



Marriage: Holy Estate or Wholly Destitute?

And they said it wouldn't last. According to the latest census data, 76 percent of Americans report being married just one time. That statistic should not be interpreted to mean, however, that 76 percent of Americans are happily married. The true significance of the reported figure is that whether still married or divorced, more than three-fourths of American adults only want to go around once. Only 5 percent of the three million households surveyed by the American Community Survey reported being married more than twice, with about 20 percent reporting being married twice.



Apart from those interesting statistics, the survey indicated a reduction in the number of same-sex couples who consider themselves married. Specifically, the number of homosexual respondents declaring themselves to be "married" fell by nearly 200,000 in 2008, down to roughly 565,000 from about 754,000 making that claim in 2007. This apparent diminution is in reality less a reflection of the number of homosexuals entering into monogamous unions than the result of an alteration in the manner in which the data is mined and interpreted, according to officials at the Census Bureau.

Given their pattern of zealous defense of the "normalization" of a behavior and lifestyle that was until recently considered extremely marginal, at least one group in the "gay" community has actually come out in support of the new findings, reckoning (correctly) that the drop in same-sex couples is actually a statistical anomaly rather than a shift away from monogamy in the overall homosexual population. Jaime Grant of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force based in Washington, D.C., told the *USA Today*, "We don't think the Census is doing us dirty here. They improved the way they designed the form, so they got fewer false reports from opposite-sex partners. But I still think it doesn't mean we're getting the full picture of LGBT [lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans-sexual] people across the board." Grant and other opinion shapers in the homosexual community pushed for at least a decade for the right of same-sex couples to mark themselves as such on the official decennial census. In the census conducted in 2000, the Census Bureau did not reassign partners. Instead, it put everyone into the domestic partner category, and then classified the couples as homosexual or heterosexual. There are 3,850,524 heterosexual unmarried couples nationwide. Such a classification endows homosexual couples with a status that neither culture nor biology has provided, and has simultaneously devalued and desecrated the chief foundation of human society — the marriage of a man and a woman.

Finally, apart from the controversial assignments made regarding what it means "officially" to be a couple, there were other notable findings published in the American Community Survey. Of particular sociological interest is the insight that can be gained by examining the trends evident in marriage. For example, the 2008 data show the percentage of women 15 and over who have never married was 28.1 percent, up from 27.6 percent in 2007 and 27.3 percent in 2006.

Another picture visible in the newly released data is that of the strength of marriage as judged from its



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duration. The average marriage in the United States lasts approximately 18.2 years. Some sociologists have interpreted this to indicate that many couples will stay together just long enough for children to become independent. "Many [respondents] want to stay married until the children are independent or semi-independent," opines Carl Haub, senior demographer at the non-profit Population Reference Bureau. "That certainly does make some sense. Some number people will stay together for the children. That timing might not be just a coincidence," he proposes.

Regardless of the reported strength and duration of marriages across the country, however, shamefully the value and sanctity of marriage is being irreparably undermined by government-sanctioned legitimacy being afforded to same-sex relationships who, regardless of the universally accepted and time-honored definitions of the word, are being permitted to take upon themselves the honor of the "blessed and honorable" estate of marriage.



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