



UNCONVENTIONAL WISDOM: News You Can Use, 1st Annual Edition

A Survey of Recent Family Research and
Clinical Findings Prepared for the
Council on Contemporary Families

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 UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
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Unconventional Wisdom: News You Can Use

CCF's annual "Unconventional Wisdom" is a collection of member submissions and recent briefing papers prepared for the Council on Contemporary Families' 10th Anniversary Conference at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, May 4-5, 2007.

The Council on Contemporary Families was formed to increase communication among family researchers and practitioners from many different fields, and to help the press and public get access to accurate information and best-practice findings about how today's families work. The theme of this year's conference is a decade-long evaluation of what we have learned and what we have yet to find out about how to help America's diverse families better cope with contemporary changes and challenges. In addition to organizing the panels listed on the conference program, we surveyed CCF members to collect their most important--and sometimes surprising--recent research findings, practical experience, and clinical observations. We are publishing the results of our survey to encourage members and the press to explore these topics at greater length.

Although Unconventional Wisdom does not include the publications of all those represented here, this document provides the contact information for members for readers to contact them directly.

Unconventional Wisdom: News You Can Use

1st Annual Edition

Edited by Joshua Coleman, Senior Fellow, Council on Contemporary Families, and Stephanie Coontz, Director of Research and Public Education, Council on Contemporary Families.

No Time for Their Kids? Working Parents and Time with Children

Despite concerns of policy makers that children are not receiving sufficient parental time, married parents' time with children is higher now than during the "golden era" of the nuclear family in 1965: Married mothers increased their time in childcare by 21% (from 10.6 to 12.9 hours per week between 1965 and 2000) and fathers have more than doubled their time in childcare (from 2.6 to 6.5 hours per week). How have they done this? Mothers in particular have shed large quantities of housework in order to accommodate their increased time with children. Married parents of today's era also spend more time multitasking, and less time with their spouse and friends and extended family. Although parent-child time has increased over the years, almost half of American parents continue to feel they spend too little time with their children, particularly married fathers who spend less time overall with children than married mothers. Married mothers also long for more time for themselves and both mothers and fathers feel they have too little time for each other.

Contact Suzanne M. Bianchi, Professor and Chair of Sociology at the University of Maryland, at bianchi@umd.edu and 301.405.6394.

Contact John J. Robinson, Professor of Sociology at the University of Maryland, at jrobinson@socy.umd.edu.

Contact Melissa A. Milkie, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Maryland, at mmilkie@socy.umd.edu.

Myths About Modern Youth

Despite recent horrific events such as the killings in Virginia, most youth trends have been positive over the past 10-15 years. In 2004, violent crime in schools had fallen to less than half of the rate in 1994. The 2004 rate was one-third less than the 1991 peak rate. The high school dropout rate was eight percent in 2004 - down from 11 percent in 2000.

Binge drinking among 12th graders has declined by nearly half since the early 1980s.

Reported use of drugs by secondary school students is down from its mid-1990s peak by a third for 8th graders, a quarter for 10th graders, and an eighth for 12th graders. Daily cigarette smoking has fallen by half among 12th graders and more than half among 8th graders since the mid-1990s.

But children are far more likely to live in poverty than adults. In 2005, about more than 20 percent of children under five and 17 percent of all kids younger than 18 lived below the poverty line, compared to 8.2 percent of those 45-54 and only 10 percent of those over 65. Contact Steven Mintz, Professor of History, University of Houston, at SMintz@UH.edu and 713.805.3384.

The Myth of Closure After Loss

The idea that people can find "closure" after loss is a myth. It grows out of a mastery-oriented culture that attempts to impose an arbitrary end on things that can't in fact be "fixed," whether those be death, illness, or an irretrievable loss. An unrealistic hunger for closure actually perpetuates feelings of distress and trauma. From my experience as a researcher and family therapist, the best way to foster resiliency is to help people temper their needs for mastery and certainty, so they can learn to live with ambiguity and pain without being overwhelmed by it.

Contact Pauline Boss, Professor Emeritus, University Of Minnesota, family therapist and author of books on loss, trauma and resilience, at pboss@umn.edu and 612.625.5289.

Who is More Involved in the Community -- Married Couples or Singles?

Contrary to conventional wisdom, married couples are not the primary building blocks of community life. Married women and men have fewer ties to relatives -- they are LESS likely to visit, call, help, or have intimate talks with their parents, brothers, sisters, or other relatives than are the unmarried. Marriage also cuts off ties to the larger community: The married are less likely to hang out with neighbors or friends. Marriage even reduces political involvement, especially for women: Compared to married women, single women are more likely to attend political meetings or rallies, sign petitions, and raise money for political causes.

Contact Naomi Gerstel, Professor of Sociology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst at gerstel@sadri.umass.edu.

Contact Natalia Sarkisian, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Boston College at natalia@sarkisian.net.

Trade-Offs in Children's Changing Schedules: Less TV Watching. But Also Less Family Meal Time

Children have less free time today than they did 20 years ago -- down from 40% to 30% of their week. They also spend this time differently. They participate in more structured activities, such as sports, and spend less time in nonstructured play and television viewing. There has been a decline in meal time of about 1 hour per week. Children who spend less time eating meals have more aggressive behavior problems and lower test scores. On the other hand, sports participation is associated with fewer behavior problems and higher test scores.

Contact Sandra Hofferth, Professor of Family Studies, University of Maryland at 301.405.8501 and hofferth@umd.edu.

Adults Caring for Parents: The New Norm

Given the newly expanded lifespan, most people will spend more time caring for their parents than they will care for their children.

Contact Lillian B. Rubin, Ph.D. at lbrubin@lillianrubin.com and 415.922.8565.

Prisoners Have Families Too; Involving Them Can Help

Every year, over 600,000 adults leave prison to return to their families and communities. And every year, more than half of them are sent back to prison, many for issues related to drug use and addiction. Engaging the families of people coming home from jail and prison

in the reentry process decreased drug use among participants by 80% even without drug treatment.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, over 2.5 million children have one or both parents incarcerated. In the absence of positive intervention, children of incarcerated parents are at extremely high risk for negative personal and social behaviors such as anger, anxiety, physical aggression, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity and the potential for criminal activity. In fact, they are five times more likely than their peers to end up in prison themselves.

Contact Carol Shapiro, Founder and President, Family Justice, at cshapiro@familyjustice.org.

And Baby Makes Three

In a study of 130 couples from wedding until their first babies were three years old, John and Julie Gottman found that 67% of couples had a big drop in relationship happiness and a big increase in hostility in the first 3 years of the baby's life. In addition, the parents' hostility during pregnancy was associated with baby's responsiveness at three months.

