

THERE IS ONLY ONE PUBLIC INTEREST IN CIVIL MARRIAGE ...

It is the only institution that unites children with their moms and dads.

Whether or not this institution is important for society, is very much a subject of debate today.

Does a child have a fundamental right to be born into a family with his or her own mother and father, a right internationally recognized in the U.N Convention on the Rights of the Child? Is there value in the government promoting marriage for men and women, or have we come to the point where a statement in a U.S. Justice Department legal brief is true: "The government does not contend that there are legitimate government interests in 'creating a legal structure that promotes the raising of children by both of their biological parents'" (Smelts v. U.S. Doc. 42 at 8-9)?

Knowing and being connected with one's mother and father is a desire common to every person. Kinship and extended families are part of our identity and are the only relationships in which we are accepted simply because we exist. However marriage, the rock on which the family is built, has become disconnected from the interests and right of children.

A recent Pew Research survey indicated that 46% of 18-29 yr-olds believe the increase in alternative families is a good thing, without realizing the only thing common to alternative families is a child deprived of his or her mother or father or both—hardly a role model.

Agreeing that there is a serious problem, scholars from across the political spectrum are making recommendations, in publications ranging from the Brookings Institution to the Heritage Foundation, that there is a need for a government sponsored social marketing campaign to promote marriage for men and women before they have children. They provide examples of marketing campaigns that have changed the cultural attitudes about smoking, exercise, drinking and driving, and seatbelts. In addition to that, more fundamental questions should be asked including:

- Where do the young learn about what marriage is?
- How do they form opinions about marriage and family that affect personal decisions they make about marriage?
- What public policies and school curriculum undermine children's understanding of the value of marriage before having children?
- Is it just to have laws that encourage intentionally depriving children of knowing and being cared-for by their mothers or fathers or both without just cause?

These are difficult questions that must be considered when making decisions about public policy, particularly those that impact how marriage, family, and procreation are dealt with in the law or presented in school curriculum.

The Marriage and Family Crisis Cannot Be Ignored

The decline of marriage, and its human and social consequences over the last 40 years is alarming. Since 1970, marriage rates are down 50% and households with married people have declined 30% between 1950 and 2010. At the same time, cohabitation has increased by over 1,200%

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services this year reported that compared to living with a married mother and father, a child is 11 times more likely to be sexually, physically, or emotionally abused if living with a mother and boyfriend. The same situation also results in a child being 6 times more likely to be physically, emotionally, or educational neglected, according to the same study.

Various studies were summarized in a 2010 report by Robert Rector, a leading national authority on poverty at the Heritage

Foundation comparing families of the same race and same parental education that showed children in fatherless homes were:

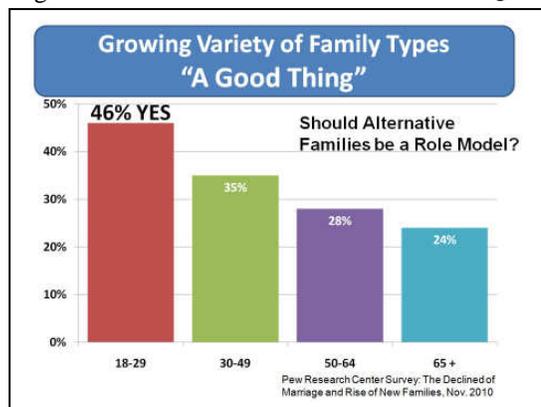
- More than twice as likely to be arrested for a juvenile crime
- Twice as likely to be treated for emotional and behavioral problems;
- Roughly twice as likely to be suspended or expelled from school; and
- A third more likely to drop out before completing high school.

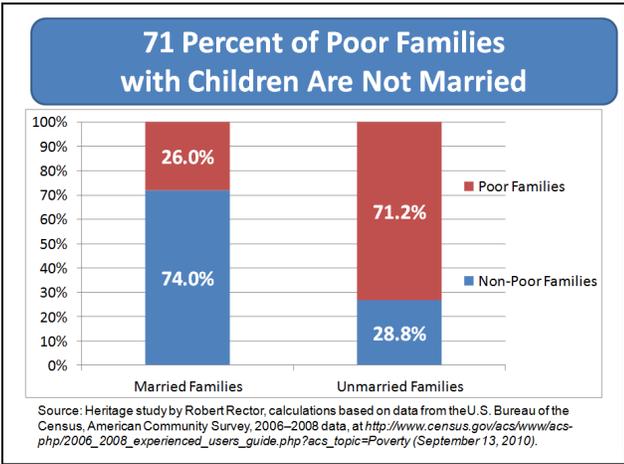
Also, "comparing families of the same race and similar incomes, children from single and broken homes are three times more likely to end up in jail by the time they reach 30 than are children raised in intact married families." Girls are twice as likely to have a child outside of marriage, repeating the cycle.

The correlation between the breakdown of marriage and family, and poverty is stunning. Isabell Sawhill from the Brookings Institution observed that if marriage in 1998 had returned to 1970 levels, the number of children living in poverty would have declined by one-third.

