

WITH THIS RING ...



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A SURVEY ON
MARRIAGE IN
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Dear Readers:

I am pleased to share with you *With This Ring...Marriage in Oregon: A Report of a New Survey*, one of the most comprehensive surveys ever conducted on Oregonians' attitudes towards the institution of marriage.

This timely report provides important data that will serve to inform opinion leaders, policy makers, marriage educators, and scholars as they grapple with strategies to strengthen marriages in Oregon and our country as a whole.

There is little doubt that marriage is one of the most venerable and significant institutions in the state of Oregon. However, there is also little doubt that, despite the fact that Oregonians generally value marriage and desire to have happy marriages, there are some troubling trends that should alarm us. The prevalence of divorce is one such troubling trend, particularly if one is concerned about the well-being of children.

Given National Fatherhood Initiative's (NFI) desire to improve the well-being of children by increasing the proportion that grow up with involved, responsible and committed fathers, NFI was especially interested in providing the public with invaluable insights into a variety of issues that affect children. Because when fathers and children are disconnected, children fare worse, on average, across every measure of physical, economic, educational, and psychological well-being.

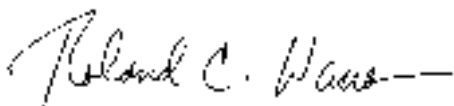
With one out of three of our nation's children living in father-absent homes, it is important for us to understand how the public views marriage, which arguably is society's best "glue" to connect fathers to their children, heart to heart.

On the fatherhood front, this report certainly provides some encouraging news. Specifically, 99% of the Oregon survey respondents agreed that fathers are just as important as mothers for the proper development of children, and 85% agreed that, all things being equal, it is better for children to be raised in a household that has a married mother and father.

However, people in Oregon may be slightly less pro-marriage than people in the country as a whole. For example, 72% of Oregon respondents agreed that "couples who have children together ought to be married," compared to 74% of national respondents. Also, while 88% of national respondents agreed that "couples who marry should make a lifelong commitment to one another, to be broken only under extreme circumstances," 87% of Oregon respondents agreed.

In closing, I am confident that you will read this report with great interest. I am also confident that some of the data will surprise you and that you will be inspired to continue to find ways to strengthen the institution of marriage so that Oregon's children can grow up in secure, stable homes with the love, nurturance, and support that they so desperately need.

Sincerely,



Roland C. Warren
President
National Fatherhood Initiative



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A telephone survey of 400 Oregon residents age 18 and older conducted in 2004 that asked questions about attitudes toward marriage, aspirations for marriage, and past experiences with marriage yielded the following findings:

A large percentage of the respondents to the survey expressed pro-marriage attitudes...

...and a small minority expressed attitudes that could reasonably be considered "anti-marriage."

- 1** A large percentage of the respondents to the survey expressed pro-marriage attitudes and a small minority expressed attitudes that could reasonably be considered "anti-marriage." For instance, most of the respondents said that marriage should be a lifelong commitment (87 percent) and that fathers are just as important as mothers for the proper development of children (99 percent). A substantial majority *disagreed* with such statements as "Marriage is an old-fashioned, outmoded institution" (91 percent) and "Either spouse should be allowed to terminate a marriage at any time for any reason" (71 percent)—the latter being rejection of unilateral no-fault divorce.
- 2** Although 44 percent of the respondents were unmarried, 83 percent (96 percent of those age 50 and older) were or had been married. Ninety-one percent of the never-married persons said they wanted eventually to marry, and a minuscule two percent of all respondents had never married and did not aspire to marry.
- 3** The quality of intact marriages in the state seems to be high, in that 66 percent of the married respondents said their marriages were "very happy," and 87 percent said they were either "completely" or "very" satisfied with their marriages. A surprising 94 percent said they would marry the same person if they had it to do over again. Seventy-five percent of the respondents agreed that "Most married persons I know have happy, healthy marriages."
- 4** However, the respondents' support for lifelong marriage was not nearly as strong as it could have been, because many of the respondents who agreed with the pro-marriage statements failed to "strongly agree," and many who disagreed with the anti-marriage statements failed to "strongly disagree." Furthermore, several sentiments that some observers consider a threat to marriage, though they are not clearly "anti-marriage," were frequently expressed in the survey. These include approval of cohabitation as a means of testing compatibility for marriage (44 percent) and rejection of such statements as "In the absence of violence and extreme conflict, parents who have an unsatisfactory marriage should stay together until their children are grown" (54 percent) and "It should be harder for parents of children under age 18 to get a divorce than it is for couples who do not have children" (60 percent).



5 Forty-one percent of the ever-married respondents had divorced, and of those, 30 percent had divorced more than once. Of the nonwidowed respondents who married 20 or more years before the survey was taken, only 30 percent were still in a first marriage they said was “very happy.” It is apparent, therefore, that the average quality of intact marriages is high only because marriages that become poor tend to quickly end in divorce—hardly a positive indicator of the health of the institution of marriage in the state.

6 There is tentative evidence in the findings of the survey that many people in Oregon are receptive to governmental involvement in the promotion of healthy marriages. Less than half of the survey respondents would *require* couples considering marriage to have pre-marital counseling, and 58 percent of the married persons and 74 percent of those “on the market” for a spouse said they would attend free marital or pre-marital education classes (presumably offered at public expense).

7 The most promising approaches to improving the health of marriage in Oregon are primarily educational and include disseminating information about the costs of marital failure as well as the promotion of pre-marital and marital education. Making divorces harder to get in order to prevent hasty and ill-considered decisions to divorce may also help, but the effectiveness of such an approach has not been proven.



8 When ever-divorced persons were asked which of a list of twelve common reasons for divorce were major reasons for their divorce (first divorce if divorced more than once), “lack of commitment by one or both persons to make it work” was chosen as one of the major reasons by 72 percent of the respondents and was, by a large margin, the most frequently chosen reason. This finding, along with the fact that 56 percent of the ever-divorced persons said they wished their ex-spouse had worked harder to save the marriage and 23 percent said they wished they, themselves, had worked harder, indicates that lack of determination to resolve marital problems accounts for a great deal of the marital failure in Oregon.

9 Other commonly given major reasons for divorce are “lack of equality in the relationship” (55 percent), “infidelity/extramarital affairs” (54 percent), “little or no helpful pre-marital preparation” (47 percent), “too much conflict and arguing” (46 percent), “unrealistic expectations of marriage by one or both spouses” (45 percent), and “getting married too young” (44 percent). Most of these can be addressed by pre-marital and marital education and counseling.

10 Most “risk factors for marital failure” that have been identified by marital researchers seem to be about as common in Oregon as in the country as a whole, but having little or no religiosity and parental divorce apparently are more prevalent in Oregon than in the nation.



WITH THIS RING... A SURVEY ON MARRIAGE IN OREGON

Introduction

Research on marriage in Oregon, as well as in the United States as a whole, reveals a paradox. According to the responses of 400 persons selected to be representative of the Oregon population age 18 and older, people in Oregon generally consider marriage to be very important, believe

that marriage should be for life, and hold traditional attitudes about marriage. However, the institution of marriage in the state is not especially robust. Divorce is prevalent, and hardly more than a third of the adults in the state are in marriages of high quality, as marital quality is rather crudely measured on the survey. Around 44 percent of the adults are unmarried, including almost a third of those in their thirties and forties. The health of marriage in the state could be worse, but it also could be a great deal better.

This report first summarizes the survey respondents' views of marriage, and then it deals with some indicators of the health of marriage in Oregon and discusses why that health is not better given the prevalence of pro-marriage attitudes in the state. Finally, the report suggests how marriage in Oregon can be improved.

The same questions asked on the Oregon survey were also asked on a survey of 1,503 persons selected to be representative of all adults in the United States (the National Fatherhood Initiative National Marriage Survey). The responses to both the Oregon and the national survey are reported in Appendix A and are discussed in general terms in the body of this report.

People in Oregon generally consider marriage to be very important...

...believe that marriage should be for life, and hold traditional attitudes about marriage.

How People in Oregon View Marriage

The generally pro-marriage attitudes of the Oregon survey respondents are illustrated by their overwhelming agreement with such statements as “All things being equal, it is better for children to be raised in a household that has a married mother and father” (85 percent), “Fathers are as important as mothers for the proper development of children” (99 percent), “Couples who marry should make a lifelong commitment, to be broken only under rare circumstances” (87 percent), and “Couples who have children together ought to be married” (72 percent).

Large percentages of the respondents *disagreed* with such statements as “Marriage is an old-fashioned, outmoded institution” (91 percent) and “Given how long people are living these days, it is unrealistic to expect a couple to remain married to one another for life” (80 percent). Most respondents expressed negative attitudes toward divorce, 90 percent agreeing that divorce is a serious national problem and 71 percent *disagreeing* that “Either spouse should be allowed to terminate a marriage at any time for any reason.” The latter percentage is especially notable, in that Oregon spouses usually can end a marriage at any time for any reason.

