

6. NEUROTIC DISORDERS

The national survey of psychiatric morbidity shows that symptoms of anxiety and depression are more common among cohabiting women than among married women. An overall measure of neurotic symptoms shows that 24% of cohabiting women compared to 15% of married women have significant neurotic scores. Among men, on the other hand, there was no difference between married and cohabiting men.⁴ In other words, a cohabiting arrangement adversely affects the mental well-being of women, whereas the mental well-being of men is hardly affected at all. It seems likely that women are worried by the possibility that they may become pregnant, and then face the consequences with a man who is not their husband and has made no lifelong commitment to the relationship.

7. MATERNAL SMOKING

An examination of smoking patterns during pregnancy shows that cohabiting women, after controlling for social class and age, have double the smoking rates of married women, which is similar to the smoking rates of single women. For example, among women in the manual social class aged 20-29 years, 26% of married women smoked throughout pregnancy compared to 49% of cohabiting women and 50% of single women.⁵ This finding suggests that cohabiting mothers have more in common with single than married mothers. A factor that contributes to the high levels of smoking among cohabiting and single mothers is probably the insecurity they feel as a result of becoming an unmarried mother.

8. SUDDEN INFANT DEATHS

National mortality statistics show that the sudden infant death rate in the first year of

life among babies born to cohabiting mothers (58.2 per 100,000 live births) is three times higher than that of babies born to married mothers (18.2 per 100,000).⁶

9. CHILD ABUSE

Data from the Family Court Reporter Survey shows that children whose parents are cohabiting are 20 times more likely to be abused than children living with their married natural parents. Children living with their mother and a cohabitee who is not the child's father are 40 times more likely to be abused. The risk of fatal child abuse is 15 times more likely among cohabiting parents than among married natural parents.⁷

10. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Women in cohabiting relationships are more likely to be abused than married women. An American study showed that marital status was the strongest predictor of abuse, ahead of race, age, education or housing conditions.⁸

ENDNOTES

1. Johnson AM, Wadsworth J, Wellings K and Field J. *Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles*, Blackwell Scientific Publications, London, 1994, p132
2. Ibid. p289
3. Ibid. p482
4. Meltzer H, et al. *The prevalence of psychiatric morbidity among adults living in private households*, OPCS, Social Survey Division, HMSO, 1995, p18
5. *The health of mothers and babies in Croydon*, Annual public health report 1997, ES Williams, p16
6. *Mortality statistics, Childhood infant and perinatal, 1999, series DH3 no.32*, Office of National Statistics, table 11
7. Family Court Reporter Survey, cited from *Broken Homes & Battered Children*, Robert Whelan, Family Education Trust, 1994.
8. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, *Morbidity and mortality weekly report 43*, No8, Washington DC, 4 March 1994.

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Essential differences between MARRIAGE AND COHABITATION

MARRIAGE

1. ORDAINED BY GOD

God ordained marriage in the second chapter of the Bible. God created man in his own image, male and female, commanding them to 'Be fruitful and increase in number' (Genesis 1:27,28). From the very beginning human beings have been divided into two sexes, with the God-given ability to reproduce. 'For this reason (because we are male and female) a man will leave his father and mother (the family of his birth) and be united to his wife (thereby forming, together with his wife, a new family) and they will become one flesh' (an indissoluble entity) (Genesis 2:24).

2. A PERMANENT UNION

Marriage is permanent, a lifelong union between one man and one woman. Jesus stressed the permanence of marriage with the words 'Therefore what God has joined let man not separate' (Mark 10:9). The lifelong nature of marriage is conveyed by the well-known words of the marriage vows: 'till death us do part'.

COHABITATION

1. A LIFESTYLE CHOICE

Secular men and women have set their seal of approval on cohabitation as a convenient lifestyle choice. Unwilling to accept the Creator's plan that sexual relations should be confined to marriage, men and women want freedom to indulge their sexual desires as they please, without regard to the moral law of God. Cohabitees want a sexual relationship without accepting the duty and responsibility that goes with such a relationship. Some couples cohabit as a trial marriage. If the trial works, they hope to marry; if not, they seek another partner.

2. A TEMPORARY RELATIONSHIP

Cohabitation is a sexual relationship, usually of a temporary nature. People choose to cohabit because they do not want to commit themselves to a permanent relationship. When the current cohabitation no longer meets their needs, they want freedom to seek another relationship. Commitment to a partner lasts only so long as the relationship is to their liking.

