



The Starter Marriage and the Future of Matrimony

Pamela Paul

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The Starter Marriage and the Future of Matrimony is a pioneering study of first marriages lasting five years or less and ending without children, and of the changing face of matrimony in America.

According to the brilliant trend analyst and journalist Pamela Paul, “It’s easy to conclude that the starter marriage trend bodes ill for the state of marriage. After all, we’re getting married, screwing it up, and divorcing—a practice that certainly isn’t strengthening our sense of trust, family, or commitment. But though starter marriages seem like a grim prospect, there is also an upside. For one thing, if people are going to divorce, better to do so after a brief marriage in which no children suffer the consequences.” But are there other consequences of starter marriages? And what causes these marriages to fail in the first place?

In today’s matrimania culture, weddings, marriage, and family are clearly goals to which most young Americans aspire. Why are today’s twenty- and thirtysomethings—the first children-of-divorce generation—so eager to get married, and so prone to failure? Are Americans today destined to jump in and out of marriage? At a time when marriage at age twenty-five can mean a sixty-year active commitment, could “serial marriages” be the wave of the future?

Drawing on more than sixty interviews with starter marriage veterans and on exhaustive re-search, Pamela Paul explores these questions, putting the issues into social and cultural perspective. She looks at the hopes and motivations of couples marrying today, and examines the conflict between our cultural conception of marriage and the society surrounding it. Most important, this lively and engaging narrative examines what the starter marriage trend means for the future of matrimony in this country—how and why we’ll continue to marry in the twenty-first century.

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