These percentages are very similar to those from the national survey (see Appendix A), but people in Oregon may be slightly less pro-marriage than people in the country as a whole.

The discussion above is based on combining “agree” and “strongly agree” responses and “disagree” and “strongly disagree” responses—a procedure that may make support for marriage in Oregon seem to be stronger than it really is. Examination of only the “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree” responses makes it clear that people in Oregon are not nearly as pro-marriage as they could be. For instance, the “strongly agree” percentages are only 35 for “All things being equal, it is better for children to be raised in a household that has a married mother and father,” 56 for “Fathers are as important as mothers for the proper development of children,” 38 for “Couples who marry should make a lifelong commitment to one another, to be broken only under extreme circumstances,” and 28 for “Couples who have children together ought to be married.” Likewise, “strongly disagree” responses to the “anti-marriage” statements are far lower than they could be.

Figure 1
Percentage of respondents who agreed that
“Couples who have children together
ought to be married”

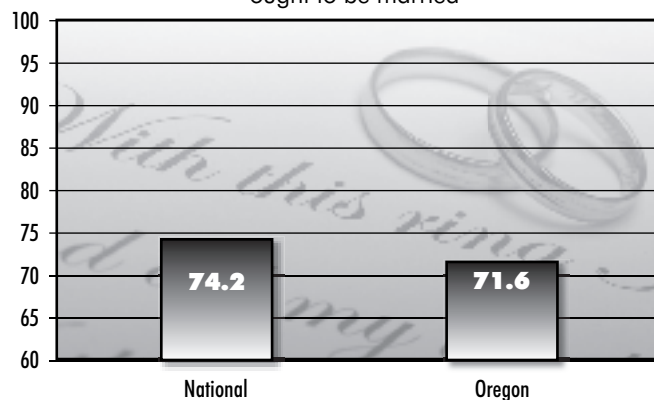


Figure 2
Percentage of respondents who agreed that
“Fathers are as important as mothers for the
proper development of children”

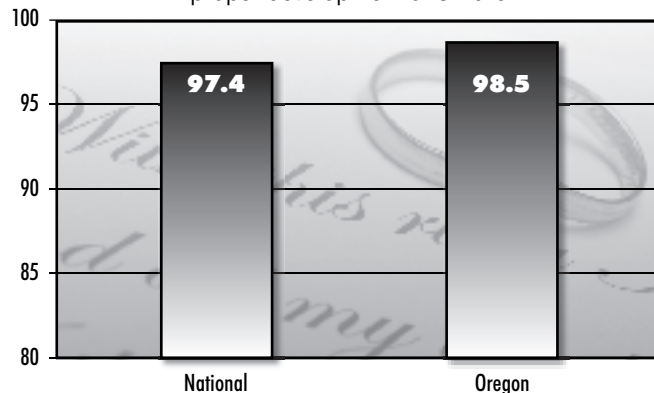
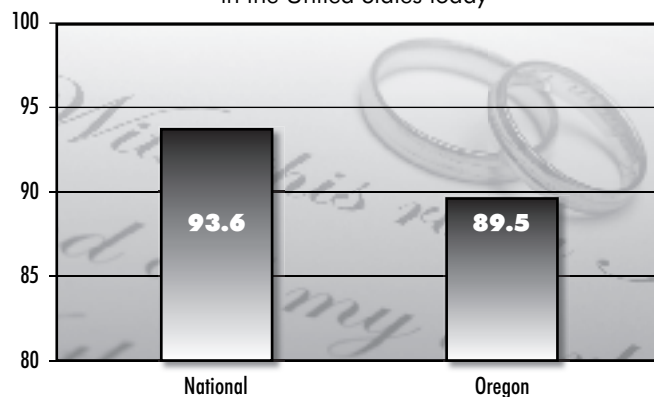


Figure 3
Percentage of respondents who agreed that
“Divorce is a serious national problem
in the United States today”





...it is important that the people of Oregon, in common with Americans in general, are "the marrying kind."

Motivations for marriage vary, but very few persons are avoiding marriage.

The percentage is 45 for "Marriage is an old-fashioned, outmoded institution," and 29 for "Given how long people are living these days, it is unrealistic to expect a couple to remain married to one another for life." And although people in Oregon can accurately be characterized as anti-divorce, their opposition could be considerably stronger. Only 47 percent "strongly agreed" that "Divorce is a serious national problem in the United States today," and only 24 percent "strongly disagreed" with the statement that "Either spouse should be allowed to terminate a marriage at any time for any reason."

Furthermore, many people in the state have attitudes that, while not distinctly anti-marriage, may negatively affect marriages and the institution of marriage. For example, 44 percent agreed that "If they are determined to do so, divorced couples can parent as effectively as can most persons who live together," and 44 percent agreed that "It is a good idea for couples considering marriage to live together in order to decide whether or not they get along well enough to be married to one another."¹ Fifty-four percent *disagreed* with the statement that "In the absence of violence and extreme conflict, parents who have an unsatisfactory marriage should stay together until their children are grown," and 60 percent *disagreed* that "It should be harder for parents of children under age 18 to get a divorce than it is for couples who do not have young children."

WITH THIS RING...

A SURVEY ON MARRIAGE IN OREGON

Clearly, many people in Oregon are somewhat tentative in their support for lifelong marriage—a fact that may help explain the negative indications of marital health discussed below.

The responses of survey respondents to attitudinal questions are subject to what survey researchers call “social desirability response bias,” or the tendency of people to give socially approved rather than honest answers. Therefore, the actions of people in Oregon may more accurately reveal how they feel about marriage than what they say about their feelings, but those actions also indicate prevalent pro-marriage sentiments. A very large proportion of the people of Oregon have chosen marriage for themselves, in that 83 percent of the survey respondents, and 96 percent of those age 50 and older, were or had been married. Ninety-one percent of the never-married respondents said they would like to marry someday—a believable level of aspiration for marriage given the high percentage who had already married. An astonishingly low two percent of the Oregon respondents—equal to the percentage in the national survey—had never married and said they did not aspire to marriage.

Of course, many people who lack a strong commitment to the institution of marriage marry or aspire to marry. Some look upon marriage solely as a source of personal gratification rather than an institutional arrangement that entails strong duties and obligations. Although only 16 percent of the Oregon respondents admitted to believing that promoting the happiness and well-being of married individuals is a more important purpose of marriage than producing well-adjusted children who will become good citizens, this finding should be viewed with a certain amount of skepticism, because the question that yielded it is of the kind that is likely to elicit socially desirable responses.

In any event, it is important that the people of Oregon, in common with Americans in general, are “the marrying kind.” Motivations for marriage vary, but very few persons are avoiding marriage.

Figure 4

Percentage of respondents who agreed that
“Couples who marry should make
a lifelong commitment to one another,
to be broken only under
extreme circumstances”

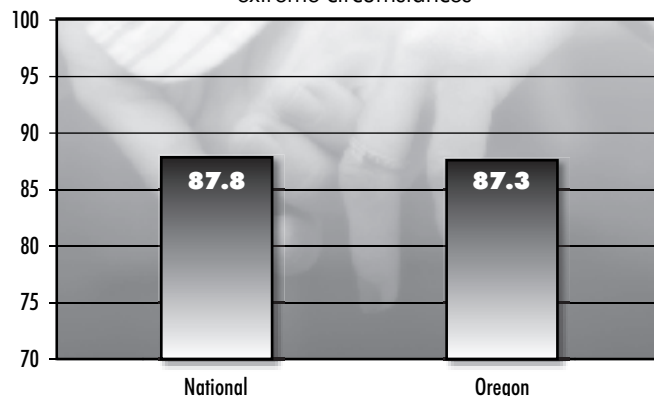
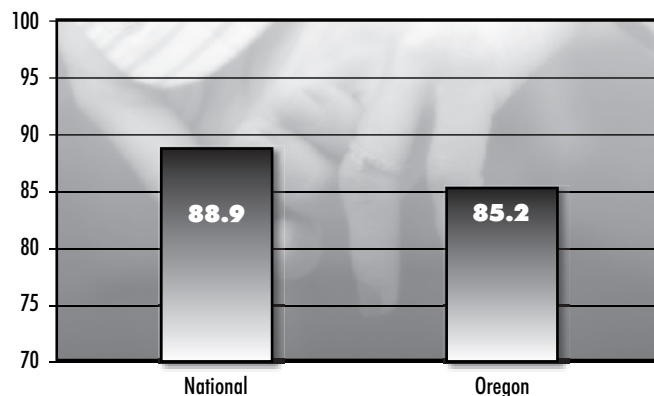


Figure 5

Percentage of respondents who agreed that
“All things being equal, it is better for children
to be raised in a household that has
a married mother and father”





WITH THIS RING... A SURVEY ON MARRIAGE IN OREGON

The Health of Marriage in Oregon

No one survey, not even one much more elaborate than the one reported here, could provide a definitive diagnosis of the health of marriage in a state, but this survey provides a useful increment of information about the health of marriage in Oregon.

