



The Effects of Divorce on Children

Patrick F. Fagan and Aaron Churchill

January 11, 2012

Introduction

Each year, over a million American children suffer the divorce of their parents. Divorce causes irreparable harm to all involved, but most especially to the children. Though it might be shown to benefit some individuals in some individual cases, over all it causes a temporary decrease in an individual's quality of life and puts some "on a downward trajectory from which they might never fully recover."¹

Divorce damages society. It consumes social and human capital. It substantially increases cost to the taxpayer, while diminishing the taxpaying portion of society. It diminishes children's future competence in all five of society's major tasks or institutions: family, school, religion, marketplace and government. The reversal of the cultural and social status of divorce would be nothing less than a cultural revolution. Only a few generations ago, American culture rejected divorce as scandalous. Today, law, behavior, and culture embrace and even celebrate it.

Divorce also permanently weakens the family and the relationship between children and parents.² It frequently leads to destructive conflict management methods, diminished social competence and for children, the early loss of virginity, as well as diminished sense of masculinity or femininity for young adults. It also results in more trouble with dating, more cohabitation, greater likelihood of divorce, higher expectations of divorce later in life, and a decreased

¹ Paul R. Amato, "The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62 (2000): 1269.

² Paul R. Amato and Juliana M. Sobolewski, "The Effects of Divorce and Marital Discord on Adult Children's Psychological Well-Being," *American Sociological Review* 66 (2001): 917.

desire to have children. Paul Amato, professor of sociology at Pennsylvania State University summed it up: divorce leads to “disruptions in the parent-child relationship, continuing discord between former spouses, loss of emotional support, economic hardship, and an increase in the number of other negative life events.”³

The last year for accurate numbers on children annually affected by divorce was 1988 when the Center for Disease Control stopped gathering the data. That year the number was over 1,044,000. However, since then the percent of women who have been divorced has continued to rise.⁴ Therefore, conservatively, we estimate the number to be at least 1,000,000 children per year. Should one add the number affected by the dissolution of “an always intact” cohabitation of natural parents, the number is significantly greater. We do know that for all U.S. children, as of the latest data from the 2009 American Community Survey, only 47 percent reach age 17 in an intact married family.⁵

Divorce detrimentally impacts individuals and society in numerous other ways:

- Religious practice: Divorce diminishes the frequency of worship of God and recourse to Him in prayer.
- Education: Divorce diminishes children’s learning capacity and educational attainment.
- The marketplace: Divorce reduces household income and deeply cuts individual earning capacity.
- Government: Divorce significantly increases crime, abuse and neglect, drug use, and the costs of compensating government services.
- Health and well-being: Divorce weakens children’s health and longevity. It also increases behavioral, emotional, and psychiatric risks, including even suicide.

The effect of divorce on children’s hearts, minds, and souls ranges from mild to severe, from seemingly small to observably significant, and from short-term to long-term. None of the effects applies to each child of every divorced couple, nor has any one child suffered all the effects we will discuss. There is no way to predict how any particular child will be affected nor to what extent, but it is possible to predict divorce’s societal effects and how this large cohort of children will be affected as a group. These effects are both numerous and serious.

³ Paul R. Amato, “The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62 (2000): 1282.

⁴ Patrick F. Fagan, Thomas J. Tacoma, Brooke A. Tonne, and Alexander W. Matthews, “The Annual Report on Family Trends: The Behaviors of the American Family in the Five Major Institutions of Society,” (Washington, D.C.: Marriage and Religion Research Institute, February 2011). See Section 4: Structures of the Family, subsection “Divorces.” Available at <http://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF11B27.pdf>.

⁵ Patrick F. Fagan and Nicholas Zill, “The Second Annual Index of Family Belonging and Rejection,” (Washington, D.C.: Marriage and Religion Research Institute, 17 November 2011).

The major issue for researchers is no longer to learn what the ill effects of divorce are, but to understand the extent of these effects on children and grandchildren and to identify ways of reversing their intergenerational cycle.

I. Effects on the Family: Cyclical Brokenness

A. Weakened Parent-Child Relationships

When parents divorce each other, another sort of divorce occurs between the parents and their children. The primary effect of divorce (and of the parental conflict that precedes the divorce) is a decline in the relationship between parent and child.⁶ Immediately after a divorce, most parents have two sets of problems: their adjustment to their own intrapsychic conflicts and to their role as a divorced parent. The stress of divorce damages the parent-child relationship for as many as 40 percent of divorced mothers.⁷ The support they receive from home is rated much lower by children of divorced parents than by children from intact homes,⁸ and these negative ratings become more pronounced by the time children are in high school⁹ and college.¹⁰

Children in divorced families receive less emotional support, financial assistance, and practical help from their parents.¹¹ Divorced homes show a decrease in language stimulation, pride, affection, stimulation of academic behavior, encouragement of social maturity, and warmth directed towards the children. The presence of fewer toys and games is common, as is an increase in physical punishment.¹² Though some studies show that parental divorce itself may not

⁶ Elizabeth Meneghan and Toby L. Parcel, "Social Sources of Change in Children's Home Environments: The Effects of Parental Occupational Experiences and Family Conditions," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 57 (1995): 69-84.

Paul R. Amato and Tamara D. Afifi, "Feeling Caught Between Parents: Adult Children's Relations with Parents and Subjective Well-Being," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68, no. 1 (2006): 231.

⁷ Judith S. Wallerstein and Joan Berlin Kelly, *Surviving the Breakup: How Children and Parents Cope With Divorce* (1980; repr., New York, NY: Basic Books, 1996), 224-225. Citations are from the 1996 edition.

⁸ Jane E. Miller and Diane Davis, "Poverty History, Marital History, and Quality of Children's Home Environments," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 59 (1997): 1002.

⁹ Thomas S. Parish, "Evaluations of Family by Youth: Do They Vary as a Function of Family Structure, Gender and Birth Order?" *Adolescence* 25 (1990): 354-356.

¹⁰ Thomas S. Parish, "Evaluations of Family as a Function of One's Family Structure and Sex," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 66 (1988): 25-26.

¹¹ Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, *A Generation at Risk* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 69.

Teresa M. Cooney and Peter Uhlenberg, "Support from Parents Over the Life Course: The Adult Child's Perspective," *Social Forces* 71 (1991): 63-83.

