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Introduction
The United States has been the global leader in all spheres of democratic governance. It has been the undisputed economic and military leader for decades since the cold war era. Its dominance in areas of commerce, science, and technology has always been the envy of the globe. Breakthroughs in scientific research and technology continue to make life easier, safer, cleaner, healthier and longer for its citizens. No other country in recent history has enjoyed uninterrupted freedom, prosperity and development like the United States.

However, this outstanding record has been tarnished by a very small, but important area of social life; i.e. living together. Like all other “Developed Nations “the United States has very high rates of divorce, cohabitation and out of wedlock births. Surprisingly, policymakers remain indifferent to these problems and civil society agenda continues to exclude these social problems, while focusing on political issues they think are critical in fetching votes. It is unfortunate that the current debates over increased welfare dependency seem less informed by research than by ideology. To the politicians it is more about political correctness and garnering the votes than it is about solving real problems faced by electorate every day. However, it is high time policymakers began to realize the connection between the breakdown of families, welfare dependency and the various social problems prevalent in the United States today.

The current debate concerning welfare reforms, for instance has been prompted by the wide acceptance that in recent years, children from broken families are much more likely than children from two parent families to fall into the poverty trap that leads to welfare dependency and crime. However, sound policymaking is impossible without a good understanding of the root causes of criminal behavior. While most Americans blame the television and violent movies as the sources of most of the social problems bedeviling the United States today, it is the objective
of this paper to prove that broken families are the leading source of most of these social problems.

My understanding of marriage is that it is a formal union between a man and a woman. Marriage is a social institution through which society seeks to provide for each child the love, attention and all the resources a mother and a father can pool together. However, today society has expanded the meaning of marriage to encompass same sex unions that disregard the complementary role mothers and fathers play in the family. The divorce epidemic has its origins in the 60s and 70s.

According to Mr. Wilcox, Director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, the current trend in divorce goes way back to the 70s when the pro-divorce revolution gripped the United States. Feminists and Psychologists were especially visible in pushing for easier divorce laws. In the 1970s, the pro-divorce momentum was so strong that no-fault divorce laws were adopted to facilitate quicker divorce proceedings. According to social historian Barbra Dafoe Whitehead, back then, divorce ceased to be simply an individual’s right, it became a psychological weapon spouse used against each other. California was the first state to introduce no-fault divorce laws and then the rest of the states followed suit. After the introduction of no fault divorce laws, divorce rates which were already rising, shot up for a while before slowing down in the early 1980s. th

What style of citations are being used? These facts should probably be backed up with a reference.

It did not take too long for society to realize that no fault divorce laws contributed to the easy divorces that followed shortly. Studies conducted shortly after these changes in divorce laws (reference) reflected negative consequences of
divorce to children in particular and to society in general. After decades of research, the attitudes of many people began to change dramatically. (1) The Catholic Education Resource Center cites that in 1970, about 4% of the total adult population had gone through marriage dissolution of some sort, but by 1992, the rate rose to 11%. Today it is widely accepted that around 50% of marriages end in divorce. (2) These given statistics indicate a sharp rise in divorce rates most likely precipitated by ideas of the feminist movement which advocated for the emancipation of women.

Prior to World War I, most conservative Americans believed that women were home makers, not bread winners. However, during the WWI when most men were at war, women took up jobs in industry. This and the feminist movement probably marked the beginning of the career woman, a woman who was capable of taking care of herself. This newly found freedom made women more independent and probably led to more divorces. With the US Census Bureau reporting that just over the past decade, there has been a 60% increase in out of wedlock birth, it is clear that most women were avoiding marriage, but continuing to have children. (3)

In such a situation, a heightened awareness of the negative consequences of divorce only comes with a good understanding that a healthy marriage/family provides substantial benefits to adults, children and to the society in general. A stable marriage plays a positive economic role that provides for the emotional and psychological needs of the parents and children, while at the same time contributing to the social well-being of the larger community.
It is baffling to realize that the core character shaping institutions that once transmitted moral education have all been weakened by the changes taking place in society today especially those issues regarding homosexuality and same sex marriages. With so many family broken families, people have no option but to turn to the churches and the government for moral guidance. Unfortunately, today the church strives to strike a balance between sticking to rigid Christian tenets and changing its approach in keeping with the changing values. It is sad that the proliferation of moral relativism has left issues of morality to be contingent upon personal choices.