The survey responses show, for instance, that most currently married persons in Oregon view their marriages positively, or at least say they do when they are asked. For instance, 66 percent said their marriages were “very happy,” and 87 percent said they were either “completely” or “very” satisfied with their marriages. An astounding 98 percent said they expected to be married for life,² and 94 percent said they would marry the same person if they had it to do over again. Quite a few of these persons and their spouses had recovered from marital problems, because 14 percent said they had seriously considered filing for divorce.

The survey responses show... that currently married persons in Oregon generally view their marriages positively...

These positive reports of marital quality are similar to those found by national surveys (see Appendix A), which have been viewed with skepticism by some commentators on American marriage. The reasoning is that people are reluctant to admit to problems in their marriages and thus tend to say their marriages are better than they really are—something akin to social desirability response bias.

There is no definitive evidence that survey responses about marital quality are not substantially biased, but the responses to a question on the Oregon survey (and on the comparable national survey) suggest that any bias is not great. The respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the

statement: “Most married couples I know have happy, healthy marriages.” Of course, a norm of privacy about marital problems could make agreement with this statement artificially high, but many married persons do talk about their marital problems with friends and relatives, and tensions between married couples cannot always be well concealed. Thus, a high level of agreement with this statement is at least tentative evidence that high levels of reported marital happiness and satisfaction are not substantially in error. And that level of agreement was rather high—75 percent—among the Oregon respondents, only three percent of whom strongly disagreed with the statement.

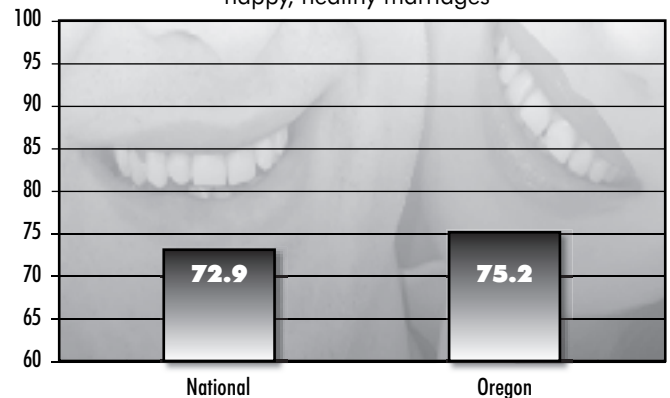
Although some authors perceive an inconsistency between a high average quality of existing marriages and a high level of divorce, in fact the two are not inconsistent. If poor marriages tend to end quickly, thus producing a high divorce rate, the average quality of the remaining intact marriages will be high, as is apparently the case in Oregon. Therefore, high levels of marital happiness and satisfaction are not, by themselves, strong indications that the institution



of marriage is healthy. Divorce weakens the institution and of course has many negative consequences for adults, children, and the society as a whole even if it does not lower the average quality of existing marriages.

It is well known that divorce is prevalent in Oregon—a fact confirmed by the results of the survey.³ Forty-one percent of the ever-married respondents had divorced, and among those who first married 20

Figure 6
Percentage of respondents who agreed that
“Most married couples I know have
happy, healthy marriages”



or more years before the survey, the percentage is 58. Since many of the not yet divorced persons will eventually divorce, it is likely that as around two-thirds of all marriages entered into more than 20 years ago by persons still alive at the time of the survey will eventually end in divorce. Furthermore, many persons in Oregon have experienced multiple divorces. Of 41 percent of the ever-married Oregon respondents who had divorced, 30 percent had divorced more than once. Comparable national data are 34 and 25 percent.

Marital failure can consist of either divorce or a stable but bad marriage, and thus it is useful to construct measures of marital success-failure that take into account both marital stability-instability and marital quality. For instance, it is useful to know that among the nonwidowed Oregon respondents who married 20 or more years before the survey, only 30 percent were still in their first marriage and considered it to be “very happy.” Thus, by a stringent standard, less than a third of all first marriages have been clearly successful. Some ever-married respondents were in good second or subsequent marriages, but after 20 or more years, only 48 percent of the nonwidowed ever-married respondents were in a marriage of any order that they said was “very happy.” Another way to gage the state of marriage in Oregon is to look at what proportion of the total (including never married) nonwidowed respondents age 30 and older were in a “very happy” marriage, and that is 43 percent. Obviously, these indicators of the health of marriage in Oregon are not very positive.



WITH THIS
RING...
A SURVEY ON
MARRIAGE
IN OREGON

Why the Health of Marriage in Oregon is Not Better

Previous research... has revealed a number of "risk factors for marital failure," which are associated with and may contribute to divorce and poor marital quality.

It is useful to examine the prevalence of some of these risk factors in Oregon.

It would be unreasonable to expect the results of the survey reported here to fully explain why the health of marriage in Oregon is not better than it is, but those results do provide some clues.

The respondents to the survey who had ever been divorced were asked which, of a list of twelve common reasons for divorce, were major reasons for their divorce (first divorce in the case of those divorced more than once). The respondents could select as many reasons as applied and could give reasons not on the list, though few did that. The frequency of the reasons selected (except for the few "other" reasons) is reported in Figure 7. The reasons are ordered by the frequency of their selection rather than by the sequence in which they appeared on the questionnaire.

"Lack of commitment by one or both persons to make it work" was, by a large margin, the most frequently selected reason, followed by "lack of equality in the relationship," "infidelity/extramarital affairs," "little or no helpful pre-marital preparation," "too much conflict and arguing," "unrealistic expectations of marriage by one or both spouses," and "getting married too young." All other reasons were much less frequently chosen.

There is a widespread belief among commentators on American marriage that most couples who divorce do so only after they have tried very hard to save the marriage. The validity of that belief is placed in doubt by the frequent choice of "lack of commitment" as a major reason for divorce. Additional evidence against this belief is the fact that 56 percent of the ever-divorced Oregon respondents said they wished their spouses had worked harder

to save the marriage, and 23 percent said they wished they, themselves, had worked harder. It seems, therefore, that a major reason for marital failure in Oregon (as in the nation as a whole) is a lack of determination of persons to resolve problems and dissatisfactions that arise in their marriages.

A lack of preparation for marriage, including a lack of conflict resolution skills, also seems to loom large, and the frequent choice of “unrealistic expectations” is consistent with the impressions of

those observers of American marriage who think that Americans have come to rely too heavily on marriage to meet all of their emotional needs. “Getting married too young” ranks high and undoubtedly was an important reason for marital failure in Oregon, young marriage apparently being slightly more common in Oregon than in the nation as a whole (31 percent of the ever-married Oregon respondents and 28 percent of the United States respondents first married before age 20). The average age at first marriage in the country as a whole has risen steeply in the past quarter of a century, but young age at marriage was still frequent in the recent past in Oregon, in that 24 percent of the ever-married respondents under age 40 had married before age 20.

Some reasons for divorce widely believed to be common were not frequently chosen by the Oregon (or the national) respondents, examples being financial problems and conflict about domestic chores. Lack of equality and domestic violence were more frequently chosen by women than by men in the national survey, but the number of ever-divorced respondents to the Oregon survey is too small for a breakdown by gender.

Previous research, including the National Fatherhood Initiative National Marriage Survey, has revealed a number of “risk factors for marital failure,” which are associated with and may contribute to divorce and poor marital quality. It is

useful to examine the prevalence of some of these risk factors in Oregon.

One of the most important of these is little or no religiosity, which appears to be somewhat more common in Oregon than in the nation as a whole. Thirty-four percent of the Oregon respondents said they were “slightly religious” or “not religious at all”, compared with 29 percent of the respondents to the national survey, but 33 percent of the Oregon respondents said they were “very religious,” compared with 32 percent of the national respondents.

Another important risk factor for marital failure is having parents who divorced after the person was born but before he or she reached age 16. Twenty-one percent of the respondents to the Oregon survey, compared with 15 percent on the national survey, fell into this category. For persons under age 40, the percentages for the Oregon and national respondents are 34 and 24, respectively.