¹² Carol E. MacKinnon, Gene H. Brody, and Zolinda Stoneman, "The Effects of Divorce and Maternal Employment on the Home Environments of Preschool Children," *Child Development* 53 (1982): 1392-1399.

affect parenting,¹³ it often leads to worry, exhaustion, and stress for parents. These factors affect both parenting and parental control.¹⁴ Thus, divorce and separation result in less caring and more overprotective parenting during the adolescent years.¹⁵

Though the child's ability to trust their parents, close friends, and others "is strongly linked to positive parent-teen relationships regardless of parental divorce,"¹⁶ parental divorce makes it more difficult for children to trust their parents,¹⁷ while a "decline in the closeness of the parent-child relationship mediates much of the association between parental divorce, marital discord, and offspring's psychological wellbeing in adulthood."¹⁸

Though one review of the literature conducted in the United Kingdom found "that although children are at increased risk of adverse outcomes following family breakdown and that negative outcomes can persist into adulthood, the difference between children from intact and non-intact families is a small one, and the majority of children will not be adversely affected in the long-term,"¹⁹ the rest of this paper contradicts this conclusion.

B. Weakened Mother-Child Relationships

Children of divorced mothers have poorer and less stimulating home environments. Furthermore, divorced mothers, despite their best intentions, are less able than married mothers to give emotional support to their children.²⁰ Divorce also causes a slight decline in children's trust of their mothers when parental divorce occurs between birth and age four; however, after controlling for

¹³ Lisa Strohschein, "Challenging the Presumption of Diminished Capacity to Parent: Does Divorce Really Change Parenting Practices?" *Family Relations* 56 (2007): 358-368.

¹⁴ Thomas L. Hanson, Sara S. McLanahan, and Elizabeth Thomson, "Windows on Divorce: Before and After," *Social Science Research* 27 (1998): 329-349.

Jeanne M. Hilton and Stephan Desrochers, "Children's Behavior Problems in Single-Parent and Married-Parent Families: Development of Predictive Model," *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage* 37 (2003): 13-34.

¹⁵ Lianne Woodward, David M. Fergusson, and Jay Belsky, "Timing of Parental Separation and Attachment to Parents in Adolescence: Results of a Prospective Study from Birth to Age 16," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62 (2000): 167.

¹⁶ Valarie King, "Parental Divorce and Interpersonal Trust in Adult Offspring," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 64, no.3 (2002): 642.

¹⁷ Valarie King, "Parental Divorce and Interpersonal Trust in Adult Offspring," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 64, no.3 (2002): 648.

¹⁸ Paul R. Amato and Juliana M. Sobolewski, "The Effects of Divorce and Marital Discord on Adult Children's Psychological Well-Being," *American Sociological Review* 66 (2001): 912.

¹⁹ Ann Mooney, Chris Oliver, and Marjorie Smith, *Impact of Family Breakdown on Children's Wellbeing Evidence Review* DCSF-RR113 (London: University of London, Institute of Education, Thomas Coram Research Unit, 2009) 1.

²⁰ Jane E. Miller and Diane Davis, "Poverty History, Marital History, and Quality of Children's Home Environments," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 59 (1997): 996-1007.

the quality of the parent-child relationship, this effect all but disappears.²¹ Compared with continuously-married mothers, divorced mothers tend to be less affectionate and communicative with their children, and to discipline them more harshly and more inconsistently, especially during the first year following the divorce.²²

Divorced mothers have particular problems with their sons, though their relationship will likely improve within two years,²³ even if, as often occurs, discipline problems persist for up to six years after the divorce.²⁴

C. Weakened Father-Child Relationships

Contact. Divorce leads to a decline in the frequency and quality of parent-child contact and relationships,²⁵ and it becomes difficult for nonresidential parents, 90 percent of whom are fathers, to maintain close ties with their children.²⁶ For example, children spend significantly more nights with their mother than their father.²⁷ Nearly 50 percent of the children in one study reported not seeing their nonresident father in the past year, and the small number that had recently stayed overnight at the father's residence did so for a special visit, not as part of a regular routine.²⁸ An analysis of the National Survey of Families and

²¹ Valarie King, "Parental Divorce and Interpersonal Trust in Adult Offspring," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 64, no.3 (2002): 648.

²² E. Mavis Hetherington, Roger Cox, and Martha Cox, "Effects of Divorce on Parents and Children," in *Nontraditional Families: Parenting and Child Development*, ed. Michael E. Lamb (New York, NY: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1982), 223-288. There is increasing evidence that many divorced families already had these patterns long before the divorce.

Paul. R. Amato and Alan Booth, "A Prospective Study of Divorce and Parent-Child Relationships," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 58 (1996): 357.

Jane E. Miller and Diane Davis, "Poverty History, Marital History, and Quality of Children's Home Environments," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 59 (1997): 1004.

²³ E. Mavis Hetherington, Roger Cox, and Martha Cox, "Effects of Divorce on Parents and Children," in *Nontraditional Families: Parenting and Child Development*, ed. Michael E. Lamb (New York, NY: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1982), 223-288.

²⁴ E. Mavis Hetherington, Roger Cox, and Martha Cox, "Long-term Effects of Divorce and Remarriage on the Adjustment of Children," *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry* 24 (1985): 518-530.

²⁵ William S. Aquilino, "Later-Life Parental Divorce and Widowhood: Impact on Young Adults' Assessment of Parent-Child Relations," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 56 (1994): 908-922.

Alan Booth and Paul R. Amato, "Parental Pre-Divorce Relations and Offspring Postdivorce Well-Being," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 63 (2001): 210.

²⁶ Brad Peters and Marion F. Ehrenberg, "The Influence of Parental Separations and Divorce on Father-Child Relationships," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 49 (2008): 96-97.

Alan Booth and Paul R. Amato, "Parental Marital Quality, Parental Divorce, and Relations with Parents," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 56, no. 1 (1994): 27.

²⁷ I-Fen Lin, Nora Cate Schaeffer, Judith A. Seltzer, and Kay L. Tuschen, "Divorced Parents' Qualitative and Quantitative Reports of Children's Living Arrangements," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66 (2004): 389-390.