Based on this, they designed and tested an intervention to help new parents: the workshop reversed the drop in couple happiness and the increasing hostility. They also found a reduction in postpartum depression. At three years old, the babies whose parents had been to a workshop were more advanced in terms of emotional and language development. Part of this was due to father's involvement: the workshops improved father's involvement.

Contact John Gottman and Julie Gottman, Co-Directors, The Gottman Institute, Seattle, WA, at johng@gottman.com.

The Trade-Offs of Shift Work

When parents work different shifts, this can be hard on a marriage. Yet when mothers work during the after-school and evening hours, fathers spend more time with their children, are more involved in their lives, and are rated by the children as better parents than are fathers whose wives work days. These aspects of parenting are all associated with better outcomes for children.

Contact Karen C. Gareis, Program Director, Community, Families & Work Program, Brandeis at 781.736.4886 and gareis@brandeis.edu.

The Trade-Offs of Family Change

The same forces that have made successful marriage fairer, more intimate, and more passionate than ever before in history have made alternatives to marriage more feasible and have made staying in an unsatisfying marriage seem less bearable. Marriage is becoming more optional all across the world.

Contact Stephanie Coontz, The Evergreen State College at coontzs@msn.com and 360.352.8117.

Are Older Singles Doomed to Loneliness?

All three of the major internet sites -- Match, E Harmony and Perfectmatch.com --report that their fastest growing dating population consists of the over-50 members.

Perfectmatch.com has seen significant increases in people over 60 and 70, and as a

consultant to Perfect Match I have seen piles of letters from people over 50 who are getting married and thanking us for the introduction.

Contact Pepper Schwartz, Clarence Shrag Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Washington at pepperschwartz@hotmail.com and 206.910.7586.

What Do Children Want From Their Working Parents?

A nationally representative study of more than 1000 young people in the 3rd through the 12th grades asked children: "If you were granted one wish that would change the way that your mother's/your father's work affects your life, what would that wish be?" In a parallel study, more than 600 employed mothers and fathers were asked to guess what their children would wish. Most parents (56%) guessed that their children would wish for more time with them. But more time was not at the top of children's wish list. Only 10% of children made that wish about their mothers and 15.5% made that wish about their fathers. Most children wished that their mothers (34%) and their fathers (27.5%) would be less stressed and tired.

Contact Ellen Galinsky, President and Co-Founder, Families and Work Institute at egalinsky@familiesandwork.org.

Never Married, Single Women: Who's Happy and Who Isn't at Middle Age?

At middle age, never-married single women who were happy and satisfied with their lives were not "on their own" and not defined primarily by self-reliance, but by skills at creating networks of friends and extended family and the ability to link these networks into a community. However, dissatisfied single women became more isolated as they focused most of their energy on finding a mate or trying to hold onto a problematic relationship.

Contact E. Kay Trimberger, Professor Emerita in Women's & Gender Studies at Sonoma State University, at 510.848.4033 and ktrimberkeley.edu.

Eating Disorders and the Pressure to Be Thin

In 1922, the first Miss America weighed 140 pounds at 5'7. Today, the average fashion model is 5'11 and weighs 117 lb.

Eating disorders are ranked among the top four leading causes for "burden of disease" due to life lost through death or disability. 90% of those suffering are women. Among psychiatric conditions, anorexia nervosa has the highest mortality, with an estimated 10% mortality rate at 10 years of symptom duration and 20 % at 20- year follow-up. It is the leading cause of death for young women aged 15-24 years with a general mortality rate 12 times the expected and a suicide rate 75 times greater. The mortality rate is 3 times greater than in depression, schizophrenia or alcoholism.

But older women also suffer from eating disorders. Body image dissatisfaction in midlife has increased dramatically, more than doubling from 25% in 1972 to 56% in 1997.

Contact Margo Maine, clinical psychologist and author, at mdm@mswg.org and 860.313.4431.

Are American Boys in Crisis?

We often hear about a "crisis" among boys in school -- how boys are dropping out more often getting lower grades and fewer honors, are more likely to experience behavioral

problems, and are falling behind in higher education. There are two problems with this take on gender roles.

1. Higher education is not a zero-sum game. On college campuses, female students passed males in 1982, and today 58% of college students are female. While it is true that there are fewer males than females, there are also more people going to college than ever before (the rate of increase among females is greater than the rate of increase among males, but both percentages are increasing). And men are not quite a disadvantaged gender: Over their lifetimes, female college graduates earn less than two-thirds of what male college graduates do (\$1.6 million compared to \$2.5 million) -- and only slightly more than male high school graduates (\$1.4 million).

2. To the extent there is a "crisis" it is largely concentrated among poor men and men of color. According to the U.S. department of Education, 52% of upper income white college students are male (48% female), while among lower income African American students, 32% are male and 68% are female. Among lower income Hispanics, 43% are male and 57% are female. Asian American males outnumber Asian American females in all income categories. Middle-income whites are split exactly 50-50.

The "boy crisis" depends, then, on which boys we are talking about. Middle and upper income white boys may have some problems and difficulties, but they are not in crisis. This is a crisis among lower income boys of color -- that is, race and class are more salient dimensions of this problem than is gender.

Contact Michael Kimmel, Department of Sociology, SUNY at Stony Brook, at 631.632.7708 and michael_kimmel@yahoo.com.

Marriage May Protect Men More than Women from Depression

A Pilot Project at the Ackerman Family Institute shows a definite connection between marriage, gender and depression. The most stressful life event that precipitates depression is marital conflict, while marital conflict is the single most predictable indicator of relapse. Marriage protects men from depression but not women; married men are less subject to depression compared to single men or married women.

Contact Peggy Papp, Director of Gender and Depression Project, Ackerman Family Institute at 212.722.7794 and ppapp999@aol.com.

Are Mothers "Opting Out" of the Workplace?

Between 2000 and 2004, the labor force participation by mothers dipped, prompting a spate of news reports that mothers were "opting out." But most of this was a result of the recession of 2002-2005 -- the labor force participation of childless women and of men and men also fell. The 20-year trend has been in exactly the opposite direction. Mothers are only half as likely to leave their jobs because of their children today as they were in 1984. Contact Heather Boushey, Research Economist, Center for Economic and Policy Research at 202.293.5380 x116 and hboushey@cepr.net.

Is Child Care Good or Bad for Children?

This can't be answered yes or no. It depends on the quality of the center, the number of hours spent there, the child's unique temperament, and the mother's sensitivity to her child when the child is at home, report childcare researchers Alison Clarke-Stewart (UC-Irvine) and Carollee Howes (UCLA), acstewar@uci.edu and howes@gseis.ucla.edu.