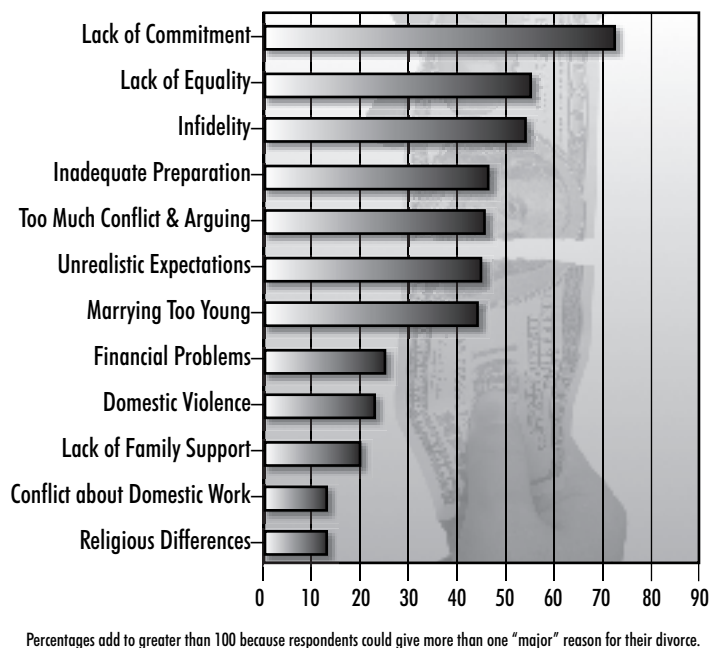
Most of the other risk factors for marital failure covered by the surveys are apparently about fairly similar in

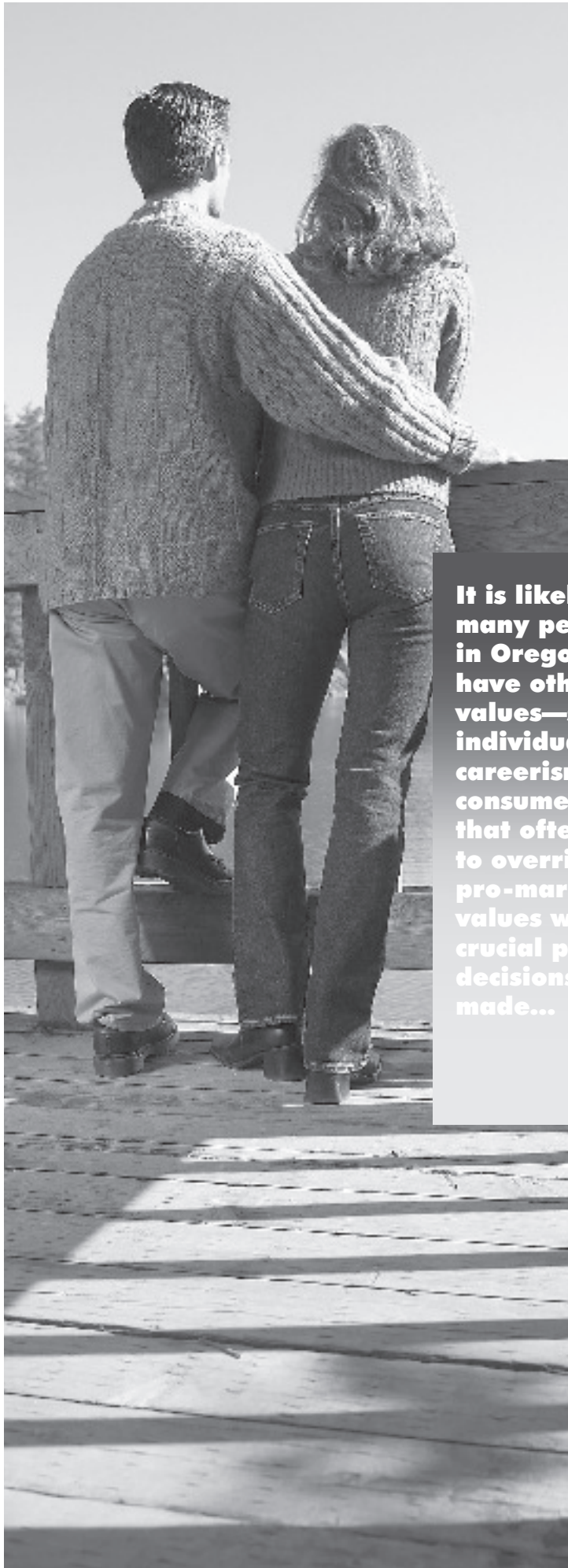
Oregon and in the United States as a whole. These include living together before marriage (33 percent of ever-married respondents in Oregon and 29 percent in the nation), not having premarital counseling (61 percent in Oregon and 63 percent in the nation), and marrying under age 20 (31 percent in Oregon and 28 percent in the nation).

As pointed out above, most of the Oregon respondents reported pro-marriage attitudes, but there is evidence in the survey responses that many persons have a rather tentative and qualified commitment to lifelong marriage. Although the survey provides no direct evidence on the topic, it is likely that many people in Oregon have other values—such as those usually subsumed under such labels as individualism, careerism, and consumerism—that often tend to override their pro-marriage values when crucial personal decisions are made.

Figure 7

Percentage of Ever-Divorced Respondents Who Gave Selected “Major” Reasons for Their Divorce





It is likely that many people in Oregon have other values—such as individualism, careerism, and consumerism—that often tend to override their pro-marriage values when crucial personal decisions are made...

Some commentators on American marriage believe that problems in marriages grow to a large extent out of “structural impediments” to good marriages external to the married persons themselves.⁴ The impediments discussed are sometimes economic ones, such as the lack of good jobs, and sometimes they are demographic, such as a scarcity of marriageable men. These impediments are undoubtedly very real for some segments of the American population, including especially African Americans, who are afflicted with an unfavorable (for marriage) ratio of males to females and with more economic hardships than most other Americans.⁵ However, African Americans are only about two percent of the Oregon population, and the state has an unusually high ratio of males to females and a relatively robust economy. The survey findings reported here can provide only tentative evidence on how much structural impediments have affected marriages in Oregon, but the evidence they do provide points more to the characteristics of individuals than to broad social and demographic influences. For instance, few ever-divorced respondents said that financial problems were a major reason for their divorces, and the most frequently chosen reasons are characteristics of individuals. Of course, people may not be aware of how social and demographic influences affect their marriages, and the reasons for divorce presented to the respondents are largely individual characteristics.

In any event, the characteristics of individuals seem to be more important than structural influences on the health of marriage in Oregon, are undoubtedly very important, and are probably more amenable than the structural influences to being addressed by public policy and the efforts of private individuals and organizations.



WITH THIS
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A SURVEY ON
MARRIAGE
IN OREGON

How Can the Health of Marriage in Oregon Be Improved?

There is currently an active "marriage movement" in this country...

by which scholars, educators, clergy, and other interested persons are trying to increase the prevalence of healthy marriages.

No one has discovered a panacea for the problems of marriage in the United States or in modern societies in general, and there can be no "ten easy steps" to improving marriage in Oregon. However, there is reason to be guardedly optimistic about the prospects for improvement. There is currently an active "marriage movement" in this country, by which family scholars, educators, clergy, and other interested persons are trying to increase the prevalence of healthy marriages. The efforts have been largely put forth by private individuals and organizations, but concern about the public consequences of widespread marital failure has led to public efforts, such as the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative, which began in 2000, and fledgling programs of a similar nature in several other states. In Arizona, Louisiana, and Arkansas, the movement has led to Covenant Marriage, an optional kind of marriage in which the couple gives up the right to quick no-fault divorce. Even in these three states, the main thrust of the efforts has been through pre-marital and marital education. It is too early to gage the efficacy of the marriage movement, but preliminary evidence is encouraging.⁶

Data from surveys such as the Oregon survey reported here and the National Fatherhood Initiative National Marriage Survey can provide clues about where marriage improvement efforts can best be directed. For instance, the high ranking of "too much conflict and arguing" and "little or no helpful pre-marriage preparation" as stated major reasons for divorce indicates a great need for education to improve conflict resolution and relationship skills. A number of well-tested educational programs designed to instill such skills are available, including the *Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program* (PREP), developed by Howard Markman and Scott Stanley of the University of Denver. In Oklahoma, public funds are used to make various versions of PREP available at little or no cost to the individuals or couples who want the education, and couples who take advantage of pre-marital education get a steep reduction in their marriage license fee.

Not everyone thinks that promoting healthy marriages is a proper function of government, and the survey reported here did not ask respondents their opinions on the issue. However, the survey did ask married persons if they would attend marriage strengthening classes if they were available at no cost, and 58 percent said yes, about the same as the 57 percent of married national survey respondents who said yes. The Oregon survey also asked unmarried respondents who were seeking spouses if they would attend pre-marital education classes if they were available at no cost, and 74 percent said yes, compared with 73 percent of the comparable national survey respondents. It is likely that quite a few of those who said they would attend the classes would not find the time to do so, but the responses nevertheless indicate considerable receptiveness in Oregon to the offering of such classes, either by the government or by private organizations. Furthermore, 41 percent of the Oregon respondents (and 47 percent of the national ones) agreed that all couples considering marriage should be required by law to have premarital counseling before they marry—an indication of considerable support for governmental promotion of healthy marriages. Support for less coercive methods of promotion is probably greater.

