

Risk Factors for Cohabitors Who Marry

One: Predisposing Attitudes and Patterns

1. Cohabitors as a general group are less committed to the institution of marriage and more accepting of divorce. (*Lillard, Brien & Waite, 1995; Bracher, Santow, Morgan & Trussel, 1993; Thomson & Colella, 1991; Bennett, Blanc, Klimas & Bloom, 1988*)

2. Sexual exclusivity during marriage, as indicator of commitment to partner, may be lower for cohabitators after they marry. Cohabitation is more like dating than marriage. Women who cohabited are 3.3 times more likely to have a secondary sex partner after marriage than noncohabitators. (*Forste & Tanler, 1996*)

3. Cohabitors may perceive themselves or the relationship as a poor risk for long-term happiness. Some cohabitators have problematic relationships and this may be why they need to test through cohabitation. They may carry these problems into marriage. (*Lillard, Brien, Waite, 1995; Thomson & Colella, 1991; Booth & Johnson, 1988*)

4. Cohabitors tend to hold individualism as more important than noncohabitators do. Cohabitors value independence and economic equality in a relationship while married persons value interdependence and the exchange of resources. (*Clarkberg, Stolzenberg & Waite, 1995; Brines & Joyner, 1992; Bumpass, Sweet and Cherlin, 1991*)

5. Cohabitors may allow themselves to marry because of pressure from family and friends or pressure to provide a stable home for children. (*Barber & Axinn, 1998; Wu, 1995; Mahler, 1996; Manning & Smock, 1994; Teachman and Polanko, 1990; Thompson, Hanson & McLanahan, 1994*)

6. Cohabitors as a group report lower satisfaction with marriage after they marry than do noncohabitators. Couples may be going into marriage with unrealistic expectations or making the faulty assumption that they had worked through all future problems during cohabitation. (*Brown, 1998; Nock, 1995; Booth & Johnson, 1988*)

7. Cohabitors, in general, are less religious, more independent, more liberal in attitude and more risk-oriented than noncohabitators. These qualities may be related to having less committed, fewer bonders and limited readiness to work at marriage. (*Clarkberg, Stolzenberg & Wait, 1995; Cunningham & Antill, 1994; Huffman, Chang, Rausch & Schaffer, 1994; DeMaris & MacDonald, 1993; Smock, Paula, 2000*)

Two: The Experience of Cohabitation

1. The experience of cohabitation changes attitudes about commitment and permanence in relationship and makes some persons more open to divorce. (*Axinn & Barber, 1997; Nock, 1995; Schoen & Weinick, 1993; Axinn & Thornton, 1992*)

2. Cohabitors after marriage have more problems in relationship about money than do noncohabitators. (*Sing & Lindsey, 1996; Ressler, Rand, Walters & Meliss, 1995; Waite, 1995*)

3. Domestic Violence occurs more often with cohabiting couples than with married persons and cohabitators are likely to carry this pattern into marriage. (*Jackson, 1996; McLaughlin, Leonard & Senchak, 1992; Stets & Straus, 1989*)

4. Cohabitors who marry are less good at conflict resolution than those who do not cohabit. (*Booth & Johnson, 1988*)

5. Negative or conflicted family of origin patterns or using sex as power may also be patterns set during cohabitation. (*Waite & Joyner, 1996; Waite, 1995; Thornton & Axinn, 1993*)

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