

# *The Carter-Jenkins Center*

*presents*



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# **DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

By

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# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- 40 to 50% of all marriages in the US end in divorce (in Sweden and the Czech Republic this figure soars to over 60%)
- 45 to 50% of First Marriages end in divorce
- 60 to 67% of Second Marriages end in divorce
- 70 to 73% of Third Marriages end in Divorce

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

## Age at marriage for those that divorce in the U.S:

<i>Age</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
Under 20 years old	27.6%	11.7%
20 to 24 years old	36.6%	38.8%
25 to 29 years old	16.4%	22.3%
30 to 34 years old	8.5%	11.6%
35 to 39 years old	5.1%	6.5%

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- Rate of divorce for couples with children is 40%
- Rate of divorce for couples without children is 66%
- Mean age at first divorce:
  - Males: 30.5 years old
  - Females: 29 years old
- Average years waited to remarry after first divorce:
  - Males: 3.3 years
  - Females: 3.1 years couples

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

## *Causes or combination of causes for divorces:*

- **Marrying to young is a common cause**
- **Infidelity is a very common cause**
- **Wanting different things out of life**
- **Irreconcilable differences (cultural, religious, philosophical, in sexual frequency, in sexual practices, impotence, excessive jealousy, etc, etc)**

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

## Causes or combination of causes for divorces:

- Abuse (verbal, physical or both)\*, cruelty, excessive and/or abusive controlling
- Alcoholism and/or drug abuse (frequently leading to abuse)
- Felony convictions (usually husbands)
- Laziness and/or lack of support (moral or economic i.e., money goes to alcohol, gambling etc)

\* 2/3 of the physical abuse is done by boy friends and ex spouses. Only 9% is actually done by spouses (Justice Department, 1991)

# **DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

- **Average length of divorce procedures: 1 year**
- **State with lower divorce rate in the US is Massachusetts:  
2.4% per 1,000 of population**
- **State with highest divorce rate is Nevada:  
9.1% per 1000 population**

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

## *Divorce and children:*

- Generally speaking all children are affected by divorce. Younger children are more affected than older children.(\*)
- One of the things that affects them more, is the lost of the “family”, since at least in many cases they maintain a relationship with their fathers though that is not always the case
- Depression, grief and anxiety are common, as are regressive moves in toilet training, speech, etc

# **DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

- Anger at one or both parents common**
- There may be school performance problems and generally they have higher rates of dropping out of school, etc**
- Children of divorce frequently become oppositional defiant disorders, conduct disorders and antisocial personalities (Ex of Inpatient Unit)**
- Girls more prone to act out sexually**

# **DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

- Children frequently feel that they are responsible for their parents divorce attributing it to their disobedience, bad behavior, poor grades at school or what not**
- This is particularly true of children still in the egocentric stage of development. Remember too, that children under 12 years of age have at best a partial understanding of these problems**
- Adolescents are more mature. They may be able to look at the moral problems involved, while drawing lessons for their own futures**

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- Because of the above, parents should explain clearly and repeatedly, that their divorce is not the children's fault and that they (the children) have not done anything wrong
- Some children may exhibit no negative effects after parental divorce. They are the exception not the rule

# **DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

- As Ena Furman has pointed out, some children are barely left with one parent**
- Others have four parents, with the addition of step parents**
- Brothers and sisters may be gained or lost too, as the consequence of the divorce**
- There are many other changes such as changes of schools, loss of home and familiar places, loss of friends, life standards changes, etc**

# **DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

- **Furman points out too that “a child may still love and long for a parent who is hated as spouse”**
- **He may be sad when the parents feel relieved**
- **May confront a parent with being selfish or unkind when the parent thinks of him/herself as being morally superior**
- **“I am not divorced from my Dad only my Mom is” (Furman)**

# **DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

- Many children whose parents have divorced complain of depression, anxiety, fear, loneliness, feeling less protected and stressed out**
- One in four children in the U.S live in one single parent or step/blended family, from which it is generally the father that is absent**
- Children of divorce are twice as likely to drop out of school, 3 times as apt to conceive a baby out of wedlock, 5 times more likely to be poor and suffer incarceration 12 times more frequently**

