GENERATION UNBOUND
Drifting into Sex and Parenthood without Marriage

Isabel Sawhill
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November 20, 2014
Outline

• What’s happening
• Why it’s happening
• Why it matters
• What to do
A Large Proportion of Births Occur Outside of Marriage

Over 40% of all children are born outside of marriage.


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Is Unwed Childbearing Going to be the New Normal?

The problem of unmarried births has shifted up the age range. Though teenage births have been on the decline since the 1990s, births to unmarried 20-somethings remain high.

Cohabitation is Increasingly Common

Percent of all first unions among women aged 15 to 44


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Cohabitation: The New Marriage-Lite?
Increasingly Common but Unstable

Percent of Parents Separated by the Time Their Child is Age 5


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What is Driving the Change in Family Structure?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improving Opportunities for Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declining Economic Prospects for Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraception and Abortion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing Social Norms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why it Matters

- Children fare better in stable two-parent family; child poverty rates are much higher in single-parent families
- Married adults are happier, healthier, and longer-lived
- Family breakdown: a new class divide, leading to less social mobility
- Costs to society
Chicken and Egg

Does poverty $\rightarrow$ family breakdown

OR

Does family breakdown $\rightarrow$ poverty?
Costs to Society

The typical single parent family receives around $6000 in government benefits per year.¹

The SNAP program alone cost about $80 billion in 2013 and reduced child poverty by 3 percentage points.²

The growth of single parenthood since 1970 has increased child poverty by 5 percentage points.³

1. Post-tax, post-transfer income includes earned income, child support, social insurance, means-tested cash benefits, food stamps, housing benefits, EITC, and other tax/stimulus payments; Tabulations by Richard Bavier, based on U.S. Census Bureau March Current Population Survey.
Can Social Policy Keep Pace with Increased Need?

Poverty

- Leaving poverty (due to social programs)
- Entering poverty (result of family breakdown)

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The truth is, the greatest tool to lift children and families from poverty... isn’t a government spending program. It’s called marriage.

Children are not rugged individualists... All of us, whether we acknowledge it or not, are responsible for deciding whether our children are raised in a nation that doesn’t just espouse family values but values families and children.
Changing Drifters into Planners

OR

Changing the Default from Childbearing by Chance to Childbearing by Choice
What is Drifting?

• Doing something impulsively or without intention
• “Thinking fast,” not “thinking slow” (Kahneman)

44

Percent of young women agreeing with the following statement: “It doesn’t matter whether you use birth control or not; when it’s your time to get pregnant it will happen.”
Planners vs. Drifters

Finish college → Get a job → Get married → Have kids

Finish high school → Move in together → Have a kid → Break up
Drifting into Parenthood is Common

60% OF BIRTHS TO SINGLE WOMEN UNDER 30 ARE UNPLANNED

Less Advantaged Women Have Highest Rates of Drifting


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IUDs Are Much More Effective Than Other Forms of Birth Control

How we got these numbers: Data is from Trussell (2011). The probability that a person doesn't get pregnant at all over a given period of time is equal to the success rate of her contraceptive method raised to the power of the number of years she is using that method. We then subtract this multi year “success rate" from 100% to get the failure rate (graphed above). This assumes that there is an equal chance of not getting pregnant in every year of condom use and that successful users and failed users (where success is not getting pregnant during a year using birth control) have the same rate. The assumption is reasonable given that figures we use are the figure for a “typical” user of some type of contraceptive.

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Changing the Default: Evidence

St. Louis: The CHOICE Project
Colorado Family Planning Initiative
Iowa Initiative to Reduce Unintended Pregnancies
St. Louis: The CHOICE Project

Women using LARCs or shots had lowest unintended pregnancy rates after 1, 2, and 3 years.

Source: http://www.choiceproject.wustl.edu/~media/Files/ChoiceProject/Study-Findings-20120917.ashx.

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Expanding access to LARCs caused a 27 percent decline in births to unmarried disadvantaged women who are younger than 25 between 2009 and 2011.

Iowa Initiative to Reduce Unintended Pregnancies

Percent of Iowa women using an IUD or Implant as primary contraceptive method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>IUD Method</th>
<th>Implant Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of pregnancies in Iowa that are unintended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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5 Inconvenient Truths About Sex and Parenthood

1. Likelihood of pregnancy using a condom alone for 5 years is 63%. Use the pill – or even better – an IUD.

2. An early unplanned birth affects a child’s success later in life.

3. Cohabitation is NOT a substitute for marriage.

4. Later marriages are more stable than early ones, so waiting is a good idea.

5. Children are expensive – expect to spend about $500,000 to $1 million per child.
What Government Needs to Do

Create more opportunity:
• Evidence-based programs (SGM)
• More career and technical education
• Raise minimum wage; expand EITC

Empower women to have children when and with whom they want:
• ACA
• Health care providers
• Social marketing campaign
What Individuals Need to Do

Old social norm: Don’t have children outside of marriage

New social norm: Don’t have children until you and your partner are ready to be parents