3. CREATES A NEW FAMILY

When husband and wife unite in marriage they form something that is greater than themselves—that is, they form a new family, with a family identity and a family name. And when God blesses their marriage with children, husband and wife become father and mother, and their children become members of the family created by the marriage of their parents. Children are known by the family name.

4. CREATES NEW FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Marriage unites the families of the husband and wife, creating new family relationships. The wife, for example, becomes a part of the family of her husband; she acquires a father and mother-in-law, and brothers and sisters-in-law. Her father-in-law becomes the grandfather of her children, and her brother-in-law becomes their uncle, and so on. These relationships are lifelong.

5. CHILDREN WELCOMED

One of the main purposes of marriage is to have children. Most married couples are delighted at the birth of a child.

6. HUSBAND AND WIFE

At marriage a man and woman become husband and wife, the words used by God to describe the relationship between a married man and woman. Jesus said, 'So they (husband and wife) are no longer two but one' (Mark 10:8).

7. MARRIAGE IS PUBLIC

Marriage is public. A forthcoming marriage is usually announced by banns being read in church. The promise to live together 'till death us do part' is made before witnesses, so that society knows the married couple's intention is to live together for life. Details of the marriage are recorded in a register.

3. SETS UP A SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP

Cohabitation forms a sexual partnership, not a family. Indeed, a couple choose to cohabit because they do not want the responsibilities that are associated with a family. Cohabiting 'partners' retain their own names and each their own identity. There is no family name, and so children that result from the cohabitation do not have a family name; they usually take the family name of their mother.

4. NO NEW FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Cohabitation creates no new family relationships, for the families of cohabittees are not united to each other, and there is no legal bond between the families of cohabittees. Children born to cohabiting couples do not acquire grandparents, uncles, aunts or cousins. Even in these days of sexual liberation there is a sense of shame associated with cohabitation.

5. CHILDREN NOT WANTED

In many cohabiting relationships children are not wanted, and often not welcomed by both 'partners'.

6. SEXUAL 'PARTNERS'

When a man and woman cohabit they become sexual 'partners'. They are two separate individuals sharing a sexual partnership. When one tires of the partnership he or she is free to change 'partners'.

7. COHABITATION IS PRIVATE

Cohabiting couples make no public expression of their intentions. There is no public promise that the relationship is intended to be permanent. Most cohabiting relationships are private and sometimes secret. Society does not know the long-term intentions of the couple.

8. CONSISTENT WITH GOD'S MORAL LAW
Marriage is consistent with the moral law of God. It is God's will that sexual relations take place within marriage so that children are born into the family created by the marriage of their parents.

9. FOUNDATION OF A GOOD SOCIETY

Marriage is the basis of a good society. A good society gives its approval to a man and woman living together in a marriage relationship.

10. GOOD FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Marriage is good for men, women and children. It is celebrated by the parents, family members and friends of the married couple.

8. AGAINST GOD'S MORAL LAW

Cohabitation is against the moral law of God. The Bible condemns sexual relations outside marriage. The word 'fornication' is used to describe sexual intercourse between an unmarried man and woman.

9. CONDEMNED BY A GOOD SOCIETY

Cohabitation is against the moral standards of a good society. It sets a bad example for children. A good society does not approve of unmarried couples living together.

10. BAD FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Cohabitation is particularly bad for women and children; it is also bad for men. It may also cause problems for the parents and family members of the cohabiting couple.

THE REALITY OF COHABITATION

1. DURATION OF COHABITATION

The average length of cohabitation is about two years. The majority (60%) of marriages are lifelong.

2. DIVORCE

Couples who cohabit before marriage are twice as likely to divorce as those who do not cohabit before their marriage. The idea that premarital cohabitation reduces the likelihood of a broken marriage is false.

3. SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

The national survey of sexual behaviour shows that, among married men around 90% have been monogamous during the last five years compared to only 43% of cohabiting men. Well over 90% of married women have been monogamous compared with around 60% of women who were cohabiting. According to the researchers those who cohabit exhibit patterns of sexual behaviour more like those who are single

than those who are married.¹ In other words, sexual faithfulness is not a feature of cohabitation.

4. ABORTION

The national survey shows that cohabiting women are four times more likely to have an abortion than married women. The proportion of women reporting an abortion over the last five years was as follows: married 2.6%, single 7.3%, and cohabiting women 10.2%.²

5. SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASE

It is not surprising that cohabiting women are six times more likely than married women to attend a clinic for a sexually transmitted disease,³ suggesting that cohabiting women are far more likely to acquire a sexually transmitted disease. This is consistent with the less monogamous lifestyle associated with cohabitation.