Worse still, the complicity of the churches in issues related to moral relativism like ordaining gay pastors, as a way of adapting to the changing values of its followers, has weakened their position in society today. The never ending sex scandals involving some members of the clergy compromises the role of the church in society. Such issues do not only undermine the faith of the public in the church, but they challenge its moral authority. With the church struggling to take its rightful place in society, who will restore the moral tone? The church should never give up its central doctrine to appease followers and critics.

On the hand the situation about the church is worsened by biased media reporting. It is clear that what the media consider as “justice” is those situations where Supreme Court rulings are in favor of gays’ rights or same sex unions, not when the outcome favors the traditional marriage.

However, Christianity regards marriage as a lifelong commitment. Mark 19:1-3 aptly concurs and says; “Haven’t you read, … that in the beginning the creator
made them male and female...For this reason man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” I believe the oneness being referred to in this verse means singleness of purpose as couples enter into matrimony. (4) In his book, Mere Christianity, C. S Lewis scoffs at today’s concept of marriage which he says is based on “sexual feelings”, not real love. He adds that principles and habits last, but feelings come and go. You therefore cannot base marriage on “feelings” for they will not last. C. S Lewis explains marriage as a “deep unity, maintained by the will, and deliberately strengthened by habit; reinforced (in Christian marriages) by the Grace which both partners ask and receive from God.” He concludes by adding that, such partners in marriage can have love for each other even at those moments when they do not like each other. That is what makes a marriage permanent.” (5) Today the institution of marriage is fast losing its meaning because it no longer embodies commitment and obligation to others, instead it has become a tool for personal enrichment, hence the divorces. Lewis also warns us not to marry simply for sexual gratification, but to marry because we are in love.

Marriage And Government Laws

Sometimes policies clearly indicate where government priorities lie. This can be seen in the current endorsement of alternative unions by government, a move which disregards the complementary role mothers and fathers play in the family.

Additionally, government maintains tax structures which fail to recognize and award the second working adult some tax credits. On the other hand, the current welfare benefits seem to favor of single parents, and this becomes an incentive for
out-of wedlock childbearing. Also, by maintaining no-fault divorce laws which facilitate quicker divorce proceedings, the state makes it easy for spouses to enter and leave marriage easily. Additionally, the recent enactment of the Affordable Care Act which provides tax credits for the purchase of Health Insurance, but then imposes new marriage penalties to married couples says it all. While government has constitutional obligations to meet, it should be mindful of the importance of being supportive to families.

Life after Divorce

Contrary to popular belief that most of the spouses who opt out of marriage thrive better in new relationships and live happily ever after, there is evidence that at times the impact of divorce is as devastating to adults as it is to the children. According to Psychologist Mavis Hetherington from an emotional and social perspective, the effects of divorce on adults usually vary from individual to individual, but those spouses who are an unwilling party to the divorce tend not to do so well after the divorce.

Hetherington cites (This is an important citation that should be direct. The assertion here is huge and needs back-up data, to be sure it is not just an author’s opinion) that only about 20% of divorced adults find their lives enhanced, while another 50% seem to suffer no long term effects. (6) She also contends that with two thirds of divorce cases usually done at the behest of women, men are more often than women to be against the divorce. As a result, the negative effects of
divorce tend to hurt more men than women. This information shows that divorce is not usually the panacea to family problems. If only 20% of divorcees recover fully from divorce, then it is logical to conclude that seeking other options apart from divorce is better.

Most divorced mothers, despite their best intentions, usually find it harder than married mothers to give the same level of care and emotional support to their children. On the other hand, divorced fathers are less likely to develop a close relationship with their children; especially if the children are very young at the time of divorce. Some fathers get married, move on and lose contact with their children. Divorce presents most parents with two sets of problems. The first one is their own personal adjustment to the new and different role of divorced parent. According to reports by the Heritage Foundation close to 40% of divorced parents usually get so stressed that their abilities to take care of their children become somewhat impaired. At times parents themselves become emotionally dependent on others. (7)

What exacerbates the problem is the fact divorce rulings do not usually consider who was at fault when making determinations about child custody, child support, and the division of marital property. In the wake of divorce proceedings, property is usually lost and income levels decline substantially for the remaining spouse. Some parents even lose regular contact with their children. Any spouse found in these circumstances, will definitely feel the sting of divorce. Such stressful situations often lead to depression. When a family breaks down, supervision of the children becomes largely the responsibility of the custodial
spouse. Having the other parent out of the picture or on minimal visitation rights is what creates most of the problems discussed in this project.