Although many people oppose governmental efforts to improve marriages, few would dispute the desirability of informing young people about the major correlates of marital success and failure. For instance, who would object to informing teenagers that marriages entered into prior to age 20 are more than twice as likely to end in divorce as those entered into in the mid-twenties? If the proportion of first marriages entered into before age 20 in Oregon could be reduced below the recent level of around 24 percent, the divorce rate would almost certainly decline.

However, the case of age at marriage illustrates that there are no easy and simple solutions to the problem of marital failure. A reduction in teenage marriages without a corresponding reduction in teen pregnancies might not have an overall positive impact when child well-being is taken into account. When a teen pregnancy occurs, marriage may often be desirable, even if

the marriage ends in divorce, in that the father may be more likely to form a lasting bond with the child if he has been married to the mother. Furthermore, it is important not to assume that because teen marriage is generally undesirable, the later the age at marriage the better. Data from the National Fatherhood Initiative National Marriage Survey show that while persons who first marry after their mid-twenties are not much more likely to divorce than those who marry in their mid-twenties, they are much more likely to be in stable marriages of poor quality. The reason for this finding is not clear, but it suggests that first marriage can come too late as well as too early.⁷

It also would be desirable to inform unmarried persons of all ages that premarital cohabitation is predictive of marital failure rather than marital success, although the reason for this correlation also is not clear. It is possible that couples who cohabit before they marry

are more likely to divorce than other couples only because on average they have less traditional values, and traditional values are conducive to marital success. However, the cohabitation itself may have negative consequences on marriage. It is likely that quite a few bad marriages are prevented when cohabitation reveals major incompatibilities, but cohabitation may also lead to unwise marriages and/or lead to patterns of relating that are inimical to successful marriage. A casual decision to cohabit (perhaps to save living expenses) limits the ability of each partner to meet and get to know other persons who might be more appropriate mates than the cohabitant, and it often sets in

Figure 8
Percentage of respondents who agreed that
"All couples considering marriage should be
encouraged to get premarital counseling
before they marry"

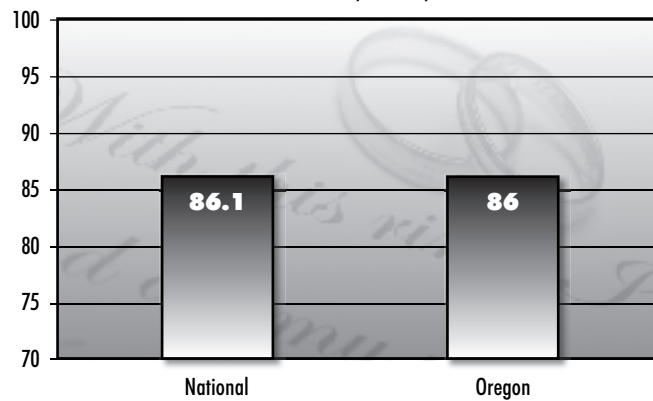
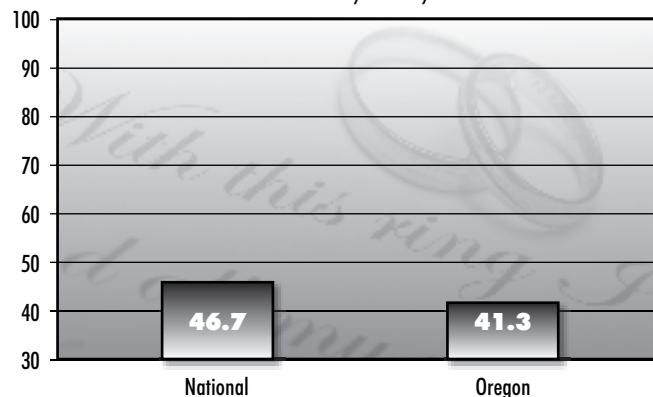


Figure 9
Percentage of respondents who agreed that
"All couples considering marriage should be
required by law to have premarital counseling
before they marry"



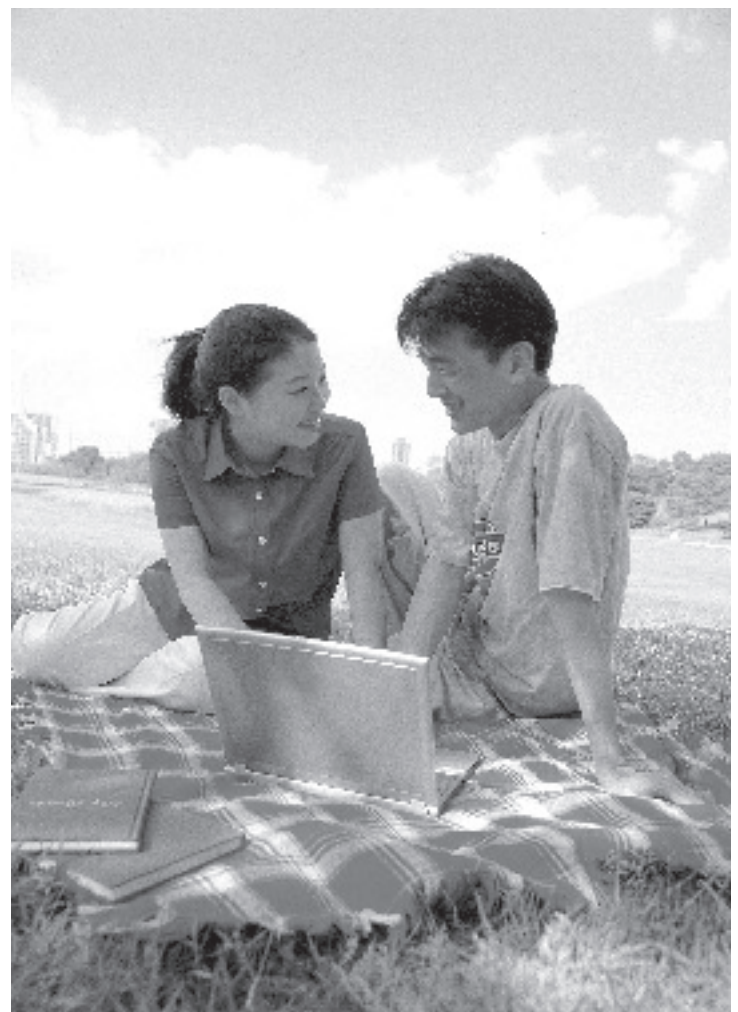
motion forces toward marriage that are hard to stop. “Breaking up is hard to do” under any circumstances, but it is especially hard when the couple is living together.

Having parents who divorced is a risk factor that cannot be changed, and its prevalence in Oregon cannot be reduced without a reduction in divorce in the state and in the places from which persons migrate to Oregon. However, persons with this risk factor can be identified as having a special need for premarital education and counseling. “Children of divorce” need to know of their elevated risk for marital failure, but they also need to know that there are measures they can take to reduce that risk. Some authorities believe that fear of failure in marriage can be a self-fulfilling prophesy, and thus is it important not to give persons whose parents divorced the impression that they face insurmountable obstacles to marital success.

Low or nonexistent religiosity is a risk factor for marital failure that cannot be directly addressed by public policy, except that knowledge that this is a risk factor can be instilled by educational programs regardless of their sponsorship. Other risk factors, such as a low level of formal education, are already being addressed for reasons unrelated to the promotion of healthy marriages.

The findings from the National Fatherhood Initiative Surveys most useful for deciding on means to try to promote healthy marriages are almost certainly those indicating that many people lack determination to resolve difficulties that arise in their marriages. These findings point to a need for a wider understanding of the consequences of marital failure, for adults, for children, and for the society as a whole. Although different social and behavioral scientists interpret the evidence concerning these consequences differently, on the order of seeing the glass either half full or half empty,⁸ even most of the more sanguine interpretations should motivate couples in troubled marriages to try to save them unless one of the spouses has a propensity to violence that does not grow out of preventable marital conflict, or unless the marital match is hopelessly bad. Married persons need to realize that given the apparent usual negative consequences of terminating marriages (especially if children are involved), simply feeling that a marriage is stale, or the ubiquitous human tendency to see the grass as greener on the other side of the fence, is not a sufficient reason to quickly resort to divorce.

The primary task for healthy marriage advocates, then, is educational, but much of the needed education is different from that usually included in pre-marital and marital educational courses, and it can probably best be provided by private individuals and organizations. For instance, family scholars can



work with journalists and can write op-ed pieces and essays for a lay audience to disseminate information about the effects of marital failure.

