

The Marriage Movement

In this section:

- What Is The Marriage Movement?
- Some Key Players and What They Say
- How Else Has The Alternatives to Marriage Project Responded?
- Experts Who Agree With AtMP

What Is The Marriage Movement?

The Alternatives to Marriage Project is a leading voice in questioning the goals and tactics of the marriage movement. Historically, unmarried people have been pressured to marry, experienced discrimination on the basis of their marital status, and had their relationships labeled immoral and sinful. While this continues today, many positive changes have occurred in our society's view of unmarried people and relationships. Today, well over one in three adult Americans is unmarried. The majority of all couples marrying today have lived together before marriage. Increasing numbers of employers are offering domestic partner benefits to their employees. Religious leaders have stepped forward in support of unmarried relationships, including gay and lesbian ones.

The Alternatives to Marriage Project supports these changes and works to continue this positive process of supporting diverse families. But for some people these changes are threatening to their views of relationships and family and a backlash has begun. To be fair, the marriage movement includes a spectrum of individuals and organizations that vary in their views and approaches on unmarried relationships. Some who consider themselves part of the movement focus primarily on helping married people address problems and conflicts in their relationships. We support activities like these, and believe people in all relationships, married and unmarried, can benefit from learning conflict resolution, communication, decision-making, and other needed skills.

There are other organizations and individuals who are more direct in their disdain for people in unmarried relationships. Although tactics vary, they include misrepresenting and oversimplifying social science research about cohabitation; providing sermon outlines for ministers to preach from the pulpit about the evils of living together before marriage; opposing domestic partner benefits; opposing or ignoring same-sex marriage but providing no alternatives for supporting gay, lesbian, bisexual, and

transgender people; fighting legal battles on behalf of people who discriminate against unmarried people; and the list goes on.

Some Key Players and What They Say

The National Marriage Project is a high-visibility group pretends it's an objective thinktank, but actually has a strong marriage-only agenda and openly opposes cohabitation. AtMP has responded to their propaganda - read more here.

The Center for Marriage and Family of the Institute for American Values is the official repository of the marriage movement. It has deep ties to the Institute for Marriage and Public Policy - they co-sponsor reports and echo each other's statements. The president of the IMAPP is the author of *The Case for Marriage*, a book that's sometimes called "the Bible of the Marriage Movement". Read AtMP's commentary on that book.

How Else Has The Alternatives to Marriage Project Responded?

In addition to our *Affirmation of Family Diversity*, our critique of *The Case for Marriage*, and our responses to the National Marriage Project, we've released these articles:

Review: The Case for Marriage Our book review of this much-publicized book pointed out the errors and omissions in its review of the research.

Research Says Unmarried Bliss Is Possible

This op-ed appeared in the *Arizona Daily Star* on August 24, 1999. It was written in response to a piece by Heritage Foundation intern Stacey Felzenberg that ran in the same paper a few days earlier.

Law an Invasion of Privacy

Three years after our op-ed ran in the *Deming, New Mexico Headlight*, the state repealed its law against cohabitation! The piece was inspired by the case of Michael McNair, whom a judge unfairly threatened not to release on bond because he and his girlfriend lived together.

If you share our concerns about the marriage-only movement, please support the work of the Alternatives to Marriage Project with a financial contribution. Your support is vital to our continued efforts. Thank you!

Experts Who Agree With AtMP

"In the end, the evidence suggests that the benefits of marriage promotion would be marginal."
- Andrew Cherlin, John Hopkins University sociologist, in Contexts, a publication of the American Sociological Association, Fall 2003

"My strong objection is to the notion that there's one kind of relationship that's best for everyone, that it's a moral failing if you don't achieve it, and that it will irreparably harm your children if you don't marry or if your marriage doesn't last."

- Judith Stacey, University of Southern California sociologist, in The Bergen Record, August 13, 2000

"There is only so far you can go to shore up marriage without reviving its repressive aspects."

- Stephanie Coontz, co-chair, Council on Contemporary Families, in USA Today, June 29, 2000

"I favor healthy marriages, and I favor healthy un-marriages."

- Don Bloch, past president of the American Family Therapy Association, in USA Today, June 29, 2000

[Read more quotes from experts](#)