

The Experts Speak

Cohabitation

Cohabitation and divorce

Marriage

Marriage benefits

Marriage promotion

Family

Families with children

On cohabitation:

"Co-habitation without children or marriage needs to be viewed not only as a legitimate end-state in itself, but also as a legitimate form of pre-marriage." - William Pinsof, family psychologist and President of the Family Institute at Northwestern University, in *Family Process*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2002

"Policymakers need to clarify how cohabiting families are treated and recognize cohabitation as a potentially viable family form." - Wendy Manning, Bowling Green State University sociologist, in "The Implications of Cohabitation for Children's Well-Being," in *Just Living Together*, 2002

"Cohabiting unions may be an end in themselves for an increasing percentage of cohabitators. These cohabitators do not necessarily reject marriage. Instead, cohabitators are less likely to see marriage as the defining characteristic of their family lives." - Judith Seltzer, University of California sociologist, in "Families Formed Outside of Marriage," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, November 2000.

"Rarely does social change occur with such rapidity. Indeed, there have been few developments relating to marriage and family life which have been as dramatic as the rapid increase in unmarried cohabitation." - Paul Glick and Graham Spanier, "Married and Unmarried Cohabitation in the United States," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, February 1980

"There are not monolithic categories called 'cohabitations' on the one hand, and 'marriages' on the other. There is a great deal of variation within each type of relationship in terms of commitment. And John [the caller on a radio show, who has been in a nine-year unmarried relationship with three children] is telling us about a relationship with a very extreme and long-term commitment. And there are many marriages that break up within the first couple of years following marriage because of an absence of such commitment." - Larry Bumpass, University of Wisconsin sociologist and demographer, on NPR's *Talk of the Nation*, November 11, 1998

"The extent to which cohabitation on average appears to be somewhere in between dating and marriage on various indicators may be because cohabiting relationships are split between those that are much like marriage, and those that are very little like marriage." - Philip Cohen, U.S. Bureau of the Census, in a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of

the Population Association of America, 1999

"Committed cohabiting relationships seem to confer many of the benefits of marriage." - William Doherty, Professor, Department of Family Social Science, University of Minnesota, at the Council on Contemporary Families conference, April 27, 2001

"Paradoxically, more people today value marriage. They take it seriously. That's why they're more likely to cohabit. They want to make sure before they take the ultimate step." - Frank Furstenberg, sociologist at University of Pennsylvania, in Newsweek May 28, 2001

"Today it's unusual if you don't live with someone before you marry them." - Andrew Cherlin, sociologist at John Hopkins University and author of Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage, in Newsweek May 28, 2001

"In its variant forms, cohabitation has been practised in many, if not all, human societies." - Zheng Wu, sociologist at the University of Victoria, in Cohabitation: An Alternative Form of Family Living, Oxford University Press, 2000

"Cohabitation may originally have been the normative form of family living. Even after marriage became the norm, informal cohabitation continued to coexist with formal marriage and the line between the two family forms was blurred for a long period of time. For example, in England the distinction between marriage and cohabitation remained unclear until the passage of Lord Hardwicke's Act in 1754, which stipulated more stringent requirements for formal marriage." - Zheng Wu, sociologist at the University of Victoria, in Cohabitation: An Alternative Form of Family Living, Oxford University Press, 2000

"Married and cohabiting parents in stable relationships do not differ very much in terms of their relationship quality." - Fragile Families. Fragile Families Research Brief. 2005

*Get the statistics on living together.

On cohabitation and divorce:

"The most sophisticated studies have found that, although cohabitation engenders somewhat more liberal attitudes toward divorce, it does not increase the likelihood of marital disruption." - Final report prepared for the Department of Health and Human Services by Abt Associates. "The Determinants of Marriage and Cohabitation Among Disadvantaged Americans: Research Findings and Needs." Marriage and Family Formation Data Analysis Project, March 2003

"The problem with this research is that it does not adequately account for selection—people who choose to live together before marriage are not the same people who choose to marry directly. They comprise at least two different groups with different attitudes toward marriage, religion, and relationships in general…. To attribute premarital cohabitators' higher subsequent divorce rate and non-premarital-cohabitators' lower subsequent divorce rate to the fact that they did and did not cohabit before they married is unwarranted and bad science." - William Pinsof, family psychologist and President of the Family Institute at Northwestern University, in *Family Process*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2002