²⁸ Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr. and Christine W. Nord, "Parenting Apart: Patterns of Childrearing after Marital Disruption," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 47 (1985): 893-904. Note: Eight

Households²⁹ found that about one in five divorced fathers had not seen his children in the past year, and fewer than half the fathers saw their children more than a few times a year.³⁰ By adolescence (between the ages of 12 and 16), fewer than half of children living with separated, divorced, or remarried mothers had seen their fathers at all in more than a year, and only one in six saw their fathers once a week.³¹

Contact with the father declines over time after a divorce, though this pattern is less pronounced the older the child is at the time of the divorce.³² Daughters of divorced parents were 38 percent less likely than their peers in intact families to have frequent contact with their fathers, and sons of divorced parents were 20 percent less likely.³³

Emotional Closeness and Well-being. Children's relationships with their parents worsen after a divorce.³⁴ Marital disruption creates distance between parents and children,³⁵ even compared to children living in married but unhappy families.³⁶ Divorced parents also report significantly diminished satisfaction with their former spouse's relationships with their children,³⁷ though parental divorce

percent of the children whose fathers were nonresident had never-married (as opposed to married and then divorced or separated) fathers.

²⁹ This is a federally funded survey of 13,000 respondents conducted by the University of Wisconsin in 1987-1988, 1992-1994, and 2001-2003.

³⁰ Judith A. Seltzer, "Relationships between Fathers and Children Who Live Apart: The Father's Role After Separation," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 53 (1991): 79-101.

³¹ David Popenoe, *Life without Father* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1996), 31. Popenoe reports on the findings of The National Survey of Children.

³² Judith Seltzer, "Relationships between Fathers and Children Who Live Apart: The Father's Role after Separation," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 53 (1991): 79-101.

³³ Teresa M. Cooney, "Young Adults' Relations With Parents: The Influence of Recent Parental Divorce," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 56 (1994): 45-56.

³⁴ Paul R. Amato, "Children of Divorce in the 1990s: An Update of the Amato and Keith (1991) Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Family Psychology* 15 (2001): 355-375.

Yongmin Sun, "Family Environment and Adolescents' Well-being Before and After Parents' Marital Disruption: A Longitudinal Analysis," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 697-713.

Paul R. Amato and Bruce Keith "Parental Divorce and the Well-being of Children: A Meta-Analysis," *Psychological Bulletin* 110 (1991): 26-46.

³⁵ Alice Rossi and Peter Rossi, *Of Human Bonding: Parent-Child Relations Across the Life Course* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1990). As cited in Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, *A Generation at Risk*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 69.

Juliana M. Soboleswki, "Parents' Discord and Divorce, Parent-Child Relationships and Subjective Well-being in Early Adulthood: Is Feeling Close to Two Parents Always Better than Feeling Close to One?" *Social Forces* 85 (2007): 1105-1124.

Alan Booth and Paul R. Amato, "Parental Predivorce Relations and Offspring Postdivorce Well-being," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 197-212.

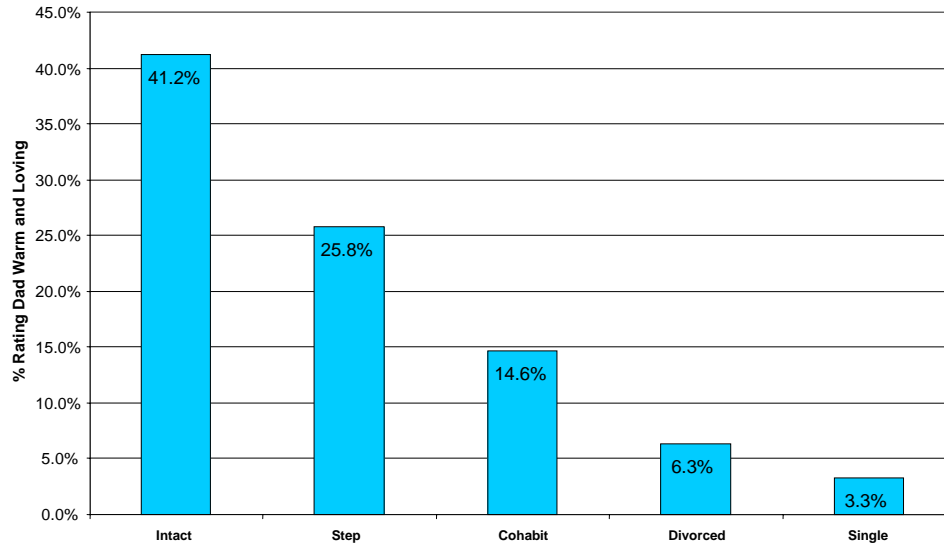
³⁶ Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, "Consequences of Parental Divorce and Marital Unhappiness for Adult Well-being," *Social Forces* 69 (1991): 895-914.

³⁷ Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, "A Prospective Study of Divorce and Parent-Child Relationships," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 58 (1996): 361.

tends to affect the relationship of the child and the opposite-sex parent more than the child and their parent of the same sex.³⁸

Father Rated Warm and Loving

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health Wave 2, 1996



Divorced fathers, especially non-custodial fathers, do not fare well with their children. Children report more distant relationships with their fathers,³⁹ and fathers report “a more negative change in their relationships with their children than [do] custodial mothers.”⁴⁰ The pattern of worsening relationships after the breakup holds for both sons⁴¹ and daughters,⁴² and more conflict during the divorce process increases the likelihood of distance between the father and his children.⁴³ However, as time passes after the breakup, conflict between father and child decreases. Additionally, older children typically experience less conflict with their nonresident fathers than do younger children.⁴⁴

³⁸ Alan Booth and Paul R. Amato, “Parental Marital Quality, Parental Divorce, and Relations with Parents,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 56, no. 1 (1994): 28.

³⁹ Rosemary Dunlop, Ailsa Burns, and Suzanne Bermingham, “Parent-Child Relations and Adolescent Self-Image Following Divorce: A Ten Year Study,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 30 (2001): 117-134.

⁴⁰ Marsha Kline Pruett, Tamra Y. Williams, Glendessa Insabella, and Todd D. Little, “Family and Legal Indicators of Child Adjustment to Divorce Among Families With Young Children,” *Journal of Family Psychology* 17, no. 2 (2003): 174.

⁴¹ Nicholas Zill, Donna Morrison, and Mary Jo Coiro, “Long Term Effects of Parental Divorce on Parent-child Relationships, Adjustment, and Achievement in Young Adulthood,” *Journal of Family Psychology* 7 (1993): 91-103.

⁴² Constance R. Ahrons and Jennifer L. Tanner, “Adult Children and Their Fathers: Relationship Changes Twenty Years after Parental Divorce,” *Family Relations* 52 (2003): 340-351.