Marriage is what builds safe communities. The constant supervision that comes with parenting naturally reduces the incidences of drug addiction, street violence, prostitution, and sexual abuse. Although abusive marriages are among the leading causes of divorce, a 2002 study by the Family Research Council found that, cohabiting couples are physically abused at rates that are triple those reported by married couples. On the other hand, women who are divorced or separated had the highest rates of abuse by either a boyfriend, or an ex-spouse. In light of this evidence, one can claim that marriage reduces the rate of abuse of women. Divorce also burdens government with medical costs and placement expenses of victims in shelters.

The cost of divorce to society

Society might not readily realize how expensive it is for government to take care of divorced victims of abusive relationships. A 1999 study by the Family Council, (citation?) pegs the annual medical costs for abused women at around 1, 8 billion dollars. This figure excludes expenses on shelters and other non-medical costs. (8)

It is logical that communities with more married couples are safer and better places to live because they will not let drug abuse and crime go unchecked. Married parents are more likely to provide the security and supervision their children need, thus discourage them from substance abuse and crime. Any crime for which somebody is arrested generates a cost to be paid by tax payers.
The Family Research Council contends that annual national costs related to drug abuse can be as high as 160.7 billion dollars, including money allocated towards rehabilitation of the offender, other healthcare and welfare related benefits. A further break down of the costs shows that the criminal justice system gets around $292 billion annually from the federal coffers; $50 billion is paid by states, and close to $35 billion comes from the counties respectively. As if that is not enough, an additional $32 billion goes to police and $49 billion goes towards correctional services. (9) If the percentage of children in single-parent families was reduced by half, this could translate to substantial savings in dollar terms. With more married families, not only are drug abuse and criminal justice costs much lower, but communities become safer and more young people have a greater chance of finishing school and becoming responsible citizens. All the money that is used in the administration of justice and feeding offenders in prison could be put to better use, through building infrastructure, schools and other forms of social capital.

The same study 1997 national study by the Research Council, asserts that due to increased child supervision, two parent families considerably reduce the prevalence of premarital sex which obviously leads to illegitimate children. To those of low socio-economic status, having children out of wedlock usually condemns the family to endless poverty and welfare dependency. When this happens, some of these parents abdicate their parental responsibilities to government. Research concurs that childbearing out of wedlock confers an estimated $7 billion annual bill to the government through provision of food
stamps, and other entitlements. Additionally, the administration of these welfare benefits and foster care programs claim another 29 billion dollars annually.

Since divorce and unwed parenthood, often require child support from non-custodial parents which usually comes through the court-system, a 2000 report states that state and federal governments spend around $4.5 billion towards child support enforcement programs and the system handles around 17.4 million cases annually. (11) The digits involved here are astronomical because they reflect the magnitude of the divorce problem.

With all these expenses coming out of divorce, unwed child bearing, crime, welfare dependency and administrative costs, what should spouses in abusive marriages, or unfaithful marriages do? Does divorce make sense in high conflict marriages only?

**High Conflict Marriages**

Normal adults do not just wake up one morning and decide to divorce. There is usually a good reason why people divorce. At times it is better to divorce than to live in a high conflict marriage where everybody is not happy. However, because of its negative consequences, where young children are involved divorce should be regarded as a tragedy that should be avoided at all costs.

A 1979 study conducted by Hetherington examined the lives of 72 children from divorced families over a two year period, following divorce, and another 72 children from two-parent families. (12) The researchers conducted extensive interviews involving parents and teachers at intervals of two months, one year and
two years following the divorce. The findings revealed that children from two-parent families where conflict levels were very low did the best. On the other hand, children from high conflict families had problems comparable to those from divorced single parent families. In light of these findings, high-conflict marriages are equally as bad as divorce on the part of the children. When too much family time is squandered in endless conflict, parents often lack time and patience to attend to the children. Despite the importance of staying together as a family, at times the best course of action for the children’s sake is for the parents to go their separate ways.