"Claims that individuals who cohabit before marriage hurt their chances of a good marriage pay too little attention to [the] evidence [that it is likely other factors, not cohabitation, that create the apparent difference in divorce rates]." - Judith Seltzer, University of California sociologist, in "Families Formed Outside of Marriage," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, November 2000

"The most consistent and strongest predictor of whether a given couple will divorce is not whether or not they cohabited, but the age at which they got married. People who get married younger have significantly higher divorce rates than couples who marry older. - Teachman, Jay and Polonko, Karen. "Cohabitation and Marital Stability in the United States." *Social Forces*, 1990

On marriage:

"As an adult stage in the life course, marriage is shrinking. Americans are living longer, marrying later, exiting marriage more quickly, and choosing to live together before marriage, after marriage, in-between marriages, and as an alternative to marriage. A small but growing percentage of American adults will never marry."
- David Popenoe, Co-Director, National Marriage Project, House Ways and Means testimony May 22, 2001

"Although marriage remains an important feature of adulthood, it no longer looms like Mount Everest in the landscape of the adult life course. It is more like a hill that people climb, up and down, once or twice, or bypass altogether."
- David Popenoe, Co-Director, National Marriage Project, House Ways and Means testimony May 22, 2001

"It can be argued that residence/degree of physical proximity is actually becoming more significant than is legal [marital] status in terms of understanding and intervening in close relationships."
- John Scanzoni et al., in *The Sexual Bond: Rethinking Families and Close Relationships*, 1989

"“[M]arriage appears to encourage a more sedentary lifestyle and is associated with modest weight gain and reduced physical activity.”
- Wood, Robert G., Brian Goesling, and Sarah Avellar. “The Effects of Marriage on Health: A Synthesis of Recent Research Evidence.” 2007

"Studies find that increases in depressive symptoms after divorce are long-lasting and that the prevalence of these symptoms remains elevated years after the marital breakup."
- Wood, Robert G., Brian Goesling, and Sarah Avellar. "The Effects of Marriage on Health: A Synthesis of Recent Research Evidence." 2007

On marriage benefits:

"Gainful employment," said Daniel Lichter, director of Pennsylvania State University's Population Research Institute, "can turn a man or woman into a potential bride or groom pretty quickly."
- From an article by Raphael Lewis in the Philadelphia Inquirer, "Is That Love in the Air? More People Are Saying I Do," April 19, 1998, suggesting that employment and income encourage people to get married rather than the other way around

"We find that the wage premium [the average amount married people make beyond what cohabitators make] can be explained largely in terms of unobservable individual characteristics which are positively correlated with marriage and wages. In other words, attributes leading to 'good' (long and stable) marriages are also important in obtaining 'good' (long and stable) jobs and higher wages."
- Christopher Cornwall and Peter Rupert, in Economic Inquiry, April 1997

"We found that cohabitation status was a stronger predictor of mortality than marital status, and that the latter showed no independent association to mortality. We suggest that in future studies of social relations and mortality, cohabitation status is considered to replace marital status since it may account for more of the variation in mortality."
- Rikke Lund, Pernille Due, Jens Modvig, Bjorn Holstein, Morgens Damsgaard, and Per Anderson in Social Science and Medicine, vol. 55, 2002

"Psychologist and study lead author Richard E. Lucas, Ph.D., of Michigan State University says he and his colleagues found that most people were no more satisfied with life after marriage than they were prior to marriage. Widows and widowers were less satisfied with life after the death of their spouse than they were prior to marriage, but even they showed signs of adaptation and most eventually returned close to their initial life satisfaction levels."
- Lucas, Richard E., Andrew E. Clark, Yannis Georgellis, and Ed Diener. "Reexamining Adaptation and the Set Point Model of Happiness: Reactions to Changes in Marital Status." 2003

On marriage promotion:

"It truly is time to get the federal government out of the marriage business."
- Bob Barr, former Congressman and candidate for President, in a widely published op-ed, January 2009

"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

"People living in a particular pair-bond structure [marriage or cohabitation] should not be advantaged, nor should their offspring. Social policies must be based on respect for people's right to choose—to live alone or to live within any particular pair-bond structure."

