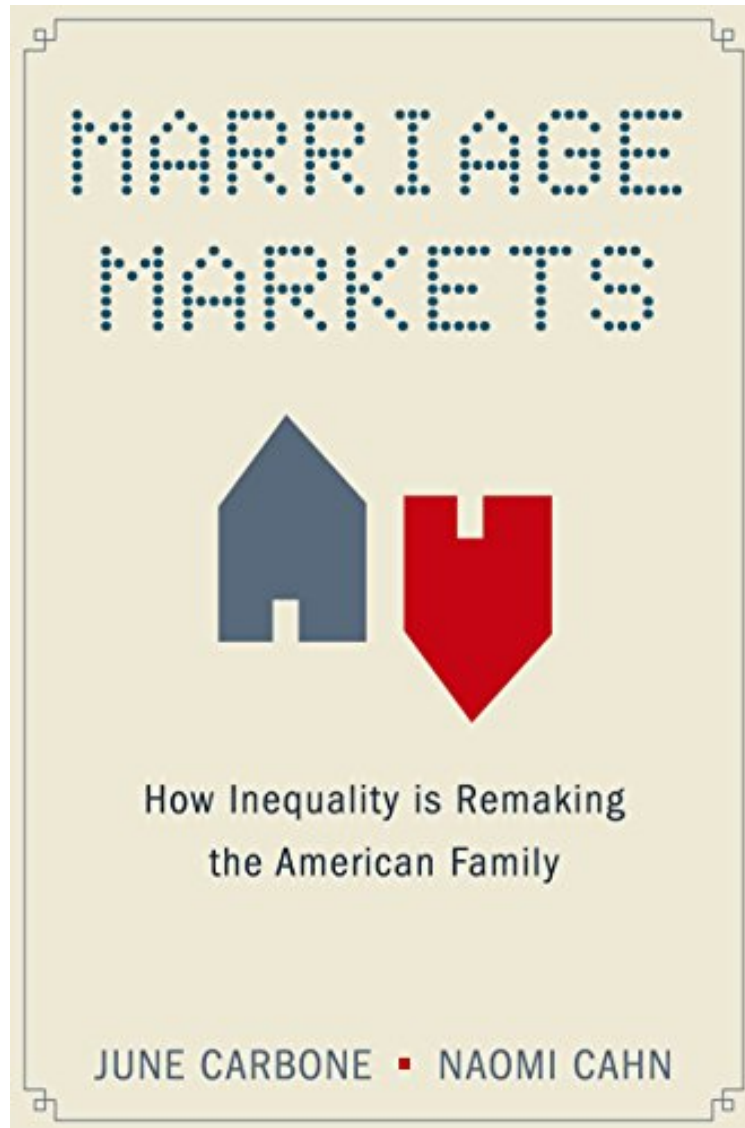


[FREE] Marriage Markets: How Inequality is Remaking the American Family

# Marriage Markets: How Inequality is Remaking the American Family

June Carbone, Naomi Cahn

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**June Carbone, Naomi Cahn : Marriage Markets: How Inequality is Remaking the American Family** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Marriage Markets: How Inequality is Remaking the American Family:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Detailed Socioeconomic Analysis of Marriage Family By Daniel Wai Amazing analysis of the socioeconomic changes about marriages in America. It explains why higher earning women are more likely to be married, and why lower earning men have become undesirable in marriage( one reason:

the unemployed men do even less housework than their employed counterpart). It also compares the laws in different states on how to define a 'parent': biological or practical. An eye opening book!

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent analysis of the marital divide and legal ramifications in ...By D. BrownExcellent analysis of the marital divide and legal ramifications in America and an interesting analysis together with Charles Murray's "Coming Apart."