Are Single Mothers Doomed to Poverty?

Single parents in most Nordic countries do not face high rates of poverty, and even in the U.S., single mothers with a college degree who work full-time have a poverty rate of just 1.2 percent, a rate lower than the national average, according to University of Massachusetts economist Nancy Folbre, NFolbre@compuserve.com.

Are America's High Teen Pregnancy Rates Due to Our Extreme Permissiveness About Sex?

The median age at first sex is lower in several European countries than in the United States, and many European countries, such as Germany, are much more approving of teen sex than Americans, but they have lower rates of teen pregnancy, abortion, and sexually-transmitted diseases. In other areas, as well, America's preoccupation with sexual exhibitionism co-exists with exceptionally conservative attitudes toward sexuality. Italians and Spaniards are much more accepting of homosexuality than the U.S. And despite its reputation for machismo, Latin America has no explicit prohibitions against gay and lesbian adoption, such as prevail in many European countries and parts of the United States.

Contact Alejandra Sarda, Coordinator, Latin American & Caribbean Program for the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission at alejandra@iglhrc.org. Contact Stephanie Coontz, The Evergreen State College at coontzs@msn.com and 360.556.9223.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Same-Sex and Heterosexual Couples

In a 12-year study comparing gay and lesbian couples with heterosexual couples, Dr. John Gottman (University of Washington) and Dr. Robert Levenson (University of California at Berkeley) found that, overall, relationship satisfaction and quality are about the same across all couple types (straight, gay, lesbian). Compared to straight couples, gay and lesbian couples use more affection and humor when they bring up a disagreement, and partners are more positive in how they receive it. Gay and lesbian couples are also more likely to remain positive after a disagreement. Gay and lesbian partners display less belligerence, domineering and fear with each other than straight couples do.

However, gay men need to be especially careful to avoid negativity in conflict. When it comes to repair, gay couples differ from straight and lesbian couples. If the initiator of conflict in a gay relationship becomes too negative, his partner is not able to repair as effectively as lesbian or straight partners.

Contact John Gottman, Co-Director, The Gottman Institute, Seattle, WA at johng@gottman.com.

Discrimination Against Mothers Even Before They Are Hired

When applying for jobs, mothers are significantly less likely to be hired and they are offered lower salaries than equally qualified childless women. Fathers, by contrast, are slightly more likely to be hired than childless men and they are offered higher salaries. Contact Shelley J. Correll, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Cornell University at 607.255.1697 and sjc62@cornell.edu.

Are Women More Stressed than Men by Work-Life Conflict?

** Men and women who were married or had children were asked in 1977 and again in 2002, "How much do your job and family life interfere with each other?" In 1977, 41 percent of women, but just 34 percent of men, reported experiencing some or a lot of work-family interference. By 2002, however, more men (46 percent) than women (41 percent) reported experiencing work-family stress. Fathers in dual-earner families are no more likely to experience some or a lot of work-family interference (53%) as fathers who are in single earner families (52%).

Contact Ellen Galinsky, President, Families and Work Institute at egalinsky@familiesandwork.org.

New research on full-time employed dual-earner couples reveals that parental concerns about after-school time are higher among fathers than mothers.

Contact Rosalind Chait Barnett, Director of Community, Families & Work Program, Brandeis University at 781.736.2287 and rbarnett@brandeis.edu.

Home Childcare More Equal than Professional Childcare

The home is a bastion of gender equality compared to the childcare center. Dads in dual-earner couples are doing 44% of the child care, while 97% of child care center staff and 98% of kindergarten and pre-K teachers are women.

Contact Bob Drago, Professor Labor Studies and Employment Relations, Penn State University at drago@psu.edu and 814.865.0751.

Why Do Low-Income Parents Spend Money on Status Goods?

Low-income parents are not mindless consumers. But extensive interviews with them reveal that they often buy more than they intend to (and sometimes more than they admit to) for their children in an attempt to help their kids fit into an "economy of dignity" at school that transforms popular consumer goods into social belonging. Low-income parents' response to their children's consumer desires is not so much about status, individual vice, or lack of deferred gratification, but their acute sensitivity to their child's need for dignity.

Contact Allison Pugh, Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of Virginia at 434.924.6510 and ap9cd@virginia.edu.

Like Father, Like Son?

Studies have consistently found that men who have experienced abuse in their family of origin are more likely to use violence against their female partners as adults than those who did not. About a third of men in batterer intervention programs report witnessing and experiencing violence in their families of origin. But blaming all domestic abuse on childhood experiences will not do. Most men raised in violent homes do not go on to abuse their intimate partners. And many men who did not experience abuse also become abusers. Contact Etiony Aldarondo, Associate Dean for Research, University of Miami at 305.284.4372 and etiony@miami.edu.

Myths About Inter-Racial Families

Children in inter-racial families are typically assumed to be disadvantaged relative to other children. However, researchers comparing parenting practices of interracial families with

families where the parents are the same race have found that parents in interracial families spend more time and money on their children than parents who are the same race. This "biracial advantage" was found using a national survey of American families and held for all inter-racial families except those with a black father and white mother.

Contact Kerry Ann Rockquemore, Associate Professor of African American Studies and Sociology, University of Illinois at Chicago at rockquem@uic.edu and 312.996.4694.

Men Also Lose After Divorce

Many press accounts of the impact of divorce still quote the 1987 claim of Lenore Weitzman that the standard of living of mothers declines by 73% one year after divorce while that of fathers increases by 42%. Most experts now believe that this estimate was greatly exaggerated. Indeed, the authors in W. S. Comanor (Ed.) (2004) *The law and economics of child support payments* argue that divorced fathers suffer financially as much, or even more, than divorced mothers when maternal tax benefits and direct expenditures by fathers on children are factored in.

Contact Professor Gordon E. Finley, Florida International University at 305.495.8962 and finley@fiu.edu.

Comparing the Outcome of Relationship Dissolution for Men and Women

What happens when couples dissolve their relationship? Both men and women experience income losses, but women experience a sharper drop. Married men whose relationships dissolve see an average decline of 22.3 percent in their household incomes, while married women see an average decline of 58.3 percent. The income loss for men and women in cohabiting relationships is less -- 10 percent for men and 33.1 percent for women. But because cohabitators have lower incomes in the first place, their income losses are especially likely to leave them in precarious economic circumstances. Only 9 percent of formerly married men are poor after dissolution, while nearly 20% of cohabiting men are living in poverty after their break-ups. And most vulnerable of all are cohabiting African-American and Hispanic women whose relationships dissolve.