**The Effects of Divorce on Children**

Children are the true victims of any divorce especially if it occurs when they are still young and emotionally attached to both parents. To truly establish the effects of divorce on children, Professor Judith Wallerstein (University of California Berkeley) and clinical Psychologist Joan Berlin Kelly conducted an extended study involving 60 families. This study purposefully excluded children involved in any form of special education. The 60 families involved in the study were all middle class families with divorce proceedings at different stages of finalization. Then, five years after the dissolution of the unions, Judith and Joan interviewed children from these families and found out that: *(Nice summation of the research method)*

a) Most of the children still experienced mixed feelings ranging from fear, sadness, worry, sad, anger, guilt and a nagging feeling of rejection by the
non-custodial parent. Half of the children were afraid of being abandoned forever by the non-custodial parent, and another third were afraid the remaining parent would abandon them. Those between the ages of 13 and 18 were worried about their future in regards to issues related to sex and marriage. Most of these children expressed their fear of marriage and doubted their own adequacy in future relationships. Worth noting was the fact that two thirds, especially the younger children missed the non-custodial parent and half of these missed the absent parent with an intensity which the researchers found to be profound. Another dimension to the findings was that these children did not only about worry about themselves, but also about the ability of the absent parents’ ability to care for themselves and about the custodial parent’s general health. It was astounding that over half of the children studied experienced strong feelings of rejection by one or both parents. It was even worse with younger children because they could not just understand why the other parent left. They thought the absent parent simply walked away from them. The report cites that most boys mistook comments made about their absent fathers to be vaguely directed at them personally. With one parent gone and the remaining one being too busy, most children felt lonely. 

b) Another astonishing find was that instead of being happy and relieved that bad times were finally over, only young children with violent fathers felt relieved. Otherwise the reaction of most of the children was unrelated to the type of life they led prior to the divorce.
c) Five years after the divorce, Wallerstein and Kelly found that about 34% of the children showed signs of coping well and they even regarded the divorce as one of the sad moments of life. At this stage they did not feel aggrieved or angry towards both parents. These children were generally those who benefited from having stable, loving relationships with both parents after the divorce. Regular and frequent visitation with the non-custodial parent was found to be a key factor in the success of the children in this group, especially among the youngest children.

d) In a second group that constituted 29%, the residual effects of the divorce were still evident although they were coping reasonably well. The emotional neediness, and unhappiness had somewhat diminished over the years. During this analysis we have not looked at how divorce leads to separation anxiety on the part of the children when one spouse leaves the family.

(Good study and helpful in making your case)

**Separation Anxiety**

English Psychiatrist and Psychoanalyst John Bowlby (1969, 1975, 1979) notes that Freud came to the conclusion that the basic anxiety in a child’s life is not related to sex but results from the perceived or real loss of a loved one. According to Freud, missing someone who is loved and longed for is the key to the understanding of anxiety. Signs of separation anxiety are shown when the child clings to another person or to the departed person when he or she returns. (15)

Bowlby assets that, anger was a frequent manifestation of separation anxiety and many studies on divorce have managed to capture the connection. He goes on
to say that this anger is sometimes directed against the non-custodial parent, or
displaced onto other available targets. The combination of attachment anxiety and
anger that a child feels towards the missing parent causes a riot of feelings within
the child. This anger serves as both a reproach at what has happened and a
deterrent against the situation happening again. (16) In Bowlby’s research, over
one third of the children in the study, especially the boys, showed feelings of
anger. There was a rise in aggression on the part of the children of all ages. One
fourth of the children expressed this anger explosively towards one or both
parents. The children saw divorce as an act of selfishness on the part of their
parents and felt that the parents had given priority to their own needs. Quite
disturbing was the finding that one third of the children significantly blamed
themselves for the breakup of the family, and that young children, up to age 8,
were more likely to feel responsible for the separation of their parents than the
older ones. (Another good reference)