- William Pinsof, family psychologist and President of the Family Institute at Northwestern University, in Family Process, vol. 41, no. 2, 2002

"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

"Giving incentives or creating pressures for unstable couples to wed can be a huge mistake. It may create families with high conflict and instability—the worst-case scenario for kids."

- Stephanie Coontz, national co-chair, Council on Contemporary Families, and a family historian at Evergreen State College, in Newsweek, May 28, 2001

"As young adults consider pair-bonding, they need to be freely able to choose the pair-bond [marriage or cohabitation] that best fits who they are and where they want to go."

- William Pinsof, family psychologist and President of the Family Institute at Northwestern University, in Family Process, vol. 41, no. 2, 2002

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

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

"We cannot afford to play favorites with first-time married couples. There are too many other circumstances into which children are being born."

- Stephanie Coontz, family historian at Evergreen State College, speaking at the Council on Contemporary Families conference, April 2001

"The positive thing that conservative groups have done is to emphasize the importance of committed relationships and the involvement of both parents in raising a child. But the fact is that people can do that without being legally married. If what they decide to do is emphasize these values, not the demographics of the families in question, they will survive. But if they insist on this notion that only people who are married with children meet this criteria, they will find themselves obsolete."

- Nancy Folbre, University of Massachusetts at Amherst economist, in Salon.com June 7, 2001

"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

“One of the key components of marriage promotion programs is to build relationship skills. Our research suggests that in order to strengthen African-American families, policies will need to focus on structural and community-level barriers as well. The importance of marriage markets in explaining low African-American marriage rates following a nonmarital birth highlights the need to curb high mortality and incarceration rates for African-American men (thus increasing the ratio of African-American men to women) and the need to improve urban labor markets for African-American men (thereby increasing the ratio of African-American employed men to women). Such policies may seem more challenging than smaller-scale relationship skills program [sic]. However, without addressing these structural barriers, relationship skills programs may make little headway in strengthening African-American families.”
 - Fragile Families. “Fragile Families Research Brief.” 2004

“The idea of promoting marriage plays into hegemonic ideologies of ‘the monolithic family’ that have elevated the nuclear family with a breadwinner husband and father and a caregiver wife and mother as the most legitimate family form. Underlying this notion of the family is a traditional model that assumes both a unitary family interest and the functionality of traditional gender roles.”
 - Catlett, Beth Skilken and Julie E. Artis. “Critiquing the Case for Marriage Promotion: How the Promarriage Movement Misrepresents Domestic Violence Research.” 2004

“30%-70% of all women seeking divorce cite physical violence as a central reason for the marital dissolution. An estimated 75% of all battered women are separated or divorced. Given the prevalence of domestic violence—in particular, among the very population targeted by marriage promotion policies—it is at least equally legitimate to see divorce as a reasonable, if not prudent, individual choice to avoid abuse, a choice that governmental policy should not be designed to remove.”
 - Catlett, Beth Skilken and Julie E. Artis. “Critiquing the Case for Marriage Promotion: How the Promarriage Movement Misrepresents Domestic Violence Research.” 2004

“The research shows what we already knew from experience,” says Anne Menard of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. “Welfare is often a bridge out of family violence. It provides a way out for many women. That is one of the main reasons women’s groups are outraged that taxpayer money is used to sell women on marriage.”
 - Holcomb, Betty. “Conservatives Push for Marriage Promotion Programs.” 2002

“One of the most private, personal, and critical decisions one makes in life is if, when, and whom one should marry. It seems the ultimate in big government, if not social engineering, to have public policy anywhere near these critical, life-altering decisions; but this is precisely what some members of [government] have in mind, to the tune of \$200-300 million per year, in the context of TANF reauthorization.”
 - Jones-DeWeever, Avis. “Marriage Promotion and Low-Income Communities: An Examination of Real Needs and Real Solutions.” 2002

“It seems that when the discussion focuses on welfare, promoting self-sufficiency and economic independence is all the rage. These values are not maintained, however, when the message is sent that in order to overcome economic problems one need only to find a man willing to walk down the aisle, and then become economically dependent on his support.”
 - Jones-DeWeever, Avis. “Marriage Promotion and Low-Income Communities: An Examination of Real Needs and Real Solutions.” 2002