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

## *Some consequences in adulthood for the children of divorce:*

- a) Fear or distrust of men by women (particularly in cases where mothers were abused). Males, may distrust females in some cases (mothers that abandoned the home for example)
  
- b) Fear of being abandoned like their mothers

# **DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

- c) Fear of their impulses, if placed in the mother's situation i.e., fantasies of hurting or killing the potential abandoner**
- d) Guilt about succeeding where mothers failed or parents failed**
- e) In Wallerstein study, many women needed to be protective and close by their mothers, so as not to repeat their father's behavior and abandonment**

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- f) This, of course, has many potential implications for this women's life and personal development**
- g) Many such women do not marry**
- h) Yet, a few of these protective and still young women, said that they hoped to marry and to have children some day (W 289)\***
- i) There is as well, a fear of having their children abandoned, as many of them felt they were**

\* Wallerstein, J., et al, Unexpected Legacy of Divorce, p.289

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- j) Most of those who did chose not to marry were scared by their own histories (parent's divorce, poor relations, etc) and from the number of broken marriages they have seen (W 289)**
  
- k) Interestingly enough some children of divorce become good peace negotiators and mediators as adults**
  
- l) See example of all the above from Wallerstein study (Lisa, p.284/5/6)\***

\* Wallerstein, J., et al, Unexpected Legacy of Divorce, p.284-89

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- **As many as 40% of the men and women (that were children whose parents divorced) in the Judith Wallerstein divorce study never married**
- **They cohabitated with somebody, had serial lovers, while others led solitary lives (W. 289)\***
- **Wallerstein saw it as the inevitable consequence of our “divorce culture”**
- **There are only 40% of married people in this country and numbers are going down all the time**

\* Wallerstein, J., et al, Unexpected Legacy of Divorce, p.289

# **DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

- There are less divorces now because there are less marriages**
- What all of the above does to the family organization, the raising of children and the fabric of society, is of enormous interest. Take into account as well, that many of the unmarried couples separate too after only 3 years of being together**
- There are significant emotional and economic deprivations for divorce families and the children of divorce, single parents, etc (more later)**

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- **“We have a consensus that children raised in divorced or re-married families are less well adjusted as adults than those raised in intact families” (Wallerstein p. 297)\***
- **Example of “conduct disorders” in our inpatient units for children and adolescents (divorce/re-constituted families)**
- **Role that the new “no fault law” and the tax penalty for married couples plays**

\* Wallerstein, J., et al, Unexpected Legacy of Divorce, p.297

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- Divorced adults are more likely to suffer from severe emotional and psychological problems\*
- Suicide rate for divorced white men is four times higher than for their married counterparts
- Divorced men's premature death rates double that of married man from such causes as cancer, cardiovascular disease, strokes, pneumonia\*\*, hypertension and suicide than their married counterparts
- According to the NIMH "The single most powerful predictor of stress-related physical, as well as emotional, is marital disruption"

\* Divorced or separated men undergo inpatient or outpatient care at a rate 10 times higher than married men; for divorced or separated women the use of such type of care shows a five fold increase

\*\* Premature death from pneumonia is said to be seven times higher!

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

## *Types of divorce:*

- **No Fault Divorce**: Possible in all States in the US. Some States require the couple to live separately from several months up to a year before granting it
- **Fault Divorce**: Not possible in every State. May allow for better alimony and marital properties division.

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- Uncontested Divorce: Both spouses agree to all details of the divorce outside the court
- Contested Divorce: Unable to settle issues out of court. Divorce must then be heard and decided by a judge
- Mediated Divorce: Spouses and attorneys go to a mediator to work details. Allows couple to be in control and keeps the court out of decisions

# **DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

- **Divorce is hardly ever a friendly procedure and what leads to it, is not either. Thus, many consequences follow from this:**
  - a) Children have frequently witnessed angry verbal or physical fights and abuse. Children are frightened, sad, worried that the parents may leave, divorce, hurt each other and so on**
  - b) They may play various roles, such as mediators, confidants, defenders (verbally or even physically) of an attacked mother for example**