⁴³ Janet Johnston, “High Conflict Divorce,” *The Future of Children* (1994): 165-182.

⁴⁴ Judy Dunn, Helen Cheng, Thomas G. O’Connor, and Laura Bridges, “Children’s Perspectives on Their Relationships with Their Nonresident Fathers: Influences, Outcomes and Implications,” *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 45, no. 3 (2004): 559.

Divorce leads to a decline in children's ability to trust their fathers,⁴⁵ which does not bode well for the lifetime happiness of divorced children. Young adults who feel emotionally close to their fathers tend to be happier and more satisfied in life, regardless of their feelings towards their mothers.⁴⁶ However, children and adolescents who do feel close to the father following a divorce experience better outcomes.⁴⁷

Children from divorced families receive less emotional support from their fathers than children from intact families.⁴⁸ Divorced fathers are less nurturing,⁴⁹ and more likely to drift away from younger children if denied legal custody at the time of the divorce.⁵⁰ Nonresident fathers also "have considerably less opportunity to influence their children's attitudes and behavior,"⁵¹ a reality of which the implications this paper will attempt to explore. Ultimately, the proportion of children who enjoy a consistently close relationship with their father is much higher among adolescents whose parents remain married (48 percent) than among those whose parents divorce (25 percent).⁵²

Persisting Effects. Boys, especially if they live with their mother, respond with more hostility to parental divorce than girls do, both immediately following the divorce and for a period of years thereafter.⁵³ Girls often fare worse than boys when living with their father or stepfather after a parental divorce.⁵⁴ By the time

⁴⁵ Valarie King, "Parental Divorce and Interpersonal Trust in Adult Offspring," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64 (2002): 642-656.

⁴⁶ Paul Amato, "Father-Child Relations, Mother-Child Relations and Offspring Psychological Well-being in Early Adulthood," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 56 (1994): 1031-1042.

⁴⁷ Paul Amato and Joan G. Gilbreth, "Nonresident fathers and children's well-being: A meta-analysis," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61 (1999): 557-574; Valarie King and Juliana M. Sobolewski, "Nonresident fathers' contributions to adolescent well-being," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68 (2006): 537-557. Both as cited in Mindy E. Scott, Alan Booth, Valarie King, and David R. Johnson, "Postdivorce Father-Adolescent Closeness," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69 (2007): 1194.

⁴⁸ Heidi R. Riggio, "Parental Marital Conflict and Divorce, Parent-Child Relationships, Social Support, and Relationship Anxiety in Young Adulthood," *Personal Relationships* 11 (2004): 106.

⁴⁹ Seth J. Schwartz and Gordon E. Finley, "Fathering in Intact and Divorced Families: Ethnic Differences in Retrospective Reports," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67 (2005): 207.

⁵⁰ Yoram Weiss and Robert J. Willis, "Children as Collective Goods and Divorce Settlements," *Journal of Labor Economics* 3 (1985): 268-292.

⁵¹ Judith A. Seltzer, "Legal Custody Arrangements and Children's Economic Welfare," *American Journal of Sociology* 96 (1991): 898.

⁵² Mindy E. Scott, Alan Booth, Valarie King, and David R. Johnson, "Postdivorce Father-Adolescent Closeness," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69 (2007): 1201.

⁵³ Martha J. Zaslow, "Sex Differences in Children's Response to Parental Divorce: Two Samples, Variables, Ages, and Sources," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 59 (1989): 118-141.

⁵⁴ Martha J. Zaslow, "Sex Differences in Children's Response to Parental Divorce: Two Samples, Variables, Ages, and Sources," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 59 (1989): 118-141.

children, particularly daughters, attend college, their affection for their divorced father wanes significantly.⁵⁵

D. Weakened Grandparent-Grandchild Relationships

Divorce negatively affects grandparent/grandchild relationships. Paternal grandparents frequently cease to see their grandchildren as their grandchildren's contact with their own father, the grandparents' son, diminishes.⁵⁶ Furthermore, compared to never-divorced grandparents, grandparents who were themselves divorced had less contact with their adolescent grandchildren and engaged in fewer shared activities with them,⁵⁷ and divorced grandparents are less likely to agree that their grandchildren are a valuable part of their lives.⁵⁸ Divorced paternal grandparents were less likely to play a mentoring role in the life of their grandchildren than divorced maternal grandparents.⁵⁹

E. Children's View of Divorce

Regardless of age, children of divorce deeply resent the strains and difficulties which arise in long-held family celebrations, traditions, daily rituals, and special times, and rate these changes as major losses.⁶⁰ Grown children continue to see their parents' divorce very differently than do the parents. Judith Wallerstein, a clinical psychologist from San Francisco, was the first to disturb the nation in 1980 with her research on the effects of divorce on children.⁶¹ She found that 10 percent of children felt positively about their parents' divorce, but 80 percent of the divorced mothers and 50 percent of the divorced fathers judged the divorce good for them 15 years after the divorce.⁶²

Girls. Young men and women react in slightly different ways to their parent's divorce. Young women from divorced families will feel a need for love and attention and yet fear abandonment; they will also be prone to both desire and

⁵⁵ Teresa M. Cooney, Michael A. Smyer, Gunhild O. Hagstad, and Robin Klock, "Parental Divorce in Young Adulthood: Some Preliminary Findings," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 56 (1986): 470-477.

⁵⁶ Janet Finch and Jennifer Mason, "Divorce, Remarriage and Family Obligations," *Sociological Review* 38 (1990): 231-234.

⁵⁷ Valarie King, "The Legacy of a Grandparent's Divorce: Consequences for Ties Between Grandparents and Grandchildren," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65 (2003): 170-183. Paul R. Amato and Jacob Cheadle, "The Long Reach of Divorce: Divorce and Child Well-being Across Three Generations," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67 (2005): 191-206.

⁵⁸ Valarie King, "The Legacy of a Grandparent's Divorce: Consequences for Ties Between Grandparents and Grandchildren," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65 (2003): 179.

⁵⁹ Valarie King, "The Legacy of a Grandparent's Divorce: Consequences for Ties Between Grandparents and Grandchildren," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65 (2003): 179.

⁶⁰ Marjorie A. Pett, Nancy Long, and Anita Gander, "Late-Life Divorce: Its Impact on Family Rituals," *Journal of Family Issues* 13 (1992): 526-552.

⁶¹ Her research was on children from families in affluent Marin County, near San Francisco.