"The current pro-marriage agenda in anti-poverty policy is misguided for at least four reasons: [1] Non-marriage is often a result of poverty and economic insecurity rather than the other way around. [2] The quality and stability of marriage matters. Prodding couples into matrimony without helping them solve problems that make relationships precarious could leave them worse off. [3] Two-parent families are not immune from the economic stresses that put children at risk. More than one third of all impoverished young children in the U.S. today live with two parents. [4] Single parenthood does not inevitably lead to poverty. In countries with a more adequate social safety net than the United States, single parent families are much less likely to live in poverty. Even within the United States, single mothers with high levels of education fare relatively well."

- Coontz, Stephanie and Nancy Folbre. "Marriage, Poverty, and Public Policy: A Discussion Paper from the Council on Contemporary Families." 2002

"The advantages of marriage...do not derive simply from having two names on a marriage certificate, and they cannot be acquired merely by going through a formality. Rather, they grow out of a long-term and economically sustainable commitment that many people feel is beyond their reach."

- Coontz, Stephanie and Nancy Folbre. "Marriage, Poverty, and Public Policy: A Discussion Paper from the Council on Contemporary Families." 2002

"Liking the abstract idea of marriage and being able to put together a stable marriage in real life are two very different things. Unemployment, low wages, and poverty discourage family formation and erode family stability, making it less likely that individuals will marry in the first place and more likely that their marriages will deteriorate."

- Coontz, Stephanie and Nancy Folbre. "Marriage, Poverty, and Public Policy: A Discussion Paper from the Council on Contemporary Families." 2002

"Federal marriage promotion diverts welfare funds from basic economic supports, lacks public support, coercively intrudes on fundamentally private decisions, places domestic violence victims at increased risk, wastes public funds on ineffective policies, and inappropriately limits state flexibility. It sends the message that the way out of poverty for women is dependence on someone else to act as a breadwinner rather than economic self-sufficiency."

- National Organization for Women. "Why NOW Legal Defense Opposes Federal Marriage Promotion in TANF Reauthorization." 2002 or later

"[T]he federal bureaucracy has funded a minor industry of marriage counselors, relationship 'experts,' and fatherhood gurus to entice and push low-income women and men into traditional heterosexual family formations. In the process, federal policy and religious goals have intermingled in ways that seriously threaten the separation of church and state." - Hardisty, Jean. *Pushed to the Altar: The Right Wing Roots of Marriage Promotion*. 2008.

"[D]iverting government funding from proven remedies for poverty to the pie-in-the-sky reconstruction of traditional family mores is not just bad public policy; it is morally reprehensible and disingenuous." - Hardisty, Jean. *Pushed to the Altar: The Right Wing Roots of Marriage Promotion*. 2008.

"A strong case can be made that the two best methods to address poverty are education and a job that pays a living wage. Marriage is not a proven path out of poverty." - Hardisty, Jean. *Marriage as a Cure for Poverty? Social Science Through a "Family Values" Lens*. 2008.

"Offering Marriage counseling that encourages marriage and discourages divorce to low-income women reasserts a traditional, patriarchal definition of what makes a family. It downplays the danger of violence that women face in marital and nonmarital relationships, assumes that heterosexual marriage is a magic bullet that will cure poverty, and further demonizes low-income single women who decide that marriage is not the best course for them and their children." - Hardisty, Jean. Marriage as a Cure for Poverty? Social Science Through a "Family Values" Lens. 2008.

On family:

"At the core of this process is a basic redefinition of family from a unit defined exclusively by blood and procreation, to a unit increasingly defined by intentionality—what the participants intend."

- William Pinsof, family psychologist and President of the Family Institute at Northwestern University, in Family Process, vol. 41, no. 2, 2002

"For centuries, the 'family' has been equated with 'marriage' both in the public eye and in our legal system. Recent trends in cohabitation have indicated that the traditional definition of the family must be expanded beyond marriage to include unmarried cohabitations. Disregarding cohabiting unions in defining the family seriously misrepresents the reality of family life."