Fatherlessness and Criminality
Since in most divorce cases mothers become the automatic custodians of the
children, it follows that most children from divorced families live with their
mothers. However, there is a strong sentiment that father-absent families
experience more maladaptive behavior in children than two parent families.
Single mothers must confront a variety of disciplinary issues single handedly. The
mere presence of a father figure in the family at times reduces undesirable
behavior that is likely to occur in most father absent families. (17)
According to research by Hetherington (1980); and findings by Ross, (1984) researchers keep finding that although mothers play a central role in the normal development of a child, fathers make major contributions to a child’s formation of individual identity. The presence of the father in the family helps break the psychological chord between the child and his or her mother. Fathers help teach children impulse control and how to respond to rules and laws and other standards prevalent in the structures of society. Besides, the father distracts the mother from emotionally over pampering the children. The presence of the father creates another significant reference point in the family, apart from the mother. To the children, the father is usually a hero and a role model for boys.

Most recently, Gary Bauer of the American Values Dot Com was quoted in the USA Today of the 6th of September, 2013 saying that the rise in NFL violence is an indictment, not of guns or football itself, but a culture in which most children are raised in broken families. The spat of violent crimes committed by National Football League players in recent years has left commentators groping for answers. Reports indicated that 37 NFL players have been arrested between the beginning of 2011 and 2013. Among the most well known players are the Cincinnati Bengals’ Adam “Pacman” Johns NFL” most incorrigible player, and Aaron Hernandez of the New England Patriots who was charged of first degree murder, and is likely to face similar charges in other pending cases. Of the 26 players whose records were analyzed by the San Diego Tribune, 80% of the players grew up in homes in which at least one biological parent was absent,
Mr. Bauer’s went to say; “… as more of our children are raised without dads, our schools will continue to fail, our drug problem will continue to grow, and crime will continue to bedevil our communities, and in all areas of American life, including the NFL. We will see more adult men prone to violence.” (18) The situation involving both dysfunctional and criminal behavior by these NFL stars compels society to look into their family backgrounds for answers. This behavior does not just happen spontaneously without good cause.

So far this paper has established that in father-absent families, supervision of boys tends to become lax, and the tendency towards antisocial behavior increases substantially. A study conducted by Pillay (1987) in South Africa found that, of the children taken to a psychological clinic, 6 out of 10 came from non-intact and both female and male children turned to drug use. However, Pillay found that problems were most serious with among fatherless boys who exhibited less self-control, delay in gratification, and internalized standards of moral judgment than did boys whose families remained intact. These boys were more antisocial, impulsive and likely to belong to delinquent groups. Having been raised without fathers in their lives deprived these boys of significant models for self-appropriate behavior. (19)

These findings link divorce to and single-parent families to delinquency, since close supervision is very difficult for a single mother. Most of the crimes relate to drug abuse, petty theft, sexual promiscuity, breaking and entering and alcoholism. This is clear evidence that broken homes are a major cause of juvenile crime has
been in the literature for many years. These findings attest to the fact that family structure exerts more influence than poverty on crime rate.

**Family Structure Matters**

No matter how amicable it is, divorce tears families apart leaving behind a trail of tears and broken hearts. Still there are those who doubt the connection between family structure and crime. According to University of Chicago Sociology Professor, Mr. Robert Sampson (citation), there is a strong relationship between family structure and the rate of crime. Based on the findings of his study, Professor Simpson argues that divorce rate predicts the rate of crime in any given area, regardless of economic and racial makeup of that area. In his study of 171 United States cities whose populations exceeded 100,000 citizens, he discovered that the lower the rates of divorce, the lower the crime rate. This should possibly be attributed to the fact that two-parent families are usually well supervised by both parents. The study also established the fact that the rates of juvenile detentions for children from divorced families are 12 times higher than that of children from married and intact families. (20) These findings are also confirmed in the Wisconsin Department of Health And Sciences Study which also illustrated that: children from divorced families are more susceptible to delinquent behavior at age 15; irrespective of when the divorce occurred, than are children whose parents are still married.