Contact Pamela J. Smock, Associate Vice President for Research, Social Sciences & Humanities, Professor of Sociology & Women's Studies, and Research Professor, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan at pjsmock@umich.edu and 734.763.2264. Contact Sarah Avellar, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. at savellar@mathematica-mpr.com.

How Many Get Child Support; How Much Do They Get?

Child support agreements and collections have improved somewhat in the past decade. The proportion of custodial mothers with child support agreements increased from 60 to 64 percent over the past 10 years. As of 2003, custodial parents received almost 70 percent of the money owed to them by the non-custodial parent, up from just under 60 percent in 1993. However, despite high-profile cases among the very rich, the average amount of child support is hardly a princely sum. Custodial parents who were owed child support in 2003 were due an average of \$5,100 each, and were able to collect an average of just \$3,500 each. Contact Paula England, Professor of Sociology, Stanford University at 650.723.4912 and pengland@stanford.edu.

How Family Complements Work

The distinctions between "work" and "family" have been highly exaggerated and the lessons learned in one sphere are readily transferable to the other. A parent's job is very similar to the challenges facing a corporate manager or other leader of adults, according to more than 100 highly successful professionals. Management experts and child-rearing authorities offer virtually the same advice to their very different audiences.

Contact Ann Crittenden, Author, at ann.crittenden@rcn.com and 202.362.3419.

Double Jeopardy for Abused Women

Once an abusive relationship has ended and the victim and her children no longer live with the abuser, she may face a second kind of threat when an angry batterer seeks revenge for losing control over his victim. Some batterers' lawyers have used an unsubstantiated "parental alienation syndrome," claiming that their children's fear or resentment is the fault not of the man's maltreatment of their mother but of her turning the children against him.

Contact Rhea V. Almeida, Executive Director, Institute for Family Services, at 732.873.0744 and RheaAlmeid@aol.com.

Are the Children of Working Mothers Dissatisfied with Their Childhoods?

Based on a representative sample of a major metropolitan area, almost eight out of ten young adults who grew up in a home with a work-committed mother believe that this was the best option. In contrast, those who lived in homes where mothers did not work in a committed way are more divided in their outlooks, with close to half wishing their moms had pursued a different path.

Those who lived in a single-parent home are similarly divided. While a slight majority wished that their biological parents had stayed together, close to half concluded that, while not ideal, a parental separation provided a better alternative than living in a conflict-ridden or silently unhappy home. Conversely, among children who grew up in an intact home, most agreed that this was the best arrangement, but four out of ten felt their parents might have been better off apart.

In all these family arrangements, sustained parental support and economic security are more important than family form in shaping young adults' satisfaction with their childhood experiences.

Contact Kathleen Gerson, Professor of Sociology, New York University, at kathleen.gerson@nyu.edu and 212.998.8376.

Good Reasons for Men to do Housework: Happier Marriages, Better Kids

Numerous studies reveal the benefits to a relationship and family when a father participates in housework. Women are more prone to depression and to fantasize about divorce when they do a disproportionate share of the housework. Wives are more sexually interested in husbands who do more housework. And children appear to be better socially adjusted when they regularly participate in doing chores with Dad. In my clinical experience, men do more in homes when they have stronger egalitarian attitudes, and when their wives are willing to negotiate standards, act assertively, prioritize the marital friendship, and avoid gatekeeping.

Contact Joshua Coleman, Author, Psychologist, and Training Faculty, San Francisco Psychotherapy Research Group, at 510.547.6500 or visit him online: www.drjoshuacoleman.com.

Unwed Mothers Are Not Necessarily Single Parents

When we hear of an unmarried woman having a baby, many of us assume that the father is long gone and not involved. But, in recent years, in over 80% of births out of wedlock, the couple is still in a romantic relationship and hopes to raise the child together. In fact, in about half they are living together.

Contact Marcy Carlson, Associate Professor, Columbia University School of Social Work, at 212.851.2225 and mjc2001@columbia.edu.

Contact Waldo E. Johnson, Jr., Associate Professor, School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago, at 773.834.400 and wejohnso@uchicago.edu.

Improving the Outcome of Divorce

Fifty percent of US counties either require or invite divorcing parents to attend an educational program prior to obtaining a divorce. Outcome research shows that participating in programs limited to one or two sessions, and 2 to 4 hours in length, improves parents' communication, so that they expose their children to less destructive parental conflict. Most parents, even when initially resistant to attending, indicate satisfaction with the programs and report better understanding the negative affects of poorly handled parental conflict on children.

Contact Karen R. Blaisure, Professor of Family & Consumer Sciences, Western Michigan University, at 269.387.3663 and karen.blaisure@wmich.edu.

Do Mothers Stay Home When Their Husbands Earn Good Money?

People often think that women whose husbands make good money stay home when they have children. But it takes being married to men in the top 5th percentile (men earning more than \$120,000 a year) to seriously reduce women's employment -- only 54 percent of mothers with husbands with these top earnings worked for pay. Among married women whose husbands were in the top 25 to 5 percent of all earners (making salaries ranging from about \$60,000 to \$120,000), 72 percent of mothers worked outside the home, almost identical to the 71 percent work participation figures among married moms whose husbands' earnings were in the lowest 25 percent of men's wages. Women's own education has a much bigger effect on her likelihood of working than her husband's earnings; highly-educated women who can earn a lot typically don't become stay-at-home mothers.

Contact Paula England, Professor of Sociology, Stanford University, at 650-723-4912 and pengland@stanford.edu.

Why Do Women Seek Divorce More Often Than Men?

Women lose more economically from divorce than men. But, despite this, in about two-thirds of cases, women are the ones who wanted the divorce more than their husbands, according to reports of divorced men as well as divorced women. This may be because women have higher standards of emotional satisfaction from relationships.

Contact Paula England, Professor of Sociology, Stanford University, at 650.723.4912 and pengland@stanford.edu.

Contact Liana Sayer, Assistant Professor of Sociology, the Ohio State University, at 614.292.8402 and sayer.12@sociology.osu.edu.

Can Heather Thrive with Two Mommies?

Research does not support the conventional belief that children need both a mother and a father, even though two parents are usually better than one. Although there are average differences in the parenting skills and behaviors of mothers and fathers, research does not demonstrate any exclusively maternal or paternal contributions to child development. Children raised by two mothers develop at least as successfully as children parented by a mother and father.

Contact Judith Stacey, Professor of Sociology and Director of Undergraduate Studies, New York University, at 212.228.9838 and judith.stacey@nyu.edu.

What About Three?

