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Review of "Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage" by Andrew J. Cherlin

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tion of articles on the role and structure of the family in rural society—but some contributors valiantly tackled topics on which very little research exists. This often leads to making inferences about the rural family based on aggregate data on the rural population as a whole. Other contributors had to deal with a lack of adequate theoretical frameworks and research findings to guide their analyses. Often they have to be content to raise issues, offer hypotheses, and propose research questions. Although the chapters have a common theme in the rural family, they vary in focus, approach, sources of data, amount of supportive research used, theoretical orientation, and the geographic location of the population under study.

The book is a good beginning effort and the authors must be commended for their willingness to undertake the task. However, I would recommend a follow-up book concerned with answering some of the many questions and issues this one raises. Such a book could also include research on marriage, youth, intergenerational family changes, and social stratification.

**Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage.**

*Reviewer: MARILYN RUESCHEMEYER, Rhode Island School of Design*

This book is the first volume in a new series, “Social Trends in the United States,” a project of the Social Science Research Council’s Center for Coordination of Research on Social Indicators. The series presents itself as continuing the tradition begun by *Recent Social Trends in the United States*, the report of the Presidential Research Committee on Social Trends which William F. Ogburn edited in 1933. Rather than present new data or analysis, the volumes in this series are “to present to the general public recent scholarship on and current analysis of topics of broad interest and concern.”

Andrew Cherlin presents and interprets findings on the formation and dissolution of marriages in the last thirty-five years in America. The book succeeds in putting these materials within the grasp of readers who do not have an extensive background in demography.

In contrast to a widespread view, which sees the 1950s as the tail-end of the good old times, Cherlin describes the fifties as an unusual period in American history, when Americans married and had children earlier, divorced less frequently, and had more children than before or after. They represent, of course, a phase in long-term trends that do have a certain consistency. Of these, the long-term increase in divorce rates has received much attention. It has overshadowed the fact that the total incidence of marital dissolution has hardly changed since 1860—parting by death has declined and divorce increased.

Faced with the estimate that one out of two recent marriages will end in divorce, many see the institution of marriage and the future of the family as questionable. What is often overlooked is that three-fourths of all divorced women remarry and an even larger proportion of men do so. Another trend of interest in this regard is the increase in the number of couples who share a household without marrying. “Among those under twenty-five, for example, the number of cohabiting couples with no children present jumped from 29,000 in 1970 to 274,000 in 1979.”
Yet "cohabitation" is often a phase preceding marriage. It is most widespread among two different groups of urban young adults: "a better-educated group who tend to cohabit prior to marrying, and a less-well-educated group whose relationships are more likely to include at least one previously married partner."

Family patterns have taken on different forms under different conditions, an issue Cherlin explores very well in regard to the American black family, using historical (Herbert Gutman) and anthropological (Carol Stack) studies in conjunction with demographic evidence. Family patterns have changed dramatically as a consequence of a higher incidence of divorce, but the results are not simply a weakening of family ties. An increasing number of families extend beyond one household, linked by the continuing ties between children and parents. "Although separation and divorce break the bonds between father and mother, the bonds between children and parents tend to remain intact."

Aside from black–white comparisons, Cherlin neglects ethnic, class, and regional differences in family and marriage patterns, and he uses little comparative data. This limits his explanations. Focusing narrowly on an explanation of differences between time periods, especially the contrasts between the fifties on the one hand and the sixties and seventies on the other, he argues that "there is reason to believe that the postwar trends up and down have been parallel for most groups." Still, taking class differences more strongly into account would probably have led him to give more weight to structural changes and to be more circumspect in using overall changes in attitudes in the explanation. This is strongly suggested by his very interesting chapter on black–white differences. By contrast, in a brief discussion of long-term "cohabitation" in Sweden, he refers to traditional Swedish values and does not even mention the structural conditions and supports which release men and women from the necessity of marriage.

The strength of Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage lies in its presentation of recent trends. It is at its best when it uses qualitative studies in order to make sense out of demographic trend data, as in its analysis of black–white differences and in a chapter on the consequences of the changes discussed for the lives of adults and children. The weaknesses of explanation probably reflect weaknesses pervasive in American social science—a focus on proximate causes, often brought in ad hoc, and a neglect of broader structural factors and of comparative analysis.

Helping Networks: How People Cope with Problems in the Urban Community.

Reviewer: GEORGE A. HILLCY, JR., Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Occasionally a book causes one to complain repeatedly because the point of view comes exasperatingly close to one's own, but not close enough; yet in no sense can the work be dismissed—in fact it causes one to ignore petty annoyances and to evaluate it as pivotal for the discipline. Warren's book is such a work.

The study begins by describing the focus, study design, and sample. Helping networks "are not groups. They often do not know each other. They are combinations of people we turn to: a spouse, a neighbor, friends, relatives, and co-workers."

The setting is the Detroit area. More than 25 neighborhoods were ob-