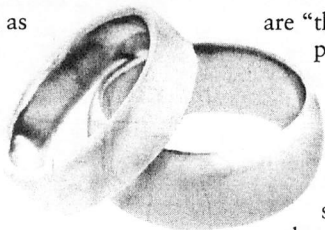


# Marriage: No longer necessary?

Does marriage matter? Not as much as it used to, said **Belinda Luscombe** in *Time*. A nationwide poll conducted by the Pew Research Center found that 40 percent of Americans think “marriage is obsolete.” For a large segment of the population, matrimony is no longer viewed as necessary for “sex or companionship or professional success or respect or even children.” In 1960, nearly 70 percent of American adults were married; now only half are, and the age at which they marry has risen to 28 for men and 26 for women. In theory, the vast majority of Americans under 30 still want to get married someday, as “the last brick in the edifice” of adulthood. First, though, they want to finish college, get careers launched, and perhaps test out a partner or two by living with them.

Ah, how “broad-minded” of us, said the Salt Lake City *Deseret News* in an editorial. The ugly reality exposed by this “frightening” poll is that the American family is falling apart. Ample research shows that “the health and well-being of children” depends on having stable, married parents. Kids born to single mothers are more prone to poverty, crime, drugs, and single motherhood than are children of traditional families. The Pew study also found that those least likely to wed



Now just an option

are “the poor and uneducated”—the people who most need “committed marriage” as a foundation to build a better life. To see the social consequences of that trend, said **Robert Knight** in *The Washington Times*, consider the “bombed-out neighborhoods” of Detroit and Newark, N.J. There’s a reason why the “timeless model of a married dad and mom with kids is optimal.”

It’s not as dire as all that, said **Brian Alexander** in *MSNBC.com*. Most people still want to get married, but now it’s “a menu choice” rather than a requirement. We are beginning to see other paths—including cohabitation and gay parenthood—“as not only morally acceptable but equally workable.” Consider Britain’s Prince William and his fiancée, Kate Middleton. Soon, they will become the very symbol of marriage, but they’ve been in a committed relationship for years, and for the past eight months, they’ve been “shacked up”—with Queen Elizabeth’s quiet approval. Now, and only now, do they feel ready to say “until death do us part.” Romance, in other words, isn’t dead—but like the royals, most of us “are beginning to recognize reality a bit more.”