South African experience suggests that legalizing polygamy can help to erode its popularity. Contact Judith Stacey, Professor of Sociology and Director of Undergraduate Studies, New York University, at 212.228.9838 and judith.stacey@nyu.edu.

Some Surprising Truths About Marriage

For Better AND For Worse - All marriages are bad marriages: success depends on how much the good marriage outweighs the bad. The emotional quality of a marriage can be much more fluid than is generally recognized: a good marriage can decline and a bad marriage improve over the years, and even in a shorter span of time. Such changes may sometimes be due to external stresses rather than problems within the couple relationships.

Tolstoy was Wrong - Happy marriages are not all alike. There are different types of successful marriage, and some couples can seem to violate all the rules of good relationships and thrive.

Contact Arlene Skolnick, Visiting Scholar, NYU Sociology Department, at Ajsko@aol.com and 212-877 5158.

The Double Burden of Working Women - Before and After Having Children

Non-parents often take on tasks from employed parents in the workplace; that's hardly surprising in a society with so few supports for either parents or employees. But the non-parents who take on these tasks tend to be women who either will be or have been mothers.

Contact Bob Drago, Professor of Labor Studies & Women's Studies, Penn State University, at drago@psu.edu and 814-865-0751.

Myths About African-American Families

Commentators often emphasize the disorganization of African American family life and the disengagement of Black men from family life. But Blacks have MORE ties to their extended families. Black women AND Black men are more likely to live with or near their relatives than Whites.

When it comes to help and support, Black and White men are similar. It's women who are different. Black women are much more involved in giving help with housework, rides and

child care to their relatives, although White women are more likely to give money or emotional support.

What can explain these race differences? Politicians often suggest that race differences can be traced to cultural differences. But we find that class trumps culture. Blacks and Whites of the same social class have about the same level of involvement with relatives.

Contact Naomi Gerstel, Professor of Sociology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst at gerstel@sadri.umass.edu.

Contact Natalia Sarkisian, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Boston College, at natalia@sarkisian.net.

Do High-Earning Wives Harm Their Husbands' Health?

On average, husbands whose wives out earn them report poorer health than husbands who are the primary breadwinner. But outdated ideas of masculinity -- not wives' work -- are to blame. It is men who subscribe to antiquated ideas of the male breadwinner who report poorer health when they earn less than their wives.

Contact Kristen W. Springer, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Rutgers, at 732.445.4015 and kspringer@sociology.rutgers.edu.

Similar findings are reported by Boston researchers who examined the relationship between husband's and wife's salaries and each partner's evaluation of the quality of their marriage. As the gap between her salary and her partner's closed, there was no effect on the wife's marital-role quality. However, especially among men who highly prized the salary rewards of their work, marital quality decreased as their wives' salary approached theirs.

Contact Rosalind Chait Barnett, Director of Community, Families & Work Program, Brandeis University, at 781.736.2287 and rbarnett@brandeis.edu.

Away from Home Alone: Unaccompanied Immigrant Children

When we think of immigrants who come to this country without legal authorization, we usually picture adults. However, large numbers of these immigrants are children under 18, and a significant number of these children are here without parental and legal guardians. In 2006 101,952 immigrant children were apprehended by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Customs and Border Protection. Most of these children were from Mexico and were returned voluntarily without being detained. The same year DHS detained 7,746 unaccompanied immigrant children, who were later transferred to the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). Three countries-Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador-accounted for 85% of the UIC detained in ORR custody.

Contact Etiony Aldarondo, Associate Dean for Research, University of Miami, at 305.0284.4372 and etiony@miami.edu.

Men and Women: Same Difference

In contrast to the media focus on gender differences, a new consensus challenging this view is emerging from the research literature. Many well-designed studies find no significant gender differences with respect to such cognitive and social behaviors as nurturance, sexuality, aggression, self-esteem, and math and verbal abilities. The big story is that there is far greater within-gender variability on such behaviors than there is between-gender difference. For example, when young boys act up and get physical we are accustomed to

hearing their behavior explained away by their high levels of testosterone. In fact, boys' and girls' testosterone levels are virtually identical during the preschool years when rough-and-tumble play is at its peak.

Contact Rosalind Chait Barnett, Director of Community, Families & Work Program, Brandeis University, at 781.736.2287 and rbarnett@brandeis.edu.

Why Adoption Needs to be More Open

* Birthmothers adjust better in their lives after placing a child for adoption if they have ongoing information from or contact with the adoptive families.

* Adult adoptees are the only Americans, other than those in the federal Witness Protection Program, who don't have routine access to their own records.

Contact Adam Pertman, Executive Director, Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, at 212.925.4089, 617.332.8944 and info@adoptioninstitute.org.

How the Rising Age of Marriage Adds to Family Diversity

The number of heterosexual unmarried cohabiting couples has soared, from 3.1 million in 1990 to 4.6 million in 2000 to 5.2 million in 2005. Inter-racial marriages, illegal in many states until 40 years ago, have also increased. In 1970, less than 2% of married couples in the US were interracial. By 2005, the number of such marriages had risen more than three fold, with interracial couples representing 7.5 percent of all married couples.

The independence of young adults helps explain why we have so much more diversity in family types now than we had in the past. In the past, the surveillance of parents and guardians prevented nontraditional unions. Today, however, young adults are far more independent than at any time in the past. Popular wisdom holds that young adults are returning home to the *parental nest in record numbers (the so-called boomerang effect), but this is a misperception.

Contact Michael J. Rosenfeld, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Stanford University, at mrosenfe@stanford.edu and 650.723.3958.

Are Increasing Rates of Interracial Marriage Really a Symbol of Changing Race Relations

June 12th, 2007 marks the 40th anniversary of the historic Supreme Court decision that struck down state laws prohibiting interracial marriage. It has been widely reported that the rates of interracial marriages have increased fourfold since 1970 and that opposition to interracial marriage in opinion polls has steadily decreased. But inter-racial marriages still represent only a sliver of all marriages. Researchers have also found that while more young adults are dating, having sex, and cohabiting with someone of a different race, interracial relationships are considerably less likely than same-race relationships to lead to marriage. While many argue that race is declining in significance, the fact that interracial marriages continue to hover in the single digits fails to provide evidence of widespread behavioral change.

Contact Kerry Ann Rockquemore, Associate Professor of African American Studies and Sociology, University of Illinois at Chicago, at rockquem@uic.edu and 312.996.4694.

Preventing Risky Behaviors Among Latino Youths

Latino youth are more likely than whites to have sexual intercourse before the age of 13 and multiple sexual partners, according to the national Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System. Heterosexual contact is the major mode of HIV transmission among Latino adolescents. Other studies have shown that Latino adolescents also are less likely to use condoms than African American or white adolescents. There is growing evidence that behavioral training, which is culturally tailored and age-appropriate, is more effective with minority adolescents than traditional sex education programs. A culturally tailored HIV-prevention program can help reduce risky sexual behaviors among Latino adolescents, even a year after students attended the training, according to a study led by University of Michigan and University of Pennsylvania researchers.