In Wisconsin, a 6 year study of 1,000 families involving with children of ages between 6 and 18, found that children from two-parent families were less
inclined towards delinquency, while children with stepfathers were more likely to exhibit the most disruptive behavior. Additionally, the findings of a British longitudinal study involving male subjects with between 8 and 32, revealed that divorce between parents before a child is 10 years, significantly predicts adolescent delinquency and criminal behavior. (21)

A recent community longitudinal study in the United States involving 6,400 boys over an extended 20 year period (well into adulthood years) revealed that children living without their biological fathers are three times more likely to commit a crime of the magnitude that attracts jail sentences, than are children from two-parent families. Children who use drugs and abuse alcohol are more likely to come from broken families or families full of conflict and rejection than from loving two-parent homes. Comparing all family structures, drug abuse in children is lowest in two-parent families. What struck my attention were the similarities between the findings of these independent studies, and how they lend credence to the fact that children need their fathers as much as they do, their mothers. I believe to strike an equilibrium that produces a balanced individual (child), the input of both parents is critical in fostering the normal emotional development of a child. Living with both parents also reduces the chances of children being abused by strangers or stepfathers.

Divorce and Abuse
One would assume that when a divorced mother remarry children from the previous marriage are safe to because they have a father figure in their lives. However, studies suggest otherwise because step parent can also be a source of new family problems. The problems of both sexual and verbal abuse by the step parent especially the stepfather. Younger children are much more vulnerable because of their sizes. (23) The findings of a British study reports that more serious abuse of children of all ages occurs three times more frequently in step families than in biological families. When parents divorce, most children suffer long-lasting psychological damage due to the insecurity created by the split. According to this study, neglect of children can be psychologically more damaging than physical abuse, and is twice as high among separated and divorced parents. (24)

The report states that abuse cases are much higher among stepchildren than biological children in two parent families, and that usually adults who were sexually abused as children are more likely to have been raised in stepfamilies than in biological families. The rate of sexual abuse of girls by their stepfathers is at least six or seven times higher, and may be 40 times greater than sexual abuse of daughters by their biological fathers who remain in intact families. According to Bobbie Kaufman et.al, (1992), the formative years’ age range of between 5 and 11 years happens to be the time during which sexual abuse starts. Coincidentally, this is also the time during which the child is beginning to develop self control and to make sense of the values of society. (25) Remarrying out of the desire to have a father figure in the lives of the children may not guarantee their safety
because of the increased likelihood of child abuse by the stepfather in most cases. Also having new boyfriends could very well have the unintended consequence of bringing home a pedophile, thereby endangering the lives of the very people the mother wants to protect. At times divorce leads to drastic changes in lifestyle due to loss of income. Most divorced low socio-economic mothers end up relying on welfare benefits ranging from Food Stamps, unemployment checks and other forms of entitlements. Therefore, we can safely say, divorce increases the likelihood of poverty.

**Divorce, Poverty and Welfare Dependency**

When couples marry, they pool their resources together. When they part ways property and income usually decline significantly leading to a lower standard of living. According to Family Research Council, marriage is the best antidote to wade off poverty and welfare dependency. A simple comparison between two parent families and single parent families may show us the truth. Records from the findings of a Census Bureau in 2001 indicate that only 6 percent of married two-parent families lived in poverty, compared to 33, 6 percent of single parent families. One striking feature in the report was that single mothers constituted the biggest number of welfare recipients. While this may not be the case with most educated single parents, it is however true for the majority who are not highly educated.
The results by the Census Bureau also capture and support the fact that divorce and unwed childbearing lead women and children into poverty. In another study instituted by the Bureau in 1999 it was found that women who have children out of wedlock are likely to have much lower income than women who are married; in fact they are six times more likely to be welfare recipients and 40 percent less likely to be gainfully employed. (26) After comparing and contrasting these two categories, it is clear that married women are economically well off than single mothers.

Welfare entitlements may be helpful for sustenance, but they are not without stigma. A study by the Family Research Council indicate that teens living on welfare had diminished hope of doing well in school and worse still, ever getting a good job compared with those living in non-welfare homes. The study indicates that a combination of single parenthood and welfare dependency is most harmful to the self-esteem of children. The trend is such that children in welfare-dependent families often end up on welfare themselves if they fail to break the poverty cycle. It is clear that marriage helps to prevent children from experiencing the undesirable effects of welfare and from becoming welfare-dependent themselves.

