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Serial Cohabitors Less Likely Than Others to Marry

Divorce Rates High For Those Who Do Marry

Ithaca, N.Y. – November 5, 2008 – A new study in the *Journal of Marriage and Family* found that serial cohabiters are less likely than single-instance cohabiting unions to result in marriage. Similarly if serial cohabiters marry, divorce rates are very high.

Daniel T. Lichter of Cornell University and Zhenchao of Ohio State University used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth to track the experiences of serial cohabiters, or women who have cohabited with more than one partner.

Serial cohabiters were less likely than couples who cohabited only once to end in marriage. If serial cohabiters did marry, divorce rates were very high – more than twice as high as for women who cohabited only with their eventual husbands.

Results indicate that only a minority of cohabiting women (15 to 20 percent) were involved in multiple cohabitations. Also, serial cohabitations were overrepresented among economically disadvantaged groups, especially those with low income and education.

“Understanding the myriad motivations of cohabiters may be more important than ever, especially if cyclical serial cohabiting couples with children have increased among recent cohorts as a percentage of all cohabitations,” Lichter notes.

This study is published in the November 2008 issue of the *Journal of Marriage and Family*.

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