Contact Karl Leif Bates, Duke University, at bates@duke.edu and 919.812.6603.

Differences Between Benefits of Cohabiting and Marrying Have Been Exaggerated

Kelly Musick and Larry Bumpass analyzed how transitions into marriage and cohabitation are associated with changes in partners' happiness, health, and social ties. They found that, in many domains, intimate partnerships confer benefits irrespective of their legal form. Moreover, when differences exist, they tend to dissipate over time.

Contact Kelly Musick, Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of Southern California, at 213.740.5047 and musick@usc.edu.

Marriage Does Not Protect Children When Their Parents Fight

Kelly Musick, Ann Meier, and Larry Bumpass have examined the benefits of marriage for children and found that exposure to marital conflict in biological two-parent families is related to children's risk-taking and transitions to adulthood, often in ways that are indistinguishable from living in a single-parent or stepparent family. Further, exposure to marital conflict in early childhood appears to have effects independent of whether parents separate. Although, on average, children tend to fare better living with two biological married parents, the quality of parental relationships clearly matters.

Contact Kelly Musick Assistant, Professor of Sociology, University of Southern California, at 213.740.5047 and musick@usc.edu.

Dismantling Families of Color: Incarcerated Women and Their Children

Over the last two decades the percentage of women of color in prison has increased 800%. At the end of 2004, over one million women were in the criminal justice custody, either in prison, jail, on parole or probation. Prior to their arrest, 64% of mothers in state and 84% in federal prisons were the primary caregivers for their children. In consequence, many youth of color have been left without consistent family support, and society has failed to provide the social services and economic resources needed to compensate for this loss. As a result, these youths are much more vulnerable to ending up institutionalized themselves. Contact Andraé L. Brown, Professor of Counseling Psychology, Lewis & Clark College, at albrown@lclark.edu.

Teens and the Internet

Contrary to popular opinion, young teens do not use the net as a substitute for real friendships. The majority of young teenagers are in deep conversations on the internet.

Families that encourage conversations about their children's involvement fare better than those who simply ban its use.

Contact Ellen Pulleyblank Coffey, Family Psychologist, Adjunct Faculty, Smith College School for Social Work; Research Fellow, Center for Innovative Practice at Smith College, at 510.849.1608 and Ellen@BerkeleyFamilyTherapy.com.

Are African-Americans Less Tolerant of Homosexuality Than Whites?

Many people assume that the centrality of the church in African-American communities and culture results in a more homophobic environment for black lesbian and gay people in their racial/ethnic communities.

However, this is not the case. Data from the 2000 U.S. Census reveals that black same-sex partners are much more likely to live in cities and small towns that have predominantly black populations, rather than majority white locals or locations like San Francisco that are traditionally thought of as the dominant spaces where gay and lesbian people settle. Researchers of minority gay/lesbian populations do not find African-American communities to be any less tolerant of this group than the larger U.S. population more generally.

Contact Mignon Moore, Professor of Sociology, University of California, Los Angeles, at moore@soc.ucla.edu.

Raunch Culture Enters the Therapy Office

Since 2000, my clinical practice has seen a dramatic rise in the number of girls and young women (aged 13 to 21) who've found themselves in the midst of some kind of overwhelming sexual experience, usually involving some kind of exhibitionism or trading sex for favors/social standing. The transition in this country towards "porn sex" as normative sexuality is causing intense confusion among many middle-and high-school girls about whether sexiness and sexual pleasure have anything to do with each other, or with the notion of personal choice.

Contact Michael Simon, MFT, Director of Counseling & Student Support, Bentley School Lafayette, California, at Michael@PracticalHelpForParents.com.

Is There A Stalled Revolution in Men's Involvement with Children?

When we compare the work-day hours Gen-X and Boomer fathers spend caring for and doing things with their children in 2002, we find that Gen-X fathers spend significantly more time with their children, an average of 3.4 hours per workday versus an average of 2.2 hours for Boomer fathers -- a difference of more than 1 hour. Because Gen-X fathers typically have younger children than Boomer fathers, we adjusted for the age of youngest child and still found the same significant difference favoring Gen-X.

Contact Ellen Galinsky, President, Families and Work Institute, at egalinsky@familiesandwork.org.

The Gender Spectrum: What Helps Children

Based on my clinical work with parents and children, I am conducting an investigation of gender variant children, particularly those who are declaring their gender to be other than the one they were assigned at birth. My preliminary conclusions are that the vast majority of these children "just come" to their parents, rather than having their sexuality shaped by

them. Parents who attempt to bend their child's twig, often on the advice of a mental health professional, are at risk for generating anxiety reactions or depression in their children, whereas the parents who make room for their children to express the gendered self demonstrate social confidence and closer bonding to their parents, who they feel have understood, accepted, and supported them.

Contact Diane Ehrensaft, Psychoanalytic Institute of Northern California, at 510.547.4147 and dehrensaft@earthlink.net.

When Parents Have Successive Partners: Differences Between White and Black Families

Our research has shown that white children who experienced the movements of three or four parents or parents' partners in or out of their homes showed more behavioral problems, such as vandalism, truancy, and increased aggression, than those who had no such transitions. This was true even after controlling for the mother's delinquent behavior when she was a teenager. Black children who experienced similar transitions, however, did not show more behavioral problems. It's possible that the strength of the extended black family -- the greater role of grandmothers, for instance -- may lessen the upheaval caused by the break-up and formation of marriages and cohabiting relationships.

Contact Paula Fomby, Associate Research Scientist, John Hopkins University, at 410.516.0817 and pfomby@jhu.edu.

Contact Andrew Cherlin, Benjamin H. Griswold Professor of Public Policy, Department of Sociology, Johns Hopkins University, at 410.516.2370 and cherlin@jhu.edu.

Divorce Education Programs

Fifty percent of US counties either require or invite divorcing parents to attend an educational program prior to obtaining a divorce. Outcome research shows that participating in programs as limited to one or two sessions, 2 to 4 hours in length, improves parents' communication, so that they expose their children to less destructive parental conflict. Most parents, even when initially resistant to attending, indicate satisfaction with the programs, report better understanding the negative affects of poorly handled parental conflict on children, and note their intentions of using the knowledge or skills covered in the program.

Contact Karen Blaisure, Ph.D., LMFT, CFLE, Professor, Western Michigan University, at 269.387.3663 and karen.blaisure@wmich.edu.

