**Study: young couples not marrying due to fear of divorce**

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ITHACA, N.Y. December 20, 2011 ([LifeSiteNews.com](http://www.lifesitenews.com/)) - A study conducted at Cornell University has found that young couples are not marrying because they fear the ravages of divorce.

[The study](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2011.00671.x/abstract), “The Specter of Divorce: Views from Working and Middle-Class Cohabitors,” is published in the journal Family Relations (December 2011) and is co-authored by Sharon Sassler, Cornell professor of policy analysis and management, and Dela Kusi-Appouh, a Cornell doctoral student in the field of development sociology.

“Young Americans increasingly express apprehension about their ability to successfully manage intimate relationships. Partially in response, cohabitation has become normative over the past few decades,” Dr. Sassler wrote.

The publication of the study coincides with the release of [a report](http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/number-of-adults-married-at-all-time-low-new-study) by the Pew Research Center which found that only 51% of adults in the United States are currently married, an all-time low, and that the number of new marriages in the U.S. declined by 5% between 2009 and 2010.

The Cornell researchers interviewed 122 working- and middle-class cohabiting couples and found that two-thirds, or about 67 percent, of the respondents admitted to concerns about dealing with the social, legal, emotional and economic consequences of a divorce.

However, the researchers found differences in attitudes based upon what class the respondents belonged to.

The study found working-class cohabitating couples were more apt to view marriage as “just a piece of paper,” nearly identical to their existing relationship. They were twice as likely to admit fears about being stuck in marriage with no way out once they were relying on their partners’ share of income to get by.

“Working-class women, in particular, view marriage less favorably than do their male and middle-class counterparts, in part because they see marriage as hard to exit and are reluctant to assume restrictive gender roles,” the researchers wrote.

However, they found that “Middle-class cohabitors are more likely to have concrete wedding plans and believe that marriage signifies a greater commitment than does cohabitation.”

The authors said they hope that their findings could help premarital counselors to better tailor their lessons to assuage widespread fears of divorce and to target the specific needs of various socioeconomic classes.

The Family of the Americas Foundation (FAF), an organization deeply concerned with the ravages to individuals and families caused by divorce, states that hesitancy to marry due to the fear of divorce is linked to lack of commitment in marriage because of artificial birth control, sterilization and abortion.

Mercedes Arzú Wilson of the FAF said that the solution to this problem is the adoption of Natural Family Planning (NFP) to replace artificial means of conception regulation and abortion.

Arzú Wilson points to a study carried out by sociologist Dr. Robert Lerner of the University of Chicago who found an absolute correlation been couples who use NFP and successful and happy marriages.

The summary of findings in this analysis of three independent surveys found that NFP users have a dramatically low (0.2%) divorce rate (compared to a US national rate of about 50%).

“Everyone would agree that divorce is the greatest tragedy that can befall a family,” Wilson said. “The most important foundation of society to keep safe and healthy, physically, morally and spiritually, is the family. If the family is suffering physical, mental and spiritual degradation, society is placed in grave peril, as has repeatedly been the case in past civilizations,” Arzú Wilson concluded.

An abstract of the Cornell University study is available [here](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2011.00671.x/abstract).