⁶² As reported in David Larson, *The Costly Consequences of Divorce* (Rockville, MD: National Institute for Healthcare Research, 1995), 42.

anxiety.⁶³ Women whose parents divorce are likely to be hampered or even overwhelmed by anxiety when it comes time to make decisions about marriage,⁶⁴ though some “women with no ill effects from paternal divorce, may develop [the] security of friendship-based love quite well.”⁶⁵ One study linked parental divorce to lower relationship commitment and confidence in women but not in men.⁶⁶

Boys. While parental divorce affects the child’s view of marriage, girls may be less influenced in their attitudes towards divorce “because they have more role models of intimacy and marriage as the ideal in their environment than boys do, especially in the media.” By contrast, boys have fewer role models of intimacy outside of their families. Hence a father’s modeling of interpersonal skills is more important for boys.⁶⁷ Men from father-absent homes also experience less masculine sexual identification and more feminine sexual identification.⁶⁸

Men whose parents divorced are inclined to be simultaneously hostile and a “rescuer” of the women to whom they are attracted, rather than the more open, affectionate, cooperative partner, more frequently found among men raised by parents of an intact marriage.⁶⁹ By contrast, the problem of being overly meek or overly dominant is much more prevalent in the romantic relationships and marriages of the daughters of divorced families than it is among daughters of intact marriages.⁷⁰

⁶³ Susan E. Jacquet and Catherine A. Surra, “Parental Divorce and Premarital Couples: Commitment and Other Relationship Characteristics,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 635.

⁶⁴ Judith Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee, *Second Chances: Men, Women & Children a Decade After Divorce: Who Wins, Who Loses— and Why* (New York, NY: Ticknor & Fields, 1989; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), 297-307. Citations are to the Houghton Mifflin edition.

⁶⁵ Susan E. Jacquet and Catherine A. Surra, “Parental Divorce and Premarital Couples: Commitment and Other Relationship Characteristics,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 635.

⁶⁶ Sarah W. Whitton, Galena K. Rhoades, Scott M. Stanley, and Howard J. Markman, “Effects of Parental Divorce on Marital Commitment and Confidence,” *Journal of Family Psychology* 22 (2008): 791.

⁶⁷ Sharon C. Risch, Kathleen M. Jodl, and Jacquelynne S. Eccles, “Role of the Father-Adolescent Relationship in Shaping Adolescents’ Attitudes Toward Divorce,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 66 (2004): 55-56.

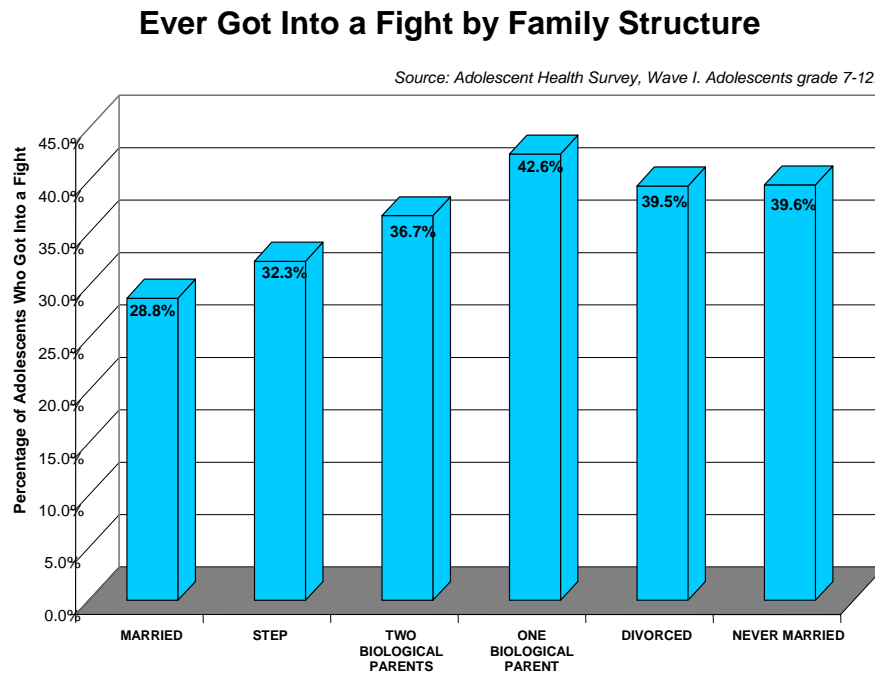
⁶⁸ Steven A. Kagel and Karen Maitland Schilling, “Sexual Identification and Gender Identity among Father-Absent Males,” *Sex Roles* 13 (1985): 357-370.

⁶⁹ Silvio Silvestri, “Marital Instability in Men from Intact and Divorced Families: Interpersonal Behavior, Cognitions and Intimacy,” *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 18 (1992): 79-106.

⁷⁰ Robert Bolgar, Hallie Zweig-Frank, and Joel Paris, “Childhood Antecedents of Interpersonal Problems in Young Adult Children of Divorce,” *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 34 (1995): 143-150.

F. Children's Weakened Ability to Handle Conflict

Divorce diminishes children's capacity to handle conflict. The difference between marriages that remain intact and those that end in divorce lies primarily in the couple's ability to handle marital conflict and move towards agreement. Parental modeling clearly diminishes many children's capacity for stable marriage later in life, though some children may react by doubling their efforts to ensure stability.



For instance, compared to students from intact families, college students from divorced families use violence more frequently to resolve conflict and are more likely to be aggressive and physically violent with their friends, male or female.⁷¹ In their own marriages, children of divorced parents are more likely to be unhappy, to escalate conflict, to communicate less, to argue frequently, and to shout or to physically assault their spouse when arguing.⁷² Thus, the likelihood of divorce is transmitted across generations.⁷³

⁷¹ Robert E. Billingham and Nicole L. Notebaert, "Divorce and Dating Violence Revisited: Multivariate Analyses Using Straus's Conflict Tactics Subscores," *Psychological Reports* 73 (1993): 679-684.

⁷² Pamela S. Webster, Terri L. Orbuch, and James S. House, "Effects of Childhood Family Background on Adult Marital Quality and Perceived Stability," *American Journal of Sociology* 101 (1995): 404-432.

⁷³ Researchers have found that the children of violent parents do better if their parents separate. However, if the parents' conflict is not violent or intense, their children fare better in their own marriages if their parents remain married. Obviously, the best solution for all concerned is that parents learn how to handle conflict and to cooperate with each other, thereby restoring family harmony.

