



# The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today

By Andrew J. Cherlin

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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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*By Andrew J. Cherlin*

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**The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today** By Andrew J. Cherlin **Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #294271 in Books
- Published on: 2010-04-06
- Released on: 2010-04-06
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .80" w x 5.20" l, .68 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 288 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

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.

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From [Booklist](#)

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

Review

"A landmark new book." —*Time*

"Intriguing. . . . Provocative. . . . Cherlin has come up with an original thesis [to explain] this peculiar paradox—we idealize marriage and yet we're so bad at it." —*The New York Times*

"A masterful comparative analysis. . . . Cherlin argues that Americans have a distinctive pattern . . . which stems from our simultaneous commitments to marriage and to self-expression and personal growth." —*The American Prospect*

"Cherlin is one of America's leading experts on the family. . . . His book delivers a stern warning to this fast-paced conjugal culture: 'Slow down—watch out for the children.'" —*Commonweal*

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**Russell Belcher:**

Why? Because this *The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today* is an unordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap it but latter it will shock you with the secret that inside. Reading this book beside it was fantastic author who all write the book in such awesome way makes the content interior easier to understand, entertaining technique but still convey the meaning completely. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this any more or you going to regret it. This excellent book will give you a lot of gains than the other book have got such as help improving your skill and your critical thinking way. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I were being you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

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