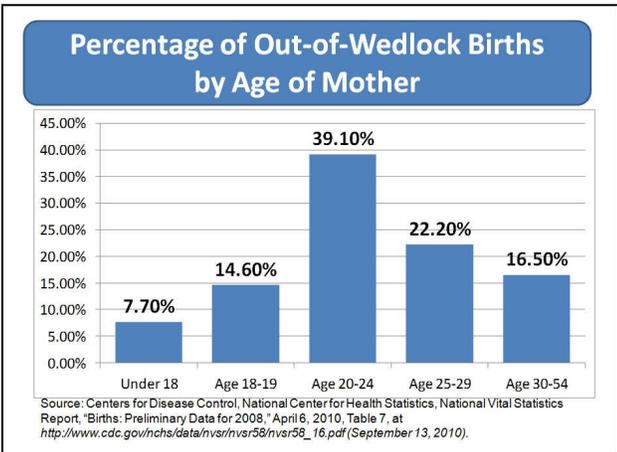
Rector's report also included a stunning summary and analysis of the relationship between poverty and the breakdown of marriage. Based on census data, he reported that 36.5% of single parent female headed families live in poverty compared to 6.4% of married two-parent families.

A comparison of married and unmarried families with children on the next page shows the problem even more dramatically.

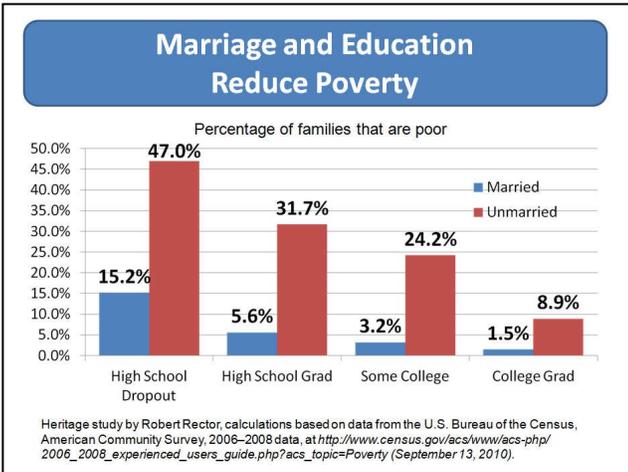




In 1960, only 5% of children were born to unmarried mothers. Today, it is 4 out of 10. But the problem is not just one related to teen or unplanned pregnancies. There has been a cultural shift in which unmarried women are intentionally having children outside of marriage over a wide range of ages.



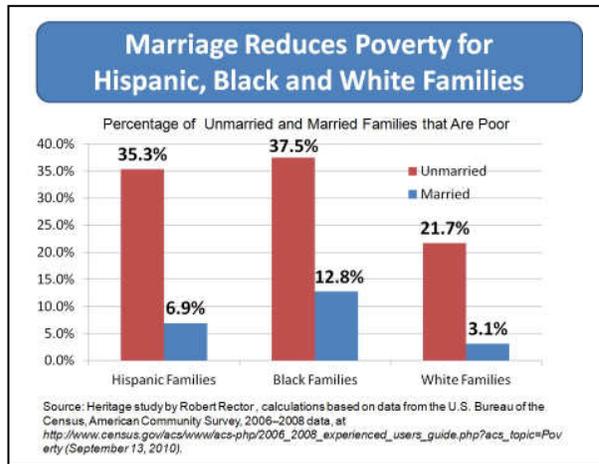
A correlation between education and poverty has been long recognized, but the data in the chart below demonstrates that being married with children reduces poverty at every educational level.



Conclusion

The only institution that unites children with their moms and dads is in serious trouble with huge societal consequence. Social marketing and educational efforts are needed to promote the reality of marriage as the foundation of the family and to promote that men and women make themselves irreplaceable to each other through marriage before having children. It is also critical to scrutinize laws and school curricula to evaluate how they support or undermine the public understanding of the value of marriage.

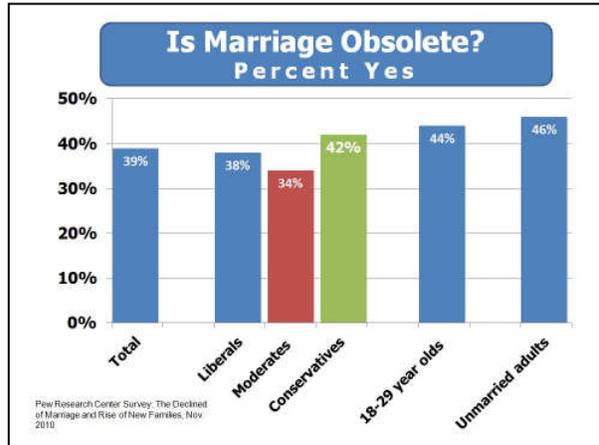
The same thing is true for different races and ethnicities



Attitudes of Young People Toward Marriage and Children

Marriage has become separated from children in the minds of young people. A 2004 University of Michigan survey found 56% of high school seniors believe it is OK to be unmarried and have children. In a 2006 poll by Gallup, only 30% of 18-29 year-olds agreed that marriage is important when a couple has children together.

More and more children and young adults are asking what is marriage for? They don't believe they need to get married if they want to have children. This is leading many to ask the question: Is marriage obsolete? Some are questioning the need for civil marriage and even suggest it be done away with leaving only religions to recognize the critical public interest of the institution.



The Pew Research Center found that 44% of marriage-aged adults, 18-29 years-old believe marriage is obsolete. Surprisingly, appreciation of the value of marriage for society was slightly lower for conservatives compared to liberals.