G. Children's Diminished Social Skills

Social Skills. Gerald Patterson of the Oregon Social Learning Center concluded that “[p]oor social skills, characterized by aversive or coercive interaction styles, lead directly to rejection by normal peers.”⁷⁴ Fear of such peer rejection is twice as likely among adolescents of divorced parents.⁷⁵ Their social relations are likely to be damaged in several ways⁷⁶ and characterized by more problems relating to peers,⁷⁷ fewer childhood friends, and a greater tendency to complain about lack of peer support.⁷⁸ Kent State University faculty members conducted a major national study on the effects of divorce in 1987. The study found that, compared to children from intact families, children of divorced parents did worse when rated by both parents and teachers on peer relationships, hostility towards adults, anxiety, withdrawal, inattention, and aggression.⁷⁹

Psychological Behaviors. A variety of psychological outcomes are associated with parental divorce that lead to vulnerability in some children and resiliency in others.⁸⁰ According to one study, child antisocial behavior decreases after the dissolution of marriages in highly dysfunctional families,⁸¹ and “the higher the level of family dysfunction prior to divorce, the greater the reduction in child antisocial behavior after the divorce.”⁸² Nevertheless, children whose parents

⁷⁴ John M. Gottman and John T. Parkhurst, “A Developmental Theory of Friendship and Acquaintanceship Processes,” *Minnesota Symposium on Child Psychology* (1978). As cited in Gerald R. Patterson and Thomas J. Dishion, “Contributions of Families and Peers to Delinquency,” *Criminology* 23 (1985): 63–79.

⁷⁵ Dorothy Tysse Breen and Margaret Crosbie-Burnett, “Moral Dilemmas of Early Adolescents of Divorced and Intact Families: A Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis,” *Journal of Early Adolescence* 13 (1993) 168-182.

⁷⁶ Paul R. Amato, “Children of Divorce in the 1990s: An Update of the Amato and Keith (1991) Meta-Analysis,” *Journal of Family Psychology* 15 (2001): 355-375.

⁷⁷ David H. Demo and Alan C. Acock, “The Impact of Divorce on Children,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 50 (1988): 619-48.

⁷⁸ Sylvie Drapeau and Camil Bouchard, “Support networks and adjustment among 6 to 11 year-olds from maritally disrupted and intact families,” *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 19 (1993): 75-97. Daughters of divorced parents, in a University of Michigan study, had significantly greater difficulty in having and keeping friends and were more frequently depressed while at college. See Kristen M. McCabe, “Sex Differences in the Long-term Effects of Divorce on Children: Depression and Heterosexual Relationship Difficulties in the Young Adult Years,” *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 27 (1997): 123-134.

⁷⁹ John Guidubaldi, Joseph D. Perry and Bonnie K. Nastasi, “Growing Up in a Divorced Family: Initial and Long-term Perspectives on Children’s Adjustment,” *Applied Social Psychology Annual* 7 (1987): 202-237.

⁸⁰ Lisa Strohschein, “Parental Divorce and Child Mental Health Trajectories,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67 (2005): 1286.

⁸¹ Lisa Strohschein, “Parental Divorce and Child Mental Health Trajectories,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67 (2005): 1286.

⁸² Lisa Strohschein, “Parental Divorce and Child Mental Health Trajectories,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67 (2005): 1297.

divorce will exhibit more anxiety and depression and antisocial behavior than children from intact families.⁸³

Children who experience divorce at any age will continue to be affected their whole lives, tending to “exhibit higher malaise scores at age 33 than their contemporaries whose parents remained married.”⁸⁴

Behavioral Problems. Children of divorced or separated parents exhibit increased behavioral problems,⁸⁵ and the marital conflict that accompanies parents’ divorce places the child’s social competence at risk. Even in intact families that have low to medium levels of conflict, children still have “fewer behavior problems than those in the high-conflict, disrupted families.”⁸⁶ Another study suggests that parental conflict affects the outcomes of children’s behavior problems, regardless of parents’ marital status, and sometimes “there is no statistical difference in the level of behavior problems observed for children whose parents separated or divorced and for children whose parents remained together.”⁸⁷

During a divorce, conflict between parents is often accompanied by less affection, less responsiveness, and more inclination to punish their children, which leaves their children feeling emotionally insecure.⁸⁸ These children are more likely to perceive their social milieu as unpredictable and uncontrollable.⁸⁹ Children who engage in fighting and stealing at school are far more likely to come from broken homes than are well-behaved children.⁹⁰ Other studies have confirmed that children of divorced parents exhibit more behavioral problems than do children

⁸³ Lisa Strohschein, “Parental Divorce and Child Mental Health Trajectories,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67 (2005): 1286.

⁸⁴ Frank F. Furstenberg and Kathleen E. Kiernan, “Delayed Parental Divorce: How Much Do Children Benefit?” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 452.

⁸⁵ Donna Ruane Morrison and Mary Jo Coiro, “Parental Conflict and Marital Disruption: Do Children Benefit When High-Conflict Marriages Are Dissolved?” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61 (1999): 626.

⁸⁶ Donna Ruane Morrison and Mary Jo Coiro, “Parental Conflict and Marital Disruption: Do Children Benefit When High-Conflict Marriages Are Dissolved?” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61 (1999): 634.

⁸⁷ Donna Ruane Morrison and Mary Jo Coiro, “Parental Conflict and Marital Disruption: Do Children Benefit When High-Conflict Marriages Are Dissolved?” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61 (1999): 632.

⁸⁸ Patrick T. Davies and E. Mark Cummings, “Marital conflict and child adjustment: An emotional security hypothesis,” *Psychological Bulletin* 116 (1994): 387-411. As cited in Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, *A Generation at Risk*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 137.