- Zheng Wu, sociologist at the University of Victoria, in Cohabitation: An Alternative Form of Family Living, Oxford University Press, 2000

"[Marriage can only] be treated as an important variable rather than the defining characteristic of families: the social interactions that constitute co-residential family life are not created by civil registration."

- Larry Bumpass, R, Kelly Raley, and James Sweet, sociologists and demographers, in "The Changing Character of Stepfamilies: Implications of Cohabitation and Nonmarital Childbearing," Demography, 1995

On families with children:

"If we're concerned with the well-being of families with children, we may have to rethink our policies in ways that will allow us to provide adequate benefits for families that don't meet the formal marriage definitions that have prevailed in the past."

- Larry Bumpass, University of Wisconsin sociologist and demographer, on NPR's Talk of the Nation, November 11, 1998

"[Social policy makers] could attempt to create policies to support and help people in whatever type of social structures they create, giving equal credence and respect to divorced and married people, cohabiting and married couples, to children born out of wedlock and children born to married couples, and to married and unmarried parents. From a psychological viewpoint, it is hard to imagine the value of defining any major social group that is not physically or emotionally harming itself or others as deviant or undesirable."

- William Pinsof, family psychologist and President of the Family Institute at Northwestern University, in Family Process, vol. 41, no. 2, 2002

"Treat [unmarried parents with new babies] as a couple, and give them the job training and economic support that will enable them to implement what they say they want to do. You have to do a lot more than issue them marriage licenses to bring them up to the married norm."

- Sara McLanahan, Princeton University researcher's policy recommendations regarding the unmarried families she studies. Speaking at the Council on Contemporary Families conference, April 2001

"We can encourage, pressure, preach, and give incentives to get people to marry. But we still have to deal with the reality that kids are going to be raised in a variety of ways, and we have to support all kinds of families with kids."

- Stephanie Coontz, national co-chair, Council on Contemporary Families, and a family historian at Evergreen State College, in Newsweek, May 28, 2001

"At a minimum, the four arrangements listed above [cohabitation without children, cohabitation with children, marriage, and elder pair-bonding] need to be recognized as legitimate pair-bond structures that fulfill important functions for their participants.

- William Pinsof, family psychologist and President of the Family Institute at Northwestern University, in Family Process, vol. 41, no. 2, 2002

"There is no evidence that, once adjustment is made for socio-economic status, the family created by cohabitation outside marriage performs the familial functions significantly less adequately than the family sanctioned by a legal marriage. Thus it is submitted that for the health of society equal protection and support should be given to all types of social groupings which provide the child's needs."

- Tapp, P., "The Social and Legal Position of Children of Unmarried but Cohabiting Parents," in Marriage and Cohabitation in Contemporary Societies: Areas of Legal, Social and Ethical Change, 1980

"What matters for children is not whether their parents are married when they are born but whether their parents live together while the children are growing up."

- Sara McLanahan, "Growing Up Without a Father," in Lost Fathers: The Politics of Fatherlessness in America, edited by Cynthia Daniels, 1998

"All different kinds of structures work for kids, as long as there's love, adequate supervision, structure and consistency."

- Barbara Howard, a pediatrician at Johns Hopkins University in Newsweek, May 28, 2001

"I don't assume that men and women have to be married or living together to produce a healthy child, but they do need to learn how to work together and we don't have a system that encourages that."

- Ronald Mincy, a Columbia University professor of social work, on Salon.com August 9, 2001

"The most careful studies and the most careful researchers confirm what most of us know from our own lives: The quality of any family's relationships and resources readily trumps its formal structure or form. Access to economic, educational, and social resources; the quality and consistency of parental nurturance, guidance, and responsibility; and the degree of domestic harmony, conflict, and hostility affect child development and welfare far more substantially than does the particular number, gender, sexual orientation, and marital status of parents or the family structure in which children are reared."

- Judith Stacey, "Dada-ism in the 1990s: Getting Past Baby Talk About Fatherlessness," in Lost Fathers: The Politics of Fatherlessness in America, edited by Cynthia Daniels, 1998

“Increases in work effort, particularly among mothers, is the most significant factor behind the reduction of child poverty among children living in cohabiting parent families.”