Along with negatively affecting children, welfare dependency generates huge expenses for state and national governments. Going by the figures supplied by the Family Research Council, in 2000, federal and state governments’ expenditures on Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) totaled 24 billion dollars nationwide. In the same year, housing benefits claimed another
$29.3 billion from federal coffers, and for their part states spent $5.6 billion. Federally mandated programs like the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) are both entitlement programs for the poor. However, AFDC creates more dependency because by its very nature it is given to poor families with dependent children who are deprived of parental support for one reason or another. While TANF is supposed to be temporary, it has since become permanent as well.

Going back to our class discussions, welfare dependency is the reason why the Republican caucus is worried about the Obama Administration. Traditionally, Americans want limited government with minimal interference in the lives of its citizens. The welfare state tends not only to expand the government, but to utilize resources that could be used for other developmental issues like refurbishing or building of new infrastructures. Welfare dependency often has negative effects on children because of the stigma that comes with it in the political discourse. Another worrisome factor is that welfare tends to reward single-parenthood, laziness, and also creates disincentives to hard working citizens who pay taxes.

**Why cohabit then?**

If we look beyond the effects of divorce on spouses and their children, we also note that high divorce rates erode the confidence of the general public in the institution of marriage. The high rate of divorce affects the societal perceptions of the matrimony. With their faith in marriage undermined, people resort to other options. In this case cohabitation seems to be the easiest way to learn how to live
together as husband and wife. In the wake of the current high rate of cohabitation, we should ask ourselves whether cohabitation leads to better marriages.

**Studies done by economist** Betsey Stevenson in 2007 found that as divorce increases cohabitation rates are going up. This is a sign that couples are settling for a lesser evil, cohabitation. According Stevenson, from 1960 to 2007, the percentage of married American women fell from 66% to 51%, and the percentage of married men fell from 69% to 55% respectively. Surprisingly, during the same time, cohabitating couples multiplied fourteen-fold from 439,000 to more than 6.4 million. This means these cohabiting couples raise close to 40% of American children. (30) A simple analysis of this situation points to the fact that cohabiting unions are much less stable than marriages and that the majority of the children raised under cohabitation are likely to experience the dissolution of the relationship between their parents when they are still young and dependent.

According to the findings of a study conducted by Bowling Green State University, young men and women who choose to cohabit are simply seeking ways of testing their relationships to see if they can be transformed into viable marriages. Again, this rationale is clearly shaped by the nagging fear of divorce and it establishes the connection between divorce and cohabitation. I don't know if it is clear, but it is an interesting theory.

However, according to information released by the Catholic Resource Center over studies on cohabitation in Sweden (Bennet, et al. 1987), in the United States (Booth and Johnson, 1988; Bumpass and Sweet, 1989) and Canada (Balakrishnan, et al., 1987), point to the fact that couples who cohabit before marriage are more
likely to divorce than those who never lived together. (31) (This is worth expounding…) 

There is also evidence that couples who start by cohabiting are usually less committed to marriage, more accepting of divorce and are more often come from broken families. If this is true, the current large number of cohabiting couples predicts massive divorcees in the foreseeable future. It is also worrisome to learn that, children from divorced families and single parent families are less likely to get married and if they do, they are likely to divorce more than those from two- 

These findings speak for themselves. (32) Cohabitation is all about convenience. I strongly believe that the essence of any relationship is commitment to one another. If there is no commitment, then there is no deal. Cohabitation is mostly about convenience, not love. If cohabitation does not prepare couples on how to live together as husband and wife well, then people simply cohabit to stay out of marriage.

**Policy Recommendations**

While the current rates of divorce, cohabitation and out of wedlock childbearing maybe reflecting changes in people’s perception of marriage, elected officials and government should take the problem of divorce seriously and put it on the agenda for debate in the public square. Since broken families force government to fill in as provider, government should be motivated to take an active role in rolling out a national drive to educate people on the importance of the two-parent family in
society. To discourage single parenthood special tax breaks and other incentives should be extended to two-parent families.

In an effort to discourage cohabitation and unwed child bearing, government should work closely with independent organizations that voluntarily initiate pro-family programs. Through these organizations, government can supply reliable information to be passed on to the people. Since significant research suggest a connection between the welfare system and single parenthood, it is important that welfare reforms be done to discourage the current trend that encourages fathers to abdicate their family responsibilities to the government.

