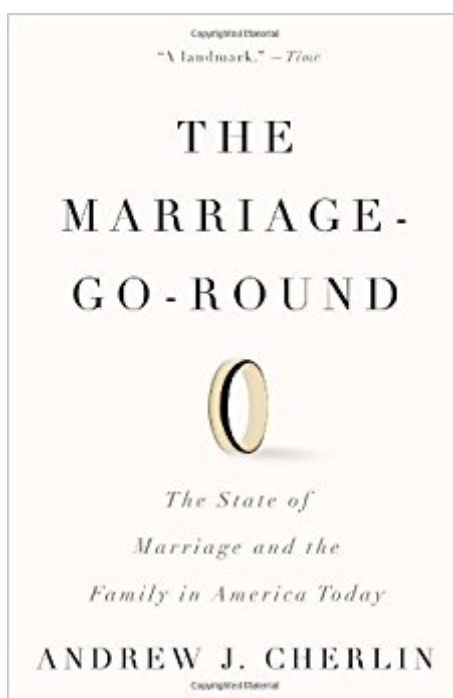


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The Marriage-Go-Round: The State Of Marriage And The Family In America Today



Synopsis

Andrew J. Cherlin's three decades of study have shown him that marriage in America is a social and political battlefield in a way that it isn't in other developed countries. Americans marry and divorce more often and have more live-in partners than Europeans, and gay Americans have more interest in legalizing same-sex marriage. The difference comes from Americans' embrace of two contradictory cultural ideals: marriage, a formal commitment to share one's life with another; and individualism, which emphasizes personal choice and self-development. Religion and law in America reinforce both of these behavioral poles, fueling turmoil in our family life and heated debate in our public life. Cherlin's incisive diagnosis is an important contribution to the debate and points the way to slowing down the partnership merry-go-round.

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Customer Reviews

Johns Hopkins University sociologist Cherlin (Public and Private Families) analyzes "the profound changes" that have occurred in American family life, especially during the past half century. Although heterosexual marriage as the bedrock institution for raising children remains a strong cultural value, it is challenged by the increasing stress placed on individualism and self-fulfillment. The book presents a comprehensive historical overview of marriage and family in the U.S. and compares American behavior with that of people in other Western countries (Americans have the highest levels of moving from partner to partner). In light of relationship instability, the author suggests that children are likely to fare better in a single parent family than in a step-family, a structure that tends to be unstable. While Cherlin delineates the stress points created by the

conflicting values of marriage and individualism, he offers few suggestions for dealing with the problems identified. To suggest that the "marriage merry-go-round" can be "slowed down" by not starting or ending relationships so quickly is to restate the problem, not offer insight for its resolution. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.
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The fact that the U.S. has the highest rate of marriage and divorce of any Western nation illustrates the tension between the American cultural ideal of commitment to marriage and the appeal of individual freedom. Cherlin, an authority on American family life, explores that tension and the differences in perceptions and value of marriage in the U.S. versus other Western nations, particularly Britain and France. Citing research on marriage and child-rearing trends, Cherlin observes that American family life is a merry-go-round characterized by the "great turbulence" of frequent marriage, frequent divorce, and more short-term cohabiting relationships than families in other Western nations. Analyzing changes in social, economic, and technological realms that account for differences in marriage trends among Western nations, Cherlin focuses on U.S. politics that uses such issues as gay marriage and covenant marriage to influence voters. He concludes that the U.S. could benefit from a culture and policies that spend less time and resources promoting marriage (pointedly between men and women) and more on promoting stable family life for children, however those families are constructed. --Vanessa Bush
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This book provides us with a concise history of the American family. It contrasts the emphasis in the U.S. on the importance and normality of marriage. Yet simultaneously it stresses the factor of choice. If marriages don't work out, then partners should exercise choice, in order to try to attain happiness and satisfaction. This shift from lifetime commitment rather than individual satisfaction beginning over a century ago, has resulted in two central goals of marriage: the strong commitment on getting married, and the equally powerful stress on the need for individual satisfaction in the marriage relationship.

I purchased this book after reading the article on infidelity in Time Magazine where it was cited. I guess I am not accustomed to reading books written by social scientists because he keeps reciting his thesis (and therefore, his conclusions) over and over again, like a mantra. That is my only complaint. Otherwise, well-reasoned, backed by research, with a lot of interesting conclusions, and

it explains why so many disparate groups place such value in the institution of marriage in our globalized society. I am glad I read it, and I have recommended it to others.

Classic sociology; worth the read for anyone with academic interest in subject. Won't allocate remote control between spouses.

Highly recommended.

Andrew Cherlin is the top American sociologist of family life. If you want to understand where we are and how we got to where we are this book is very highly recommended.

Interesting and accurate account on the state of marriage in our society including the history of marriage.

Exactly what I needed and came in just in time before I went back to school ! ÃfÂ Ã ÅÃ ÆœÃ Æ'

good book i purchased for school.

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