8 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Marriage as economic bargainBy Roger H. AndersonI was prompted to read this book by the rather provocative title: imagining marriage to be an economic transaction, devoid of romantic, intimate love and hormonal chemistry. The very analytic, scholarly presentation by the authors, with facts and inferences drawn from a wide range of academic studies - reinforced by a dry, expository style - reaffirms the emotion-free, rational view of the institution. I must say, however, that it is worth the effort to get through the 200 pages of relatively small font and consider the impressive amount of evidence gathered leading to the conclusion that here in America over the past 50 odd years, marriage has become a more pronounced marker for those with better educations, incomes, and other resources. And, as marriage goes in this direction, so goes trends in better childrearing and family stability. And for those moving in the other direction, just the opposite. Becoming more aware of this trend is the first, necessary step to understanding what possibly might be done to change it to improve the prospects of perhaps two-thirds of the young adult (20's-30's) population, who - as trends seem to indicate - will fall further behind the economic attainment curve, with resulting negative consequences for their children's upbringing and family unity. The author's principal conclusion that greater economic inequality - particularly among men - has produced this marriage market divisible into segments that seem to be growing more and more apart. They use educational attainment (i.e. college grads, high school grads, and less than high school education), as the basic building block to then explore the variables (e.g. gender ratios, women's emancipation into the workforce, contraception, secularization, changes in legal interpretations of marriage and parents, changes in social taboo's/restrictions/lifestyles, et. al.) that have moved in tandem with increasing economic inequality, and building a case that the segments are becoming divided classes based mainly, though not exclusively on income differentials. And, as mentioned, decisions regarding marriage have moved in different directions based on this reality. The authors propose various prescriptions to remedy this imbalance and help strengthen marriage (or at least cohabitation), children's upbringing and family stability for those at the lower income scales via various reforms to private practices and public policies which would require government action and private sector reforms. Chief among these are increased job opportunities, training, better safety net protections, maternal health, early childhood education, enhanced educational opportunities for lower income adults, and better work/family life balance opportunities in the workplace. This is a systemic, complex situation, and obviously, changes to reverse current trends are going to be a long time in coming (decades), even if all these recommendations were endorsed and implemented by the responsible institutions. What left me somewhat puzzled (and ultimately somewhat unsatisfied with the author's presentation), however, is an understanding as to the root causes of how we evolved into the current state of greater economic inequality and class division from that of the 1950's and 1960's. I mean, where do we assign the chief responsibility for these changes? The authors try to show that both left and right political factions lack a full understanding as to how this came about and use their own self-serving arguments to assign blame without offering a sustainable resolution to the issue. Nonetheless, I do not find the author's diagnoses or prescriptions fully credible either. The world is going to continue to evolve in directions that we can't fully control as a nation, much less as an individual. Competition among countries for human and physical resources, for educational attainment, for revenues produced by private sector investment, for inventions/innovations in science and technology, for increased interdependence among their societies brought about by migration and resource sharing, for increased mobility among their citizens in search of better opportunities; none of this is discussed in the book. The authors act like the United States is an entity unto itself, without need to examine what is happening in the world beyond our shores. Finally, there is the overarching question of individual drive and ambition, the striving to overcome limitations and better oneself. Society, much like the parent(s), can try and encourage young adults towards behaviors via various incentives (or disincentives) that will give them the motivation to seek education, economic opportunity and security. But, ultimately, regardless of current economic standing, the responsibility for taking the actions necessary and the perseverance required to achieve this must rest primarily with the young adult. I can buy the argument that it is much tougher for the young adult lacking a stable family and living in a substandard economic environment to attain these goals. I can also believe that it is possible to overcome these conditions if there is the will to do so. Perhaps, the instilling of this mindset and giving a young person the practical tools and techniques to enable this - "living skills" (which is more than just verbal and math skills, for example, dealing with people, learning the technologies demanded today, dealing with stress, nutrition, building of self-confidence, becoming independent, among others) should be considered a priority in primary and secondary education.

There was a time when the phrase "American family" conjured up a single, specific image: a breadwinner dad, a homemaker mom, and their 2.5 kids living comfortable lives in a middle-class suburb. Today, that image has been shattered, due in part to skyrocketing divorce rates, single parenthood, and increased out-of-wedlock births. But

whether it is conservatives bemoaning the wages of moral decline and women's liberation, or progressives celebrating the result of women's greater freedom and changing sexual mores, most Americans fail to identify the root factor driving the changes: economic inequality that is remaking the American family along class lines. In *Marriage Markets*, June Carbone and Naomi Cahn examine how macroeconomic forces are transforming our most intimate and important spheres, and how working class and lower income families have paid the highest price. Just like health, education, and seemingly every other advantage in life, a stable two-parent home has become a luxury that only the well-off can afford. The best educated and most prosperous have the most stable families, while working class families have seen the greatest increase in relationship instability. Why is this so? The book provides the answer: greater economic inequality has profoundly changed marriage markets, the way men and women match up when they search for a life partner. It has produced a larger group of high-income men than women; written off the men at the bottom because of chronic unemployment, incarceration, and substance abuse; and left a larger group of women with a smaller group of comparable men in the middle. The failure to see marriage as a market affected by supply and demand has obscured any meaningful analysis of the way that societal changes influence culture. Only policies that redress the balance between men and women through greater access to education, stable employment, and opportunities for social mobility can produce a culture that encourages commitment and investment in family life. A rigorous and enlightening account of why American families have changed so much in recent decades, *Marriage Markets* cuts through the ideological and moralistic rhetoric that drives our current debate. It offers critically needed solutions for a problem that will haunt America for generations to come.