# **DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

- c) Length of time of such exposures, age at exposure etc, will influence the psychological consequences for these children**
  
- d) One of the parties happy, the other not, feeling surprised, betrayed, angry, sad, abused, let down etc\***
  
- e) Degree of unhappiness related to motivation of the divorce (to be discussed later)**
  
- f) Court battles about alimony, custody, visits etc**
  
- g) Battles frequently continue after divorce**

**\* 80% of divorces are unilateral rather than mutual decisions of the married couple**

# **DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

- h) The battles may adopt different forms i.e., blaming, denigrating, undermining or bad mouthing the other parent or forcing the children to take sides etc**
- i) Not paying child support, not keeping appointments to pick up the children or for visitations**
- j) Drilling the children about the other parent life, boyfriends, girlfriends and the like or exposing them to new lovers, sexual promiscuity**

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

k) Ventilating the aggression due wife or husband on the children

l) In short, children may get cross fired

## More about economics:

- Generally both parties to the divorce end financially worse off, but women are likely to suffer the biggest fall in disposable income
- Four times as many divorced women with children fell under the poverty line when compared with married women with children\*

\* Statistical Abstract of the U S, 1993, p. 385

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- It is said that a single divorce cost the States and Federal government (i.e., the citizens) about \$ 30,000. This is due to higher use of food stamps and public housing, social welfare, medical help, plus the increase in bankruptcies and juvenile delinquency\*. A number of those end in prison
- In Utah for example, divorce and its consequences account for 75 to 80% of the people on welfare rolls\*\*

\* We are talking up to 20 or 30 billions of dollars, not including the cost of litigation between the parties, which is considered to be about 175 billion. Clearly the reason for large numbers of divorce lawyers.

\*\* From the Utah Governor's marriage conference

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

## Other findings:

- Premarital courses seem helpful and are said to improve “marital strength” by 30%
- Couples that cohabite before marriage have a risk of divorce 40 to 85% higher than those that wait until after marriage \*
- Fathers tend to divorce their children too (though not always) when their marriage dissolves. They are more likely to form new attachments to the children of their new partners\*\*.

\* Bumpass & Sweet 1995

\*\* Close to 50% of families with children have at least one set of grandparents that have been divorced. If they were distanced from their children they are less likely to have close ties with the grandchildren

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

## Some economists\* findings:

- Parents of a girl in the US are nearly 5% more likely to divorce than the parents of a boy
- Parents of three girls are 10% more likely to divorce than parents of three boys. The gap is wider in Mexico and Colombia. In Vietnam parents of a girl are 25% more likely to divorce
- Conclusion seems to be that boys are still preferred by many couples in this day and age!

\* Economists Dahl (U of Rochester) and Moretti (UCLA)

# **DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

- In such a complex situation it is not always clear whether the divorce itself, or the disarray created by it, the fighting between the parents (before, during and after the divorce), the absence of a paternal authority figure, the economic problems that may arise, the depression and anger common due to the divorce, the presence of boyfriends, girlfriends, stepfathers or stepmothers, the various conflicts of loyalty that may thus arise, are the factors responsible for the problems. Clearly, all such things combine in different proportions at times, depending on age, phase of development, cognitive abilities, the attachment to one or another parent of any given child etc**

# DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- **Divorce affects as well relatives and friends, particularly close relatives and close friends that are caught in a difficult situation, because of the conflicts of loyalty that divorces may create, and the problem of remaining neutral versus taking sides**

# **DIVORCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

## **Recommended Bibliography**

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**Wallerstein, J., and Kelly, J.B., (1980) Surviving the Breakup: How Children and Parents Cope with Divorce, Basic Books Inc, New York**

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**Wallerstein, J., Lewis, and J.M., Blakeslee, S., ( 2000) The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce (A 25 Year Study Landmark), Hyperion, New York**

**Furstenberg, F.F., & Cherlin, A.J., (1991) Divided Families: What Happens to Children When Parents Part, Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard Universities Press**

**Utah's Governor Marriage Report**

**Web page of the Census Bureau of the U.S is a valuable resource**

**The Internet is a valuable resource for this subject but care needs to be exercised as to the sources, motivations for the publication etc**

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# The End

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