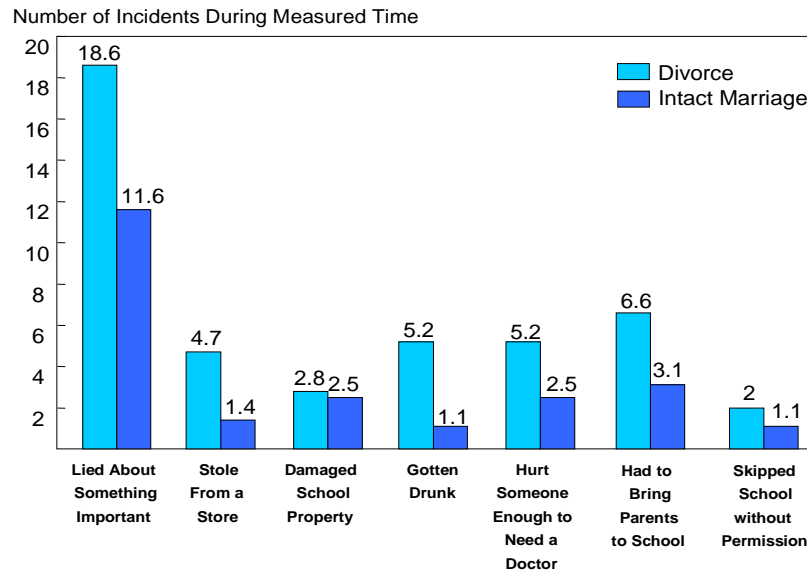
⁸⁹ Paul R. Amato, *Children in Australian Families: The Growth of Competence*, (Sydney: Prentice Hall of Australia, 1987). As cited in Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, *A Generation at Risk*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 137.

⁹⁰ Rex Forehand, “Family Characteristics of Adolescents Who Display Overt and Covert Behavior Problems,” *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry* 18 (1987): 325-328.

from intact families.⁹¹ Boys whose parents divorced while they were in elementary school tend to develop problems in the years following their parents' separation. While problem behavior increases immediately following the divorce among boys whose parents divorced while they were in middle school, their problem behavior steadily decreases in the year after the divorce.⁹²

Problem Behaviors of Children by Parents' Marital Status

National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1996



H. Children's Early Departure from Home

Children of divorced parents move away from their families of origin in greater proportions⁹³ and earlier⁹⁴ than do children of intact marriages due to low levels

⁹¹ Jeffrey J. Wood, Rena L. Repetti, and Scott C. Roesch, "Divorce and Children's Adjustment Problems at Home and School: The Role of Depressive/Withdrawn Parenting," *Child Psychiatry and Human Development* 35, no. 2 (2004): 131.

⁹² Patrick S. Malone, Jennifer E. Lansford, Domini R. Castellino, Lisa J. Berlin, Kenneth A. Dodge, John E. Bates, and Gregory S. Pettit, "Divorce and Child Behavior Problems: Applying Latent Change Score Models to Life Event Data," *Structural Equation Modeling* 11, no. 3 (2004): 417.

⁹³ Andrew J. Cherlin, Kathleen E. Kiernan, and P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, "Parental Divorce in Childhood and Demographic Outcomes in Young Adulthood," *Demography* 32 (1995): 299-316.

⁹⁴ William S. Aquilino, "The Likelihood of Parent-Adult Child Coresidence: Effects of Family Structure and Parental Characteristics," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 53 (1990): 13-27; William S. Aquilino, "Family Structure and Home-Leaving: A Further Specification of the Relationship," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53 (1991): 999-1010; Frances K. Goldscheider and Calvin Goldscheider, "Family Structure and Conflict: Nest-Leaving Expectations of Young Adults and Their Parents," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 51 (1989): 87-97; Frances K. Goldscheider and Calvin Goldscheider, *Leaving Home before Marriage* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); Teresa M. Cooney, "Young Adults' Relations With Parents: The Influence of Recent Parental Divorce," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 56 (1994): 45-56. As cited in Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, *A Generation at Risk* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 69-70.

of family cohesion and harmony.⁹⁵ The greater the unhappiness in their parents' marriage, the earlier children leave home to get married, cohabit, or live on their own.⁹⁶ Some children who experience marital disruption in adolescence may leave home "at such young ages that it resembles running away from home."⁹⁷

Furthermore, compared with children living in intact, two-parent families, runaway children with stepparents are only 70 percent as likely to return home.⁹⁸ Stepchildren are over 20 percent more likely to leave home earlier.⁹⁹ According to Frances K. Goldscheider and Calvin Goldscheider, "children whose families gained a stepparent while they were adolescents . . . increase their odds of leaving home to marry by about 100 percent."¹⁰⁰

I. Children's Sexual Practices and Attitudes as Adults

Attitudes toward Sexuality. When parents divorce, their children's attitudes about sexual behavior change. Children's approval of premarital sex, cohabitation, and divorce rises dramatically, while their endorsement of marriage and childbearing falls.¹⁰¹ Children from divorced families are also more likely to believe that marriage is not important prior to having children and are more likely to have a child out of wedlock. This holds true even after controlling for socioeconomic status.¹⁰² Furthermore, sexual permissiveness on the part of

⁹⁵ William S. Aquilino, "The Likelihood of Parent-Adult Child Coresidence: Effects of Family Structure and Parental Characteristics," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 53 (1990): 13-27; William S. Aquilino, "Family Structure and Home-Leaving: A Further Specification of the Relationship," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53 (1991): 999-1010; Kathleen Kiernan, "The Impact of Family Disruption in Childhood on Transitions Made in Young Adulthood," *Population Studies* 46 (1992): 218-234; Lynn K. White and Alan Booth, "The Quality and Stability of Marriage: The Role of Stepchildren," *American Sociological Review* 50 (1985): 689-698. As cited in Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, *A Generation at Risk* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 70.

⁹⁶ Mary Ann Powell and Toby L. Parcel, "Effects of Family Structure on the Earnings Attainment Process: Differences by Gender," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 59 (1997): 421. Kathleen E. Kiernan, "Teenage Marriage and Marital Breakdown: A Longitudinal Study," *Population Studies* 40 (1986): 35.

⁹⁷ Frances K. Goldscheider and Calvin Goldscheider, "The Effects of Childhood Family Structure on Leaving and Returning Home," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60, no. 3 (1998): 755.

⁹⁸ Frances K. Goldscheider and Calvin Goldscheider, "The Effects of Childhood Family Structure on Leaving and Returning Home," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60, no. 3 (1998): 753.

⁹⁹ Frances K. Goldscheider and Calvin Goldscheider, "The Effects of Childhood Family Structure on Leaving and Returning Home," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60, no. 3 (1998): 751.

¹⁰⁰ Frances K. Goldscheider and Calvin Goldscheider, "The Effects of Childhood Family Structure on Leaving and Returning Home," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60, no. 3 (1998): 754.

¹⁰¹ William G. Axinn and Arland Thornton, "The Influence of Parents' Marital Dissolutions on Children's Attitudes toward Family Formation," *Demography* 33 (1996): 66-81.