Some marriage movement activists believe that an effective way to prevent hasty and ill-considered divorces is to make divorce harder to get and to extend the waiting period between the filing for and the granting of the divorce. There appears to be considerable support for such measures in Oregon, in that 58 percent of the Oregon respondents agreed that “Society would be better off if divorces were harder to get,” and 65 percent agreed that “There should be a waiting period of about a year between divorce filing and the time when a divorce can be granted to give the couple a chance to reconsider their decision to divorce.” The efficacy of such measures is unknown, however, and they can make life more difficult for spouses for whom divorce is the best option. Implementation of these measures probably should be delayed until results are in from research being conducted (for instance, in states with covenant marriage) to assess their effectiveness, but these measures may be ways by which public policy can reduce marital failure without undue unintended negative consequences. There are means by which the latter might be lessened, for instance by providing for the waiver of the waiting period when violence is involved.



WITH THIS RING... A SURVEY ON MARRIAGE IN OREGON

S

ummary and Conclusions

**Respondents
to the Oregon
Marriage Survey
generally
expressed
pro-marriage
attitudes...**

but there is evidence that the
commitment of many people in
the state to lifelong marriage is
tentative and qualified.

Respondents to the Oregon Marriage Survey generally expressed pro-marriage attitudes, but there is evidence that the commitment of many people in the state to lifelong marriage is tentative and qualified, and it is likely that other values and attitudes often override pro-marriage ones when crucial personal decisions are made. The average quality of intact marriages in Oregon seems to be high, but divorce is prevalent, and almost a third of people in the state are unmarried in the middle years of adulthood when people are most likely to be married.

The ever-divorced respondents to the Oregon survey gave, by a large margin, “lack of commitment of one or both persons to make [the marriage] work” as the most frequent major reason for their divorces. This finding, plus the fact that almost two-thirds of the ever-divorced respondents said they wished their ex-spouses had worked harder to save the marriage, and more than a fifth said they wished they, themselves, had worked harder, indicates that lack of determination to save marriages is a major reason for marital failure in Oregon.

Some risk factors for marital failure are about as prevalent in Oregon as in the country as a whole, but the survey data show unusually high levels of the risk factors of little or no religiosity and experiencing a parental divorce before age 16.

The most promising strategies for improving the health of marriage in Oregon are mainly educational, although such measures as making divorce more difficult in order to prevent hasty and ill-considered divorces might also be effective. There is tentative evidence from the survey that many people in Oregon are receptive to governmental efforts to promote healthy marriages, including, for instance, the providing of pre-marital and marital education at little or no cost.

END NOTES

1. There is no definitive evidence that pre-marital cohabitation does not prevent many poor marriages, but couples who cohabit before marriage are considerably more likely to divorce than those who do not cohabit; thus, cohabitation could hardly be a highly effective means for preventing poor marriages. See David Popenoe and Barbara Whitehead, *Should We Live Together? What Young Adults Need to Know about Cohabitation before Marriage*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Marriage Project, 1999.
2. Unless divorce rates decline steeply in the near future, many of these persons will eventually divorce.
3. According to vital statistics compiled by the National Center for Health Statistics, the crude divorce rate (number of divorces per 1,000 population) in Oregon was 4.9 in 2001, compared with 3.9 for the country as a whole (U. S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2004-2005*. Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 2004, Table 113).
4. This view is expressed by such commentators on the American family as Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*. New York: Basic Books, 1992; and Arlene Skolnick and Stacey Rosencrantz, "The New Crusade for the Old Family," in Nijole Benokraitis, editor, *Feuds about Families: Conservative, Centrist, Liberal, and Feminist Perspectives*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000.
5. Norval D. Glenn, "Is the Current Concern about American Marriage Warranted?" *Virginia Journal of Social Policy and the Law*. Volume 9, 2001, pp. 5-47.
6. For instance, see Paul Birch, Stan Weed, and Joseph Olsen, "Assessing the Impact of Community Marriage Policies on U. S. County Divorce Rates," *Family Relations*, Volume 53, pp. 495-503.
7. It is possible that this finding results from the kinds of persons who marry late and does not reflect an effect of late marriage. For instance, late marriers may tend to have unrealistic standards for a mate or relatively inadequate social skills. If the finding does reflect an effect of late marriage, it could be the absolute age at marriage that is important, perhaps because independent living tends to make one unsuited for marriage, or it could be marrying later than most other persons in one's birth cohort, when the choice of mates is more restricted.
8. Differences in interpretation of the evidence are illustrated by how a finding reported by Mavis Hetherington has been discussed. Hetherington (E. Mavis Hetherington and John Kelly, *For Better or For Worse: Divorce Reconsidered*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2002) found that a majority of the "children of divorce" are well-adjusted as adults, which some commentators have stressed, but that they are almost three times as likely not to be well-adjusted as persons whose parents did not divorce, which has been emphasized by less sanguine interpreters of the evidence. Some persons whose parents divorced do extremely well, and most do reasonably well, but as a whole, "children of divorce" are at a considerably elevated risk for a number of undesirable outcomes, including failure of their own marriages.

WITH THIS
RING...
A SURVEY ON
MARRIAGE IN
OREGON

Appendix A

MARRIAGE QUESTIONNAIRE WITH RESPONSES

Attitudes Toward Marriage and Divorce

I am going to read you a list of statements. After I read each statement, please tell me whether you strongly agree with it, somewhat agree with it, somewhat disagree with it, or strongly disagree with it.

In the absence of violence and extreme conflict, parents who have an unsatisfactory marriage should stay together until their children are grown.

	National		Oregon	
	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	157	10.9	38	9.9
Agree	473	32.7	138	36.0
Disagree	565	39.1	153	39.9
Strongly Disagree	250	17.3	54	14.1
Total	1,445	100.0	383	100.0

Divorce is a serious national problem in the United States today.

	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	638	43.5	184	47.3
Agree	735	50.1	164	42.2
Disagree	85	5.8	35	9.0
Strongly Disagree	10	0.7	6	1.5
Total	1,468	100.0	395	100.0

Society would be better off if divorces were harder to get.

	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	250	17.5	77	20.4
Agree	588	41.2	141	37.4
Disagree	484	33.9	129	34.2
Strongly Disagree	106	7.4	30	8.0
Total	1,428	100.0	380	100.0

Couples who marry should make a lifelong commitment to one another, to be broken only under extreme circumstances.

	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	579	39.3	148	37.9
Agree	715	48.5	193	49.4
Disagree	151	10.2	43	11.0
Strongly Disagree	30	2.0	7	1.8
Total	1,475	100.0	391	100.0

Couples who have children together ought to be married.

	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	469	32.2	109	28.2
Agree	612	42.0	168	43.4
Disagree	321	22.0	84	21.7
Strongly Disagree	56	3.8	26	6.7
Total	1,458	100.0	387	100.0

(Note: Respondents who refused to answer, said "don't know" in response to the question, or for which the question was not applicable are excluded from the base for percentages.)



Given how long people are living these days, it is unrealistic to expect a couple to remain married to one another for life.

	National		Oregon	
	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	44	3.0	10	2.6
Agree	274	18.7	69	17.6
Disagree	721	49.3	199	50.8
Strongly Disagree	424	29.0	114	29.1
Total	1,463	100.0	392	100.0

Fathers are as important as mothers for the proper development of children.

	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	899	60.1	223	56.0
Agree	559	37.3	169	42.5
Disagree	33	2.2	6	1.5
Strongly Disagree	6	0.4	0	0.0
Total	1,497	100.0	398	100.0

If they are determined to do so, divorced couples can parent as effectively as can most parents who live together.

	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	106	7.3	26	6.8
Agree	569	39.4	142	36.9
Disagree	611	42.3	164	42.6
Strongly Disagree	157	10.9	53	13.8
Total	1,443	100.0	385	100.0

It should be harder for parents of children under age 18 to get a divorce than it is for couples who do not have young children.

	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	91	6.5	23	6.1
Agree	481	34.3	128	33.8
Disagree	660	47.1	173	45.6
Strongly Disagree	169	12.1	55	14.5
Total	1,401	100.0	379	100.0

Either spouse should be allowed to terminate a marriage at any time for any reason.

	National		Oregon	
	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	55	3.8	21	5.4
Agree	362	24.8	92	23.7
Disagree	715	49.0	184	47.3
Strongly Disagree	326	22.4	92	23.7
Total	1,458	100.0	389	100.0

Most married couples I know have happy, healthy marriages.

	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	160	11.0	51	13.1
Agree	902	61.9	241	62.1
Disagree	361	24.8	85	21.9
Strongly Disagree	35	2.4	11	2.8
Total	1,458	100.0	388	100.0

There should be a waiting period of about a year between divorce filing and the time when a divorce can be granted to give the couple a chance to reconsider their decision to divorce.

	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	222	15.3	57	14.8
Agree	842	57.9	194	50.3
Disagree	319	22.0	116	30.1
Strongly Disagree	70	4.8	19	4.9
Total	1,453	100.0	386	100.0

All things being equal, it is better for children to be raised in a household that has a married mother and father.