- Acs, Gregory and Sandi Nelson. “The Kids are Alright? Children’s Well-Being and the Rise in Cohabitation.” 2002

“It is important to keep in mind that if single mothers or cohabiting couples were to marry, their children’s well-being is unlikely to equal that of children currently living in married-parent families. The parents of children in married-parent families likely differ in both observable and unobservable ways from the parents of children in other living arrangements, and these differences account for some of the differences in child well-being across living arrangements.”

- Acs, Gregory and Sandi Nelson. “Changes in Family Structure and Child Well-Being: Evidence from the 2002 national Survey of America’s Families.” 2003

“Recent research shows that up to 50% of the effects of family structure on education outcomes can be accounted for by changing economic conditions in the family.”

- Aquilino, William S.. “The Life Course of Children Born to Unmarried Mothers: Childhood Living Arrangements and Young Adult Outcomes.” 1996

“Being raised in poverty places children at higher risk for a wide range of problems. Research indicates that poor children are disproportionately exposed to risk factors that may impair brain development and affect social and emotional development. A few of these risks include exposure to environmental toxins, inadequate nutrition, maternal depression, parental substance abuse, trauma and abuse, violent crime, divorce, low quality child care, and decreased cognitive stimulation and vocabulary exposure in infancy. When compared with all children, poor children are more likely to have poor health and chronic health conditions, are more likely to be born premature and at low birth weight and to develop later illnesses, are more likely to suffer from mental health problems, and are more likely to engage in higher rates of risky health-related behaviors. Finally, growing up in poverty is associated with lower occupational status and a lower wage rate as an adult.”

- Child Trends Databank. “Children in Poverty.” 2007

“Concerning child well-being, poorly handled conflict between parents can create emotional problems for children and provides children with poor models for their own relationships. Marital distress also can have negative effects on parenting by making it difficult to work together as a team in raising children and by creating distress that compromises each spouse’s ability to parent effectively, leading to spillover of hostilities or withdrawal from relationships with children.”

- Knox, Virginia and David Fein. “Supporting Healthy Marriage: Designing a Marriage Education Demonstration and Evaluation for Low-Income Married Couples.” 2008

“Controlling for differences in parents’ demographic characteristics, such as age, race, immigrant status, and parity, explains about one-third of the cohabitation-marriage difference for aggressive and anxious/depressive behaviors and about one half of the difference for withdrawn behaviors. Controlling for differences in parents’ economic and health resources explains all of the remaining difference in child outcomes. [Although parents’ relationship quality is strongly associated with child behavior outcomes, it does not account for marital status differences since married and cohabiting mothers report similar levels of relationship quality].”

- Fragile Families. “Fragile Families Research Brief.” 2005

“Marriage following a cohabiting birth is not associated with better child outcomes.”

- Fragile Families. “Fragile Families Research Brief.” 2005

“Although children raised in stable, cohabiting-parent families exhibit more behavior problems at age three than children raised in stable, married-parent families, the difference is largely due to differences in the background characteristics of the parents who choose marriage over cohabitation. Once these factors are taken into account, children of cohabiting and married parents are very similar in terms of their behavioral problems. Moreover, the children of cohabiting parents who marry after birth are no better off than the children of cohabiting parents who remain unmarried.”

- Fragile Families. “Fragile Families Research Brief.” 2005

“On the one hand, the findings may be interpreted as indicating that marital unions per se are no more beneficial to children than cohabiting unions, as long as the union remains stable. On the other hand, we know from other research that marriages are more stable than cohabiting unions and this stability is good for children. The findings also indicate that policies that seek to improve parents’ economic resources and health as well as relationship quality are likely to improve child outcomes.”

- Fragile Families. “Fragile Families Research Brief.” 2005

“Happy, healthy, stable marriages offer important benefits to adults and children. But not all marriages fit this description. Marital distress leads to harsh and inconsistent parenting, whether or not parents stay together. Studies show that a marriage marked by conflict, jealousy and anger is often worse for children’s well-being than divorce or residence from birth in a stable single-parent family.”

- Coontz, Stephanie and Nancy Folbre. “Marriage, Poverty, and Public Policy: A Discussion Paper from the Council on Contemporary Families.” 2002

*Get the statistics on parenting.