

Parents: Slow Down and Get Off the Marriage-Go-Round

April 28 2009

After a divorce or break-up, parents need to be very cautious about bringing new love interests into their homes, according to Andrew Cherlin, a professor in the Department of Sociology at Johns Hopkins University.

In his new book, *The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today* (April 2009, Alfred A. Knopf), Cherlin writes that any transition that brings a new partner or stepparent into the home can be difficult for [children](#) to cope with.

Cherlin suggests that a two-adult household doesn't always add up to the best situation for the children involved. Frequent marriage, frequent [divorce](#), and an increase in short-term cohabitating relationships are creating a great turbulence in American family life on a scale seen nowhere else, he said, and more thought should be given to the children caught up in the changes their parents make in the quest for personally satisfying romantic relationships.

"The merry-go-round property of American families is more than a statistical curiosity," Cherlin said. "We should be concerned about it, both as parents and as a nation, because it may increase children's behavioral and emotional problems. Simply put, some children seem to have difficulty adjusting to a series of parents and parents' partners moving in and out of their homes."

Because Americans see marriage as the most prestigious way to live, it

remains the goal for many people, parents included. But the stable home a single parent can provide may be more beneficial than a quick repartnering or remarriage, Cherlin said. For instance, if a mother and her child move in with the mother's boyfriend, but they break up soon after the move, the child may be worse off than if her mother had kept their home life as it was. The same principle applies to remarriage, he said.

"The well-being of the children of lone parents may be improved not by urging their parents to quickly bring a stepparent into the household but rather by urging them to search longer and more carefully for a partner, or to remain single if they choose," Cherlin said.

Cherlin's research found that whether an American parent is married, cohabitating, or raising children without a partner, that parent is more likely to change living arrangements in the near future than parents in the rest of the Western world. Instead of encouraging people with children to marry, we should make stable families a policy priority regardless of how many parents are present in the home, Cherlin said.

"To the current chorus of Get married,' I would sound a counterpoint: Slow down," Cherlin said. "If you are a lone parent, take your time finding a new live-in partner. See the traffic light of singlehood as yellow rather than green. Don't move in with someone, and don't remarry, until you are sure the relationship will be a lasting one that will benefit your children."

The impact of family flux on the lives of children is one of several topics Andrew Cherlin discusses in *The Marriage-Go-Round*. The book also includes the history of American marriage dating back to Colonial times, the rise of the companionate [marriage](#) as the American ideal, and how the changing world economy is affecting the marriage-ability of American men and women.

Provided by Johns Hopkins University ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Parents: Slow Down and Get Off the Marriage-Go-Round (2009, April 28) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-04-parents-marriage-go-round.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.