	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	528	35.8	140	35.3
Agree	783	53.1	198	49.9
Disagree	141	9.6	49	12.3
Strongly Disagree	22	1.5	10	2.5
Total	1,474	100.0	397	100.0

Marriage is an old-fashioned, outmoded institution.

	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	25	1.7	7	1.8
Agree	158	10.7	30	7.6
Disagree	722	48.9	181	46.1
Strongly Disagree	572	38.7	175	44.5
Total	1,477	100.0	393	100.0

All couples considering marriage should be encouraged to get premarital counseling before they marry.

	National		Oregon	
	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	482	32.5	158	40.3
Agree	795	53.6	179	45.7
Disagree	185	12.5	50	12.8
Strongly Disagree	21	1.4	5	1.3
Total	1,483	100.0	392	100.0

All couples considering marriage should be required by law to have premarital counseling before they marry.

	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	192	13.1	46	11.7
Agree	493	33.6	116	29.6
Disagree	593	40.4	178	45.4
Strongly Disagree	189	12.9	52	13.3
Total	1,467	100.0	392	100.0

It is a good idea for couples considering marriage to live together in order to decide whether or not they get along well enough to be married to one another.

	#	%	#	%
Strongly Agree	114	7.9	29	7.7
Agree	458	31.7	135	35.8
Disagree	603	41.7	137	36.3
Strongly Disagree	270	18.7	76	20.2
Total	1,445	100.0	377	100.0

Which of the following is in your opinion the more important characteristic of a good marriage. It:

	#	%	#	%
Promotes the happiness and well-being of the married individuals.	186	12.7	64	16.4
Produces children who are well-adjusted and who will become good citizens.	141	9.7	24	6.1
The two are about equally important.	1,077	73.7	293	74.9
Neither is an important characteristic of a good marriage.	57	3.9	10	2.6
Total	1,461	100.0	391	100.0



75.2% of survey participants in Oregon agreed with the statement, "Most married couples I know have happy, healthy marriages."



Marital and Relationship History

Did your two biological parents marry one another?

	National		Oregon	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, before I was born	1,358	91.2	371	94.6
Yes, after I was born	59	3.9	11	2.8
No, never married	73	4.9	10	2.6
Total	1,489	100.0	392	100.0

If yes, before or after respondent was born...

Have your parents divorced one another?

	#	%	#	%
Yes	316	22.8	117	30.6
No	1,072	77.2	265	69.4
Total	1,388	100.0	382	100.0

If yes...

How old were you when your parents divorced? (Exact age recorded in data set)

	#	%	#	%
Under age 16	232	74.8	83	72.2
Age 16 or older	78	25.2	32	27.8
Total	310	100.0	115	100.0

If parents divorced before respondent was age 16...

How much stigma did you feel as a child because your parents divorced?

	National		Oregon	
	#	%	#	%
None, or hardly any	84	38.2	36	43.9
Some, but not a great deal	75	34.1	19	23.2
A great deal	61	27.7	27	32.9
Total	220	100.0	82	100.0

Are you currently married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?

	#	%	#	%
Married	896	59.8	223	55.8
Widowed	139	9.3	35	8.8
Divorced	171	11.4	62	15.5
Separated	28	1.9	10	2.5
Never married	265	17.7	70	17.5
Total	1,499	100.0	400	100.0

If widowed, divorced, separated, or never-married...

Are you now romantically involved with someone, a man or a woman you think of as a steady, a lover, a partner, or the like?

	National		Oregon	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	232	38.9	70	39.5
No	364	61.1	107	60.5
Total	596	100.0	177	100.0

If yes...

Do you live with that person?

	#	%	#	%
Yes	89	38.4	33	47.8
No	143	61.6	36	52.2
Total	232	100.0	69	100.0

If married, widowed, or separated...

Have you ever been divorced?

	#	%	#	%
Yes	249	23.4	73	27.3
No	814	76.6	194	72.7
Total	1,063	100.0	267	100.0

If yes, or if currently divorced...

How many times have you been divorced?

	#	%	#	%
Once	314	75.3	94	70.1
Twice	73	17.5	28	20.9
Three times	20	4.8	11	8.2
Four times	7	1.7	1	0.7
Five times	1	0.2	0	0.0
Six times	2	0.5	0	0.0
Total	417	100.0	134	100.0

Think about your divorce (or your first divorce if divorced more than once).

Who filed for the divorce, you or your spouse?

	#	%	#	%
Respondent	261	65.6	91	71.7
Spouse	137	34.4	36	28.3
Total	398	100.0	127	100.0

Who was more motivated to end the marriage, you or your spouse, or was the motivation about equal?

	#	%	#	%
Respondent	223	53.6	69	51.5
Spouse	86	20.7	25	18.7
Equal motivation	107	25.7	40	29.9
Total	416	100.0	134	100.0

About how many years were you married before you separated? (Exact number recorded in data set)

	#	%	#	%
Fewer than seven	188	45.2	57	42.2
Seven to nineteen	181	43.5	61	45.2
Twenty or more	47	11.3	17	12.6
Total	416	100.0	135	100.0

I'm going to read you a list of reasons why marriages fail. Tell me whether or not each factor was a MAJOR reason your marriage (or your first marriage if divorced more than once) failed. Select as many factors as apply.

Note: Respondents who refused to answer, said "don't know" in response to the question, or for which the question was not applicable are excluded from the base for percentages.

	National		Oregon	
	#	%	#	%
Getting married too young	189	45.7	60	44.4
Little or no helpful pre-marriage preparation	168	41.1	63	47.0
Financial problems or economic hardship	118	28.4	34	25.4
Religious differences between partners	55	13.2	18	13.3
Conflict about who should do what around the house and/or with children	89	21.6	18	13.3
Domestic violence	121	29.1	31	23.0
Infidelity, extramarital affairs	226	54.6	73	54.1
Too much conflict and arguing	228	55.6	62	45.9
Lack of commitment by one or both persons to make it work	301	73.2	97	72.4
Lack of support from family members	77	18.7	27	20.0
Unrealistic expectations of marriage by one or both spouses	181	45.3	60	45.1
Lack of equality in the relationship	178	43.7	61	54.9

Looking back at your divorce (or first divorce) do you wish that it had been more difficult—from a legal standpoint—to get a divorce?

	#	%	#	%
Yes	82	19.8	23	17.3
No	333	80.2	110	82.7
Total	415	100.0	133	100.0

Do you ever wish that you, yourself, had worked harder to save your marriage?

	#	%	#	%
Yes	107	26.0	31	23.3
No	305	74.0	102	76.7
Total	412	100.0	133	100.0





Do you ever wish that your spouse had worked harder to save the marriage?

	National		Oregon	
	#	%	#	%
Yes	256	61.8	75	56.4
No	158	38.2	58	43.6
Total	414	100.0	133	100.0

If married, widowed, divorced, or separated...

How old were you when you first married? (Exact age recorded in data set)

	#	%	#	%
Under age 20	338	27.5	99	30.5
20-22	333	27.0	94	28.9
23-27	368	29.9	82	25.2
28 or older	192	15.6	50	15.4
Total	1,231	100.0	325	100.0

How long before the marriage had you been romantically involved with the person you married?

	#	%	#	%
Six months or less	181	15.0	53	16.3
Less than a year, more than six months	147	12.2	48	14.7
A year to three years	651	53.9	184	56.4
More than three years	228	18.9	41	12.6
Total	1,207	100.0	326	100.0

How did you meet the person you married (select as many as apply)?

	National		Oregon	
	#	%	#	%
We grew up together.	154	12.5	29	8.8
We lived near one another when we met.	409	33.2	113	34.2
We met in school (high school or lower level).	273	22.1	64	19.4
We met in college.	173	14.0	44	13.3
A mutual friend introduced us.	548	44.6	150	45.9
We met at work.	184	14.9	56	17.1
We met at a party.	185	15.0	45	13.7
We met at a bar.	76	6.1	19	5.8
We met at church, temple, synagogue, or other religious organization.	94	7.6	44	13.4
We met over the internet.	5	0.4	2	0.6
Met in other ways	178	14.5	40	19.8

Did you live with the person you married before you married?

	#	%	#	%
Yes	361	29.3	108	32.9
No	872	70.7	220	67.1
Total	1,233	100.0	328	100.0

If yes...

For how long?

	#	%	#	%
About a year or less	218	60.9	72	67.3
Longer than a year	140	39.1	35	32.7
Total	358	100.0	107	100.0

Had you and your spouse-to-be decided to marry when you started living together?

	#	%	#	%
Yes	173	48.3	46	42.6
No	185	51.7	62	57.4
Total	358	100.0	108	100.0

When you decided to marry your spouse (first spouse), did you have feelings of romantic love toward him/her?