State laws on divorce should be revisited with a view to change the current situation of “no fault divorce laws that make it all too easy for people to walk in and out of marriage without good cause. States should make it mandatory that before granting the dissolution of any marriage, counseling and other options have been explored with a view to restore the union.

States should also impose lengthy waiting periods before initiating final divorce proceedings unless life is in danger. At times hasty divorces do not give spouses enough time to work through their differences and save their marriages. Churches could help more with pre-marriage counseling and mentoring of youths in their communities. In addition churches could also work closely with juvenile justice departments with a view to provide free mentoring services aimed at reducing wayward behavior.

Conclusion

Having seen how divorce affects spouses, children, and the larger society through the financial burdens it imposes on government, this paper indicts broken homes as the leading source of most of the social problems society faces today. We heard how after divorce fewer spouses fully
recover and the emotional turmoil children go through during and after divorce. We have also heard how children from broken families underachieve as kids in elementary school, and as adults in college and also how they fail to nurse stable love relationships as adults in society, compared to those from two parent families.

Very worrisome was the establishment by research that the rate of divorce in any given area can predict the rate of crime in that area. This connection between divorce and crime probably prescribes answers to some of the delinquent behaviors so visible in some youths today. Besides robbing children of their chances of growing up in stable, loving and protective two parent families, research has also linked divorce and single parenthood to poverty and welfare dependence. This lends credence to the theory that family configuration is critical and in this case, the two-parent biological family is always ideal. Instead of blaming it all on TV movies, let us own up and blame our inability to live together as families as the source of some of the problems society faces today.

The institution of marriage can only survive its current onslaught if policy makers reform marriage laws to a point where they inform our actions and conscience of the importance of marriage in society. Demoting marriage to a point where it is equated with domestic unions will only continue to undermine its true value in society. The purpose of marriage should not be hijacked and used to validate minorities seeking legal recognition and other adult rights because families are about children, not adult rights. In light of what we just heard in this report, any divorce case involving children should be regarded as a tragedy to be avoided at all costs.

What hurts marriage today is this unmitigated culture of divorce which has shaken the confidence of the public in matrimony. For most marriages, divorce starts long before the wedding and as a precaution; most young men and women have resorted to cohabitation to test
and see if their relationships can be transformed into viable marriages. The negative perception that comes with marriage’s lack of permanence has led to the current high rate of out of wedlock child bearing. Some people no longer want to be married, but they still reserve their right to bear children.

Sadly, tonight a distressing number of children in this nation will go to bed without the participation of both a mother and a father in an important ritual family ritual; reading a bedtime story, saying nighttime prayers, and being tucked in with reassuring goodnight kisses. This experience is more and more often a solo act for one reason; the slow death of a marriage culture.

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The Social Context of Marriage pg. 1 by Richard Udry (197
Excellent paper, and well thought out and documented. Your conclusions were sound, and your supporting points made sense. I would suggest being a bit more “objective” in the beginning, so that your references speak for themselves. It presents a tighter argument when you allow others to initially weigh in with their views, especially the research. An author’s opinion, or the study you are referencing should have an immediate citation. If it is APA style it will simply be Jones (1987) …which you did a number of times, but not throughout. When you appear as a neutral “disseminator” of information from the start, citing the studies as you go, it lends credibility to your final statements, which then appear as a natural culmination of documented common sense.

Your initial question, “The compelling question to ask is whether these “Developed Nations” have become so sophisticated to a point that the family as an institution is no longer relevant in their societies.” This is the key. Why is this so? Have all sophisticated countries over time had declining marriages? What are the attitudes that have changed and why? Is it the assertion of “individualism” in western culture…is it individual narcissism…does affluence and/or freedom breed more choices, albeit poor ones…These are things you can speculate about at the end of your paper, because any good research recognizes the need for areas of further research. Obviously from a psychologist’s view I’m watching for the internal changes in attitude as reasons for the increase in divorce, etc, while from a sociological view one might look for society’s collective contribution, and from a policy view, the policies and laws that reinforce the attitudinal direction.

Underneath though, there are deeper reasons that set the whole thing in
motion…Why might people want the option to not marry, or remain free from commitment?

Great paper and thought-provoking…