (Washington, D.C.: The Beverly LaHaye Institute, 2000), www.cwfa.org.

⁵ D’Vera Cohn, “Married-With-Children Still Fading,” *The Washington Post*, May 14, 2001.

⁶ Larry Bumpass and Hsien-Hen Lu, “Trends in Cohabitation and Implications for Children,” *Population Studies*, 2000.

⁷ Bumpass and Lu, 2000.

⁸ *Cohabitation: Trial Marriage or Lack of Commitment? Family First*, reprinted with permission on Crosswalk.com; www.crosswalk.com/family/marriage/516028.html

⁹ Paolo Scommegna, "Increased Cohabitation Changing Children's Family Settings," *Population Today*, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), National Institutes of Health, September and October, 2002.

¹⁰ Janice Shaw Crouse, "Just a Piece of Paper?" *The Washington Times*, March 18, 2001, www.cwfa.org.

¹¹ Norval Glenn, Research Director, *Closed Hearts, Closed Minds: The Textbook Story of Marriage*, New York: Council on Families, 1997.

¹² www.josh.org.

¹³ Reo Christenson, *Christianity Today*, February 19, 1982.

¹⁴ Janice Shaw Crouse, "Unmarried with Children: Has the Upward Trend of Cohabiting with Children Halted?" *Data Digest*, The Beverly LaHaye Institute, May 26, 2004. www.cwfa.org.

¹⁵ United Families International, "Cohabitation (Living Together Without Marriage)," *Family Issues Guide*, and "Structure and Child Well-Being: Economic Resources vs. Parental Behaviors," *Social Forces* 73 (1994): 221-242. www.unitedfamilies.org/cohabitation_000.asp.

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