Cohabiting, Married, or Single: Portraying, Analyzing and Modeling New Living Arrangements in the Changing Societies of Europe


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Abstract

Demographers have been slow to reassess the value of the traditional concept of marital status. Until the beginning of the 1960s, a person's living arrangement could be predicted reasonably well by looking at the individual's legal marital status. During the 1980s, the situation altered dramatically. We know that unmarried couples have always existed; however, in the past they were so rare that little importance was attached to this living arrangement. It was also difficult to study the phenomenon because cohabitation was not yet a generally accepted lifestyle. That is no longer the case. Today, in many European countries many couples live together before marriage, and a significant portion of the adult population chooses cohabitation instead of marriage. It is therefore no longer possible not to consider consensual unions when studying marital-status or living arrangement structures.

The book provides an authoritative and up-to-date review and interpretation of the development of the cohabitation phenomenon across Europe.