Does Divorce Make You Happy?

Our research shows that it can make you less depressed. When we compare men and women in distressed marriages with men and women who have divorced and left their distressed marriages, it turns out that the people who stay are more likely to be depressed than those who leave in the short run. Over time, some of the relief from divorcing from a distressed marriage wears off, perhaps due to the challenges of being single and taking care of a family. Still even after the passage of time, people who leave are a little less likely to be depressed than people who stay.

Contact Virginia Rutter, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Framingham State College, at vrutter@gmail.com and 508.626.4863.

Same-Sex Couples Closer Than Heterosexual Married Couples?

In a research study comparing 52 lesbian couples, 50 gay male couples, and 1,140 heterosexual married couples, we examined couples' levels of emotional closeness and flexibility of rules and roles. Prevailing societal stereotypes would predict that lesbians will be closest of the three couple types (because women are socialized to be more relationship-oriented, nurturing and cooperative) and gay male couples the most distant (because men are socialized to strive for independence, be competitive, less nurturing, and gay men in particular are thought to be unable to sustain committed relationships because they prefer non-monogamy).

In accord with these stereotypes, our research showed that lesbian couples were indeed significantly closer than gay male or heterosexual couples. However, contrary to stereotypes, gay male couples proved much closer than heterosexual couples. In addition, the two groups of same-sex couples were more flexible in terms of roles and rules than were heterosexual married couples. These findings and many other research results suggest that same-sex couples frequently have closer and more egalitarian relationships than heterosexual couples.

Contact Robert-Jay Green, Executive Director, Rockway Institute for LGBT Research & Public Policy, and Distinguished Professor, California School of Professional Psychology, at rjgreen@alliant.edu and 425.955.2121.

The Critical Importance of Friends

Here are some very different questions with the same answer:

1. What is common to the life experiences of people who report positive well-being in later life?
2. Why do some new parents do better than others in the two years after a child is born?
3. Why is it that older women who have always been single are so unlikely to be lonely?

Answer: They all spend time with friends.

Contact Bella DePaulo, Professor of Psychology, University of California, Santa Barbara, at depaulo@psych.ucsb.edu and 805.565.9582.

Does Marriage Protect Children Against the Risk of Parental Separation?

Although the risk of parental separation appears higher among children of unmarried cohabiting parents than among children of married parents in any given society, that risk is highly variable across time and place. In recent years for instance, children of unmarried cohabiting parents in Sweden have been less likely to experience parental separation than children of married parents in the U.S.

Contact Patrick Heuveline, Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Chicago, at pheuveli@uchicago.edu and 773.834.2691.

Many Fathers Have Better Relationships with Their Children Post-Divorce

Although we hear most often about those divorced fathers who disappear from their children's lives, we overlook the fact that many fathers and their children have better relationships after divorce. Many fathers actually spend more, rather than less, time with their children after divorce. In a long-term study of divorced families, about half of the grown children report that their relationships with their fathers improved after their

parents were divorced. They said that their fathers spent more dedicated time with them and attended many of their extracurricular and school activities.

Contact Constance Ahrons, Professor Emerita, University of Southern California, Director, Divorce and Remarriage Consulting Associates, at 858.274.8943 and cahrons@usc.edu.

For Some Children, Marriage is More Stressful Than Divorce

In a long-term study of divorce and its aftermath, over one-third of the grown children felt their parents' marriage was more stressful than the divorce. For some children of divorce, it is actually their "intact" family life prior to the divorce that caused most of the emotional damage. In those homes, divorce may come as a relief when it reduces the long-term daily interparental conflict that they lived with before their parents separated.

Contact Constance Ahrons, Professor Emerita, University of Southern California, Director, Divorce and Remarriage Consulting Associates, at 858.274.8943 and cahrons@usc.edu.

Fathers Who Take Leave Are Better Parents

Recent research based on the UK's Millennium Cohort Study concluded that fathers with access to parental or paternity leave are 5 times as likely to take some leave after the birth of a child compared to fathers who had no such rights. And fathers who take leave after the birth are more involved in the care and development of the child 8 to 12 months later.

Contact Steve Wisensale, Professor of Human Development and Family Studies, University of Connecticut, at 860.486.4576 and steven.wisensale@uconn.edu.

Marriage in Flux

Marriage has changed more in the last 35 years than the previous 350 (and possibly even the last 3,500). All the "rules" of marriage are in flux. Until the 1980s, high-achieving women were less likely to marry than women with low income or occupational levels. Now they are more likely to marry. When a wife took a job, it used to destabilize marriage. Now it seems to stabilize it.

Contact Stephanie Coontz, The Evergreen State College, at coontzs@msn.com and 360-556-9223.

Limitations of Family and Medical Leave

Five facts about the Family and Medical Leave Act not recognized by the general public are 1) it only applies to 6% of corporations and 60% of the workforce; 2) it does not include grandchildren caring for grandparents; 3) a corporation can exempt any employee who is in the top 10% of the company's pay scale; 4) it does not apply to same-sex partners or civil unions; and 5) it is far less generous than the family leave policies of other wealthy countries.

Contact Steve Wisensale, Professor of Human Development and Family Studies, University of Connecticut, at 860-486-4576 and steven.wisensale@uconn.edu.

Parents on the Firing Line

In my clinical practice, I am seeing an increasing number of parents who feel shamed, humiliated, or rejected by their grown children. This appears to be due to several changes that have occurred over the past century.

§ While the transition from a more authoritarian household to a democratic household has created greater potential for more mutual affection, it also creates greater opportunity for the child to reject or evaluate the parent's worth.

§ The increased prevalence of divorce has meant that many parents, fathers in particular, spend far less time with their children. Divorce also creates opportunities for children to evaluate their parent's effectiveness as spouses and parents, with the other parent often serving as collaborator in constructing this reality.

§ The increased power of the peer group has weakened parental influence at the same time that politicians, therapists, and talk show hosts blame parents for child outcomes. This is especially problematic because parental self-doubt and anguish can be confusing to children of any age, and may help children believe that they have a better case against their parents than they often do.

Contact Joshua Coleman, Ph.D., Author and Training Faculty, San Francisco Psychotherapy Research Group, at 510.547.6500, or visit him online: www.drjoshuacoleman.com.

Terms of Endearment Make for Better Marriages

Nicknames, pet names, and other terms of endearment (like "Sweet Pea," "Schnookums," and "Pussy Cat") aren't just fun to make up and use, but are actually related to greater marital satisfaction, according to researchers Carol Bruess, Judy Pearson, and Anna Kudak. In their studies of couples and their language rituals, they found that nicknames and other "idiosyncratic communication" (words, phrases and/or gestures that have meaning just between the members of a relationship) create intimacy and closeness. Developing connection rituals of any kind is essential for creating emotional bonds and a "culture of two" in marriage.

