

# SHOULD WE LIVE TOGETHER?

(A comprehensive review of research by David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead - 9/23/1999)

"When blushing brides walk down the aisle in the 1990s, more than half have already lived together with a boyfriend."

According to surveys, most young people say it is a good idea to live with a person before marrying. In a recent national survey nearly 60% of high school seniors indicated that they "agreed" or "mostly agreed" with the statement "it is usually a good idea for a couple to live together before getting married in order to find out whether they really get along." And nearly 3/4s of the students, slightly more girls than boys, stated that "a man and a woman who live together without being married" are either "experimenting with a worthwhile alternative lifestyle" or "doing their own thing and not affecting anyone else."

"Surprisingly, much of the accumulating social science research suggests otherwise."

"No positive contribution of cohabitation to marriage has ever been found."

"A 1997 longitudinal study conducted by demographers at Pennsylvania State University concluded, for example, "cohabitation increased young people's acceptance of divorce, but other independent living experiences did not." And "the more months of exposure to cohabitation that young people experienced, the less enthusiastic they were toward marriage and childbearing."

"The act of cohabitation generates changes in people's attitudes toward marriage that makes the stability of marriage less likely. Society, wide, therefore, the growth of cohabitation will tend to further weaken marriage as an institution."

"Living together before marriage increases the risk of breaking up after marriage."

"Living together outside of marriage increases the risk of domestic violence for women, and the risk of physical and sexual abuse for children."

“Unmarried couples have lower levels of happiness and well-being than married couples.”

One report indicates that couples who cohabit have an 80% greater probability of divorcing than the couples who do not. Cohabiting women suffer two times the domestic violence of married women. It is also reported that cohabiting women suffer four times more than depression than married women and two times more than unmarried women. A survey of unmarried couples living together found 71% of the women saying they would not do so again (Ben Young, “Playing Spouse, CHRISTIAN SINGLE, p. 25-29, Vol. 21, No. 6, 1999).

Cohabiting has increased 700% since 1990 with 4,236,000 couples involved in 1999. A total of 1,520,000 of these couples have children under 15. 54% of cohabiting couples separate within 5 years (Kim Hurst, “Current Trends To Watch”, SINGLE ADULT MINISTRIES JOURNAL, Nov/Dec 1998, p. 5-6).

Until 1970 cohabitation was illegal in the US (& still is in 15 states but not enforced). Compared to those married, cohabiting couples have more conflict and abuse, more infidelity, and while they have more sex than those married, it is less emotionally satisfying. Dr. Laura Schlessinger calls “shacking up” a stupid thing to do, the “ultimate self-delusion.” (Cheryl Wetzstein, “Who’s Happier Ever After?”, INSIGHT, P. 38, Sep. 28, 1998).

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