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Cohabitation, Marriage and the Law: Social Change and Legal Reform in the 21st Century (Contemporary Family Trends)

Anne Barlow, Simon Duncan, Grace James, Alison Parks
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Anne Barlow, Simon Duncan, Grace James, Alison Parks : Cohabitation, Marriage and the Law: Social Change and Legal Reform in the 21st Century (Contemporary Family Trends) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Cohabitation, Marriage and the Law: Social Change

and Legal Reform in the 21st Century (Contemporary Family Trends):

Unmarried heterosexual cohabitation is rapidly increasing in Britain and over a quarter of children are now born to unmarried cohabiting parents. This is not just an important change in the way people live in modern Britain; it is also a political and theoretical marker. Some commentators see cohabitation as evidence of selfish individualism and the breakdown of the family, while others see it as just a less institutionalized way in which people express commitment and build their families. Politically, 'stable' families are seen as crucial-but does stability simply mean marriage? At present the law in Britain retains important distinctions in the way it treats cohabiting and married families and this can have deleterious effects on the welfare of children and partners on cohabitation breakdown or the death of a partner. Should the law be changed to reflect this changing social reality? Or should it-can it-be used to direct these changes? Using findings which combine nationally representative data with in-depth qualitative work, the authors examine public attitudes about cohabitation and marriage, provide an analysis of who cohabits and who marries, and investigate the extent and nature of the 'common law marriage myth' (the false belief that cohabitants have similar legal rights to married couples). They then explore why people cohabit rather than marry, what the nature of their commitment is to one another and chart public attitudes to legal change. In the light of this evidence, *Cohabitation, Marriage and the Law* then evaluates different options for legal reform.

The structure of the book is businesslike and logical...At the very least, one certainly hopes that such as Melanie Phillips, Anne Atkins and Ann Widdecombe will read *Cohabitation, Marriage and the Law* before next announcing that only married couples merit recognition and protection under our law. Professor Chris Barton *Child and Family Law Quarterly* Volume 18, No.1, 2006 .offers a helpful and clarifying look at the realities of cohabitation, marriage and the law in Britain today. John A. Dick *INTAMS Journal for the Study of Marriage Spirituality* Vol 13/1, Spring 2007
About the Author Anne Barlow is a Reader in Law at Exeter University. Simon Duncan is Professor in Comparative Social Policy at the University of Bradford. Grace James is a Lecturer in Law at the University of Reading. Alison Park is Research Director at the National Centre for Social Research and Co-Director of the British Social Attitudes Survey series.