Contact Carol Bruess, Associate Professor of Communication and Family Studies, University of St. Thomas, at 651.644.2332 and cjbruess@stthomas.edu.

Modern Parents: Are They Self-Centered or More Dedicated Than Ever?

Myth: Many youth are foundering today because their parents have adopted selfish modern values and are neglecting their parental duties.

Reality: Most parents are investing more time, energy, and resources in their teenagers and even their young adult children than ever before. But teens need more from their parents, over a longer period, than ever before. With the transition to adulthood longer and more difficult than in the past, some parents simply do not have the resources to help their teens and 20-somethings cope with the challenges. The result is that the disadvantages of vulnerable children multiply as they age, creating new forms of inequality.

Contact Wayne Osgood, Professor in the Crime, Law and Justice Program of the Department of Sociology at Pennsylvania State University, at wosgood@psu.edu and 814.865.1304.

Contact Idy Gitelson, Clinical Psychologist, at idygitelson@comcast.net.

Dads and Daughters

According to a 15 year study of daughters in college, most college-educated daughters discriminate against Dad when it comes to giving him the same chance they give their Moms to get to know one another, to talk about personal matters, to have meaningful conversations or to allow him to express sadness or grief. Dad is still more likely than Mom to be treated as a critical judge and a banking machine.

Contact Linda Nielsen, Professor of Adolescent Psychology & Women's Studies, Wake Forest University, at 336-758-5345.

The Only Child Disconnect

Single-child families are the fastest-growing families in this country and in most industrialized Western European countries as well. Over the past 20 years, the percentage of women nationwide who have one child has more than doubled, from 10% to 23%. In 2003, single-child families in the U.S. outnumbered two-child families - 20% vs. 18%. Still, according to a 2004 Gallup poll, only 3% of Americans think a single-child family is the ideal family size. There's a real disconnect between the perception of the ideal and the reality of what people are doing.

Contact Deborah Siegel, Ph.D., Author, Consultant, and Fellow, Woodhull Institute, at 646.265.8725 or 212.724.1419, or visit her online: www.deborahsiegel.net.

Hard Work Isn't Paying Off

The old adage that "Hard work pays off" is a myth for at least one out of four full-time, year-round working parents in the U.S. Wages have stagnated or decreased for millions of working men over the past several decades, and fewer firms have career ladders anymore. Contact Roberta Iversen, Associate Professor of Social Work, University of Pennsylvania, at riversen@sp2.upenn.edu and 215.898.5529.

Optimal Leave

Based on the experience of other countries with paid family leaves, the optimal amount of leave time to be granted to parents, following birth or adoption, is about six months. That provides time for parental bonding and helps to accommodate breastfeeding, without damaging parents' employment outcomes. Longer-term leaves can have harmful effects on parents' future employment prospects.

Contact Janet Gornick, Professor of Political Science at the Graduate Center and Baruch College, at 646.312.4422 and Janet_Gornick@baruch.cuny.edu.

Making Sense of Statistical Claims

1. Claim: Divorce causes criminality. Fact: A large majority of criminals come from families of divorce. But a very small proportion of children from families of divorce are criminals. In the case of those who do, the divorce may have been a symptom, not a cause, of dysfunctions that led to bad outcomes for children.

2. Claim: Children fare better, and so do their parents, in two-parent married families. Fact: This statement is statistically true when comparing single parent and two parent heterosexual couple families, but

(a) much (though not all) of that effect is that parents who divorce tend to be at war both before and after the divorce, and other selection factors;

(b) the evidence that children fare better when their parents stay together even when the parents are very unhappy is based on very small samples and applies at best to parents who stay together in low conflict marriages; and

(c) there is no evidence from systematic prospective intervention studies that getting cohabiting parents to marry will improve the life of their children.

If two parents make a longterm public commitment to each other, and have some barriers to throwing in the towel too easily, it stands to reason that children will benefit. Still, it is not correct to infer a strong causal statement that children of unmarried parents will do badly and children of married parents will do well.

Contact Philip Cowan, Professor Emeritus, Psychology, University of California, Berkeley at pcowan@socrates.berkeley.edu and 510.642.2055.

Contact Carolyn Pape Cowan, Adjunct Professor Emerita, Psychology, University of California, Berkeley at ccowan@uclink4.berkeley.edu and 510.642.2055.

More Racial-Ethnic Diversity Among Children Than Adults

The percent of children under 18 who are non-Hispanic whites fell from 74 percent in 1980 to 59 percent in 2004. In contrast, 82 percent of adults over 65 are non-Hispanic whites, and only 8 percent are African American, 6 percent are Hispanic, and 3 percent are Asian. Between 1980 and 2004, the proportion of children who are Hispanic more than doubled, jumping from 9 to 19 percent. The proportion who are Asian or Pacific Islander doubled from 2 to 4 percent, while the percentage who are African American remained at 15 percent.

Contact Steven Mintz, Professor of History, University of Houston at SMintz@UH.edu and 713.805.3384.

What Has Changed about What Men and Women Want in a Mate?

It's the perennial question: What do men and women want in a mate? Since the 1930s, researchers have been asking college men and women to rank 18 characteristics on a scale of unimportant to extremely important--and my, how times have changed! The headline over seven decades is the rise in importance of love and mutual attraction -- and the decline of chastity: Ranked #5 for women and #4 for men in 1939, in 2008, love and mutual attraction is topping the charts for both sexes, while chastity, ranked #10 for both men and women in the 1930s, has plummeted to dead last in 2008. For men, education and income has risen in the rankings and for women, a trend that began in the 1960s and continues today. For women, a man's desire for a family is on the rise and whether he's got a "pleasing disposition" seems less important than it was even a decade ago.

Contact Christine B. Whelan, Visiting Assistant Professor, University of Iowa, Department of Sociology at christine-whelan@uiowa.edu and 319.335.2484 or cell, 646.522.6456.

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About CCF

The Council on Contemporary Families is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to providing the press and public with the latest research and best-practice findings about American families. Our members include demographers, economists, family therapists, historians, political scientists, psychologists, social workers, sociologists, as well as other family social scientists and practitioners.

Founded in 1996 and now based in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Miami, the Council's mission is to enhance the national understanding of how and why contemporary families are changing, what needs and challenges they face, and how these needs can best be met. To fulfill that mission, the Council holds annual conferences, open to the public, and issues periodic briefing papers and fact sheets.

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