	#	%	#	%
Yes, very strong	936	76.5	250	76.2
Yes, fairly strong	198	16.2	55	16.8
Yes, but not strong	46	3.8	14	4.3
No	44	3.6	9	2.7
Total	1,224	100.0	328	100.0

Did you have any kind of premarital counseling before you married?

	#	%	#	%
Yes, provided by a church or other religious organization	419	34.0	118	35.8
Yes, provided by a secular marriage counselor	37	3.0	10	3.0
No	777	63.0	202	61.2
Total	1,233	100.0	330	100.0

If currently married...

I'm going to ask you a few questions about your marriage.

How long have you been married to your spouse (current spouse)?
(Exact number of years recorded in data set)

Taking things altogether, how would you describe your marriage?
Would you say it is very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?

	National		Oregon	
	#	%	#	%
Very happy	610	68.5	146	65.8
Pretty happy	248	27.9	71	32.0
Not too happy	32	3.6	5	2.3
Total	890	100.0	222	100.0

All in all, how satisfied are you with your marriage? Are you completely satisfied, very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied?

	#	%	#	%
Completely satisfied	442	49.7	113	50.9
Very satisfied	342	38.4	79	35.6
Somewhat satisfied	80	9.0	27	12.2
Not very satisfied	17	1.9	2	0.9
Not at all satisfied	9	1.0	1	0.5
Total	890	100.0	222	100.0

Would you marry the same person if you had it to do over again?

	#	%	#	%
Yes	803	92.8	200	93.5
No	62	7.2	14	6.5
Total	865	100.0	214	100.0

Do you expect to be married for life?

	#	%	#	%
Yes	852	97.0	214	98.2
No	26	3.0	4	1.8
Total	878	100.0	218	100.0

Since you married (married your current spouse), have you ever seriously considered filing for divorce?

	#	%	#	%
Yes	115	12.9	31	14.0
No	777	87.1	191	86.0
Total	892	100.0	222	100.0

Would you attend marriage strengthening classes if they were made available to you at no cost?

	#	%	#	%
Yes	489	57.3	122	58.1
No	365	42.7	88	41.9
Total	854	100.0	210	100.0

If never-married...

Would you like to be married someday?

	#	%	#	%
Yes	215	86.3	58	90.6
No	34	13.7	6	9.4
Total	249	100.0	64	100.0

If widowed or divorced...

Would you like to remarry?

	#	%	#	%
Yes	110	38.7	29	32.6
No	174	61.3	60	67.4
Total	284	100.0	89	100.0

If yes to either of the previous two questions...

Are you now searching for someone to marry?

	National		Oregon	
	#	%	#	%
Yes, definitely	87	27.0	17	19.5
Yes, tentatively	60	18.6	15	17.2
No	175	54.3	55	63.2
Total	322	100.0	87	100.0

If yes, definitely or tentatively...

How do you feel about your opportunities to meet and get to know prospective persons to marry? Are they:

	#	%	#	%
Very good	34	29.1	7	30.4
Fairly good	48	41.0	11	47.8
Rather bad	20	17.1	3	13.0
Very bad	15	12.8	2	8.7
Total	117	100.0	23	100.0
Not applicable, I'm in a romantic relationship.	28		8	

Would you attend pre-marital education classes if they were made available to you at no cost?

	#	%	#	%
Yes	107	73.3	23	74.2
No	39	26.7	8	25.8
Total	146	100.0	31	100.0



Demographics and Background Variables

What was the last grade in school you completed?

	National		Oregon	
	#	%	#	%
None or only kindergarten	2	0.1	0	0.0
Grades 1-8	49	3.3	6	1.5
Grades 9-11	123	8.2	20	5.0
Grade 12 or GED	418	27.9	102	25.6
College 1-3	398	26.5	131	32.8
College Graduate	510	34.0	140	35.1
Total	1,500	100.0	399	100.0

How old are you? (Exact age recorded in data set)

Are you of Hispanic or Spanish origin?

	#	%	#	%
Yes	174	11.7	21	5.3
No	1,319	88.3	377	94.7
Total	1,493	100.0	398	100.0

What is your race?

	#	%	#	%
White	1,298	88.1	362	92.3
Black	118	8.0	5	1.3
Asian	18	1.2	8	2.0
Pacific Islander	2	0.1	1	0.3
Native American	19	1.3	11	2.8
Other	18	1.2	5	1.3
Total	1,473	100.0	392	100.0

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or other?

	#	%	#	%
Republican	491	35.8	139	36.9
Democratic	426	31.0	116	30.8
Independent	431	31.4	120	31.8
Other party	24	1.7	2	0.5
Total	1,372	100.0	377	100.0

Last year was your total family income before taxes:

	#	%	#	%
Under \$25,000	285	22.4	82	24.0
\$25,000 to under \$45,000	307	24.1	96	28.1
\$45,000 to under \$75,000	342	26.9	87	25.4
\$75,000 to under \$100,000	169	13.3	37	10.8
\$100,000 or more	170	13.4	40	11.7
Total	1,273	100.0	342	100.0

What is your religious preference?

	National		Oregon	
	#	%	#	%
Catholic	345	23.7	62	15.9
Baptist	291	20.0	29	7.4
Methodist	85	5.8	8	2.1
Lutheran	54	3.7	14	3.6
Other Protestant	361	24.9	11	2.8
Jewish	15	1.0	4	1.0
Mormon	21	1.4	18	4.6
Agnostic	4	0.3	5	1.3
Atheist	3	0.2	5	1.3
No preference	211	14.5	76	19.5
Other	64	4.4	158	40.5
Total	1,454	100.0	390	100.0

How religious do you consider yourself to be? Are you:

	#	%	#	%
Very religious	476	32.4	129	33.2
Fairly religious	565	38.4	129	33.2
Slightly religious	307	20.9	76	19.5
Not religious at all	122	8.3	55	14.1
Total	1,470	100.0	389	100.0

Census Region

	#	%
Northeast	260	17.3
Midwest	341	22.7
South	602	40.1
West	300	20.0
Total	1,503	100.0



Appendix B

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION OF SURVEY

The survey for this report was designed to be representative of the resident population of Oregon age 18 and older and was conducted by the Office of Survey Research at the University of Texas at Austin in the Spring of 2004. The sample of phone numbers for the survey was provided by Survey Sampling, Inc., the leading firm for providing samples for telephone surveys. Respondents were selected within households by taking the adult with the most recent birthday. The response rate was 93 percent according to the most commonly used method of calculating response rates for telephone surveys (number of interviews/number of interviews + refusals by intended respondents), and there were 400 completed interviews. The questionnaire was designed by Norval Glenn in consultation with advisors at the National Fatherhood Initiative. Many of the questions were taken from other surveys, including especially the 2001 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce conducted by the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative.



WITH THIS
RING...
A SURVEY ON
MARRIAGE IN
OREGON

WITH THIS RING... A SURVEY ON MARRIAGE IN OREGON

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Norval D. Glenn is Ashbel Smith Professor and Stiles Professor in American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, where he is affiliated with the Department of Sociology and the Population Research Center. He has done research on marriage and family relations in the United States for thirty years. He is a former editor of the *Journal of Family Issues* and has served on the editorial boards of such journals as the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, the *American Sociological Review*, the *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Demography*, and *Social Science Research*. He is Chair of the Research Advisory Group for the Texas Healthy Marriage Initiative and is a member of the Research Advisory Group for the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative.

ABOUT NATIONAL FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE

The National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) was founded in 1994 to stimulate a society-wide movement to confront the growing problem of father absence. NFI's mission is to improve the well-being of children by increasing the proportion of children growing up with involved, responsible, and committed fathers.

A non-profit, non-partisan, non-sectarian organization, NFI pursues its mission through a three-e strategy of educating, equipping, and engaging all sectors of society on the issue of responsible fatherhood.

NFI educates and inspires all people, especially fathers, through public awareness campaigns, research, and other resources, publications, and media appearances centered on highlighting the unique and irreplaceable role fathers play in the lives of children. NFI's national public service advertising campaign promoting fatherhood has generated television, radio, print, Internet, and outdoor advertising valued at over \$360 million.

NFI equips fathers and develops leaders of national, state, and community fatherhood initiatives through curricula, training, and technical assistance. Through its National Fatherhood Clearinghouse and Resource Center, NFI offers a wide range of innovative resources to assist fathers and organizations interested in reaching and supporting fathers.

NFI engages all sectors of society through strategic alliances and partnerships to create unique and effective ways to reach all fathers at their points of need. NFI seeks partnerships through the three pillars of culture - business, faith, and government - to create culture change around the issue of fatherhood.

For more information on the contents of this booklet, or for general information about NFI, call 301-948-0599 or visit www.fatherhood.org.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2001-DD-BX-0079 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Institute of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crimes. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not represent the views of the Department of Justice.