"*Marriage Markets* answers some of the most critical questions our society faces: what is happening to our families and what is happening to our economy? Why is the country growing apart economically at the same time some families are disintegrating? For those interested in these questions, the authors provide fresh analysis, new ideas and a path forward. This is an important book that should guide not only what we think about rising inequality but what we do about it." -Neera Tanden, President, Center for American Progress "A new kind of class chasm is opening in America, one defined not by money but by a widening gap between marital haves and have-nots. You can't understand where our country is headed, the changing nature of inequality, and why poor and working-class kids are losing out without reading this book. It's that simple." -Jonathan Rauch, Brookings Institution "Professors Carbone and Cahn have a knack for taking mountains of data from a wide variety of sources, distilling it into readable text, and developing unique theories that fit." -Margaret Brinig, Fritz Duda Family Chair in Law, Notre Dame Law School "Marriage is a political lightning rod, attracting the energy of both the left and right in the United States, but the energy released often provides more heat than light. Without examining marriage in the context of inequality, there is little hope of understanding where we've been, where we're headed, and what policy and the law can do to help those most vulnerable to the disruption, deprivation and dispossession that make life difficult for so many American families. In providing that context-with lucid prose and in-depth analysis-Carbone and Cahn provide a rich contribution to the debate over the past and future of marriage." -Philip N. Cohen, Professor of Sociology, University of Maryland, College Park "A brutally realistic account of what wealth inequality has done to the American family. Diverse social practices-hook-up culture, college debt, women's economic advances-have resulted in stunningly class-based family patterns: little marriage at the bottom and hunky-dory arrangements at the top. The authors take on in concrete detail how family law must take account of the new structures of intimate life." -Carol Sanger, Barbara Aronstein Professor of Law, Columbia Law School "A crisp and cogent account - rich with detail and utterly free of legalese - of America's failure to invest in its children." - New York Times "Marriage Markets is a book worth reading, pondering and discussing." -Maggie Gallagher "Marriage Markets is an important book for lawyers, sociologists, and anyone who cares about families in an era of increasing inequality." -Nancy Levit, University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, Concurring Opinions "Along with the highly structured cost-benefit analysis of marriage for different economic groups, Carbone and Cahn present an interesting analysis of how family law has institutionalized the realities of the 21st-century workforce." -Publishers Weekly "Just like health, education, and seemingly every other advantage in life, a stable two-parent home has become a luxury that only the well-off can afford. The best educated and most prosperous have the most stable families, while working class families have seen the greatest increase in relationship instability. Why is this so? The book provides the answer" -Elm Street Books "This is the sort of book that reminds me why I became a sociologist (now lapsed). Carbone and Cahn, a couple of law professors, draw on a wide body of sociological literature to explain how trends in economic inequality and changing family formation patterns reinforce each other." -Joshua Kim, Inside Higher Ed "As June Carbone and Naomi Cahn demonstrate with exceptional rigor, clarity, and elegance, the white picket fences of this mythical family have been swept away by a series of economic, social, and cultural shifts that have altered the 'gender bargain' at the core of the traditional family." -Jennifer M. Silva, FDL Book Salon "In *Marriage Markets*, June Carbone and Naomi Cahn, law professors at the University of Minnesota and George Washington University respectively, argue that the increasing economic inequality in the United States is wreaking havoc on American families, creating a vast chasm in family patterns between the haves and the have-nots." --Harvard Law About the Author June Carbone is the inaugural holder of the Robina Chair of Law, Science and

Technology at the University of Minnesota. She is the author of *From Partners to Parents: The Second Revolution in Family Law*, the third and fourth editions of *Family Law* with Leslie Harris and the late Lee Teitelbaum, and *Red Families v. Blue Families* with Naomi Cahn. She is also a member of the Yale Cultural Cognition Project. Naomi Cahn, the Harold H. Greene Professor at George Washington University Law School, has written numerous articles and several books in a variety of areas. With June Carbone, she has also co-authored *Red Families v. Blue Families*. Other books include: *Finding Our Families* (with Wendy Kramer); *The New Kinship: Constructing Donor-Conceived Families*; and co-authored casebooks in family law and trusts and estates. She is a Senior Fellow at the Donaldson Adoption Institute, a board member for the Donor Sibling Registry, and a member of the GW Global Gender Program advisory board.