



## A Generation at Risk

*Paul R. Amato, Alan Booth*

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Just what do we know about the current generation of young Americans? So little it seems that we have dubbed them Generation X. Coming of age in the 1980s and '90s, they hail from families in flux, from an intimate landscape changing faster and more profoundly than ever before. This book is the first to give us a clear, close-up picture of these young Americans and to show how they have been affected and formed by the tremendous domestic changes of the last three decades.

How have members of this generation fared at school and at work, as they have moved into the world and formed families of their own? Do their struggles or successes reflect the turbulence of their time? These are the questions *A Generation at Risk* answers in comprehensive detail. Based on a unique fifteen-year study begun in 1980, the book considers parents' socioeconomic resources, their gender roles and relations, and the quality and stability of their marriages. It then examines children's relations with their parents, their intimate and broader social affiliations, and their psychological well-being. The authors provide rare insight into how both familial and historical contexts affect young people as they make the transition to adulthood.

Perhaps surprising is the authors' finding that, in this era of shifting gender roles, children who grow up in traditional father-breadwinner, mother-homemaker families and those in more egalitarian, role-sharing families apparently turn out the same. Also striking are the beneficial influence of parental education on children and the troubling long-term impact of marital conflict and divorce--an outcome that prompts the authors to suggest policy measures that encourage marital quality and stability.

Table of Contents:

Family, Social Change, and Transition to Adulthood

Study Design, Measures, and Analysis

Relationships with Parents

Intimate Relationships

Social Integration

Socioeconomic Attainment

Psychological Well-Being

Conclusions, Implications, and Policy Recommendations

Appendix: Tables

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Reviews of this book:

An important new book...Paul Amato and Alan Booth painstakingly analyze data from a large national sample of families, seeking especially to isolate the independent effects of divorce on children from the effects of preexisting marital conflict. The results call into question the rationalizations of our high divorce rate...Amato and Booth estimate that at most a third of divorces involving children are so distressed that the children are likely to benefit. The remainder, about 70%, involve low-conflict marriages that apparently

harm children much less than do the realities of divorce...This remarkably countercultural conclusion will provoke many predictable reminders about toxic marriages and many repetitions of the familiar bromide that marital unhappiness, not 'divorce per se' is the real problem. But because of this book, we also will have a more informed discussion of the moral dimensions of the decision to divorce. Amato and Booth have helped us to recognize more clearly the potential conflicts between parental responsibility and adult desires for freedom, romance, sexual gratification and self-actualization.

--Norval D. Glenn and David Blankenhorn, Los Angeles Times

Reviews of this book:

[This] longitudinal study of the consequences of family instability and change in the USA...focused upon two generations--the parents and their offspring--and looked at how the relations between them changed over the survey time...[The] study provides an excellent opportunity to test some favorite popular assumptions--such as whether witnessing unhappiness in the parental home would lead to the inability to have happy relationships in one's own home. Or does having a 'liberated' or non-traditional mother harm children's development? The advantage of a longitudinal study is that we can...

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