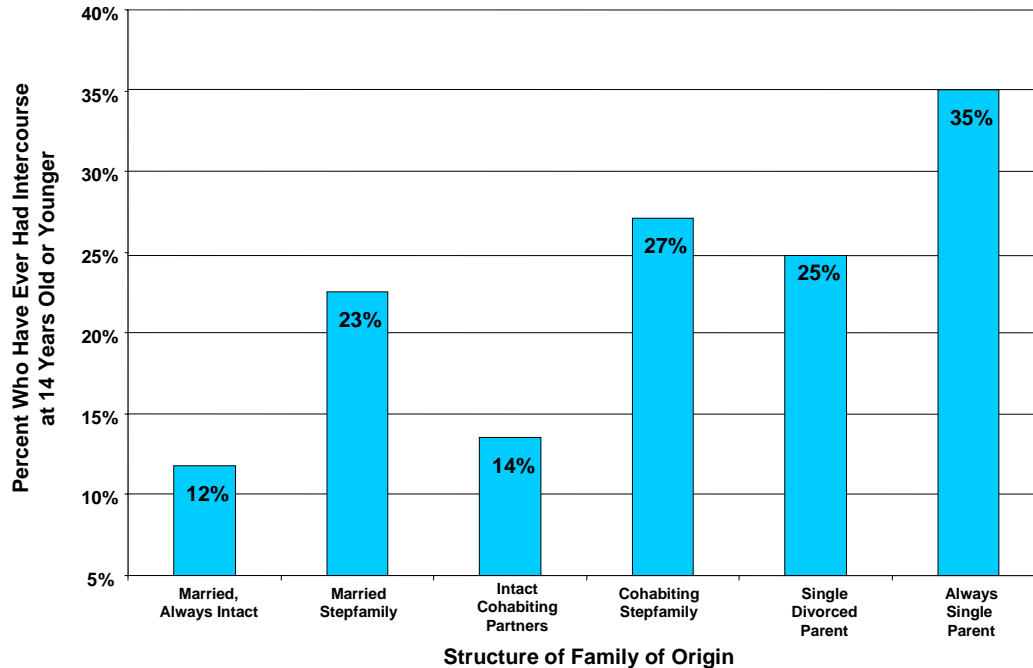
William H. Jaynes, "The Effects of Recent Parental Divorce on Their Children's Sexual Attitudes and Behavior," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 35 (2001): 125.

¹⁰² William H. Jaynes, "The Effects of Recent Parental Divorce on Their Children's Sexual Attitudes and Behavior," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 35 (2001): 125.

divorced parents significantly increases permissive attitudes and behavior in both their sons and daughters.¹⁰³

"Ever Had Intercourse at 14 Years of Age or Younger"

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)



Scott Talkington, Ph.D.

MARRIAGE AND RELIGION RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Children from divorced families have an earlier sexual debut than children from intact families.¹⁰⁴ American¹⁰⁵ and British¹⁰⁶ studies repeatedly show that daughters of divorced parents will be more likely to approve of premarital sexual intercourse¹⁰⁷ and teen sexual activity¹⁰⁸ and to engage in early sexual intercourse

¹⁰³ Les B. Whitbeck, Ronald L Simons, and Meei-Ying Kao, "The Effects of Divorced Mother's Dating Behaviors and Sexual Attitudes on the Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors of Their Adolescent Children," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 56 (1994): 615-621. As cited in Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, *To Have and To Hold: Strategies to Strengthen Marriage and Relationships* (Canberra, Australia: Parliament of Australia, 1998), 36.

¹⁰⁴ Fridrik H. Jónsson, Urdur Njardvik, Gudlaug Ólafsdóttir, and Sigurdur J. Grétarsson, "Parental Divorce: Long-term Effects on Mental Health, Family Relations, and Adult Sexual Behavior," *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* 41 (2000): 103.

¹⁰⁵ E. Mavis Hetherington, Martha Cox, and Roger Cox, "Long-term Effects of Divorce and Remarriage on the Adjustment of Children," *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry* 24 (1985): 518-530.

Kinnaird and Gerrard (1986). As cited in David Larson, *The Costly Consequences of Divorce* (Rockville, MD: National Institute for Healthcare Research, 1995), 165.

¹⁰⁶ Kathleen E. Kiernan, "The Impact of Family Disruptions in Childhood on Transitions Made in Young Adult Life," *Population Studies* 46 (1992): 213-234.

¹⁰⁷ William G. Axinn and Arland Thornton, "The Influence of Parents' Marital Dissolution on Children's Attitudes toward Family Formation," *Demography* 33 (1996): 66-81.

outside of marriage.¹⁰⁹ The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth reports that African-American girls are 42 percent less likely to have sexual intercourse before age 18 if their biological father is present at home.¹¹⁰ By contrast, the presence of a stepfather increases by 72 percent the likelihood of sexual intercourse before age 18 for Latino girls.¹¹¹

In addition to an increased likelihood of being sexually active, girls from divorced families are more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior, to have more frequent sexual intercourse, and to have more sexual partners.¹¹² In a study comparing girls from New Zealand and the United States, researchers found that the earlier a father leaves the home, the higher his daughter's risk of early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy. In the United States, girls whose fathers had left before their daughters were five years old were eight times more likely to become pregnant while adolescents than were girls whose fathers remained in the home.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Arland Thornton, and Donald Camburn, "The Influence of the Family on Premarital Sexual Attitudes and Behavior," *Demography* 24 (1987): 323-340.

¹⁰⁹ Arland Thornton and Donald Camburn, "The Influence of the Family on Premarital Sexual Attitudes and Behavior," *Demography* 24 (1987): 329-337; these findings hold regardless of ethnic background.

Carolyn A. Smith, "Factors Associated with Early Sexual Activity Among Urban Adolescents," *Social Work* 42 (1997): 334-346.

Kathleen E. Kiernan and John Hobcraft, "Parental Divorce during Childhood: Age at First Intercourse, Partnership and Parenthood," *Population Studies* 51 (1997): 41-55.

Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr. and Julien O. Teitler, "Reconsidering the Effects of Marital Disruption: What Happens to Children of Divorce in Early Adulthood?" *Journal of Family Issues* 15 (1994): 179.

¹¹⁰ Robert Day, "The Transition to First Intercourse among Racially and Culturally Diverse Youth," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 54 (1992): 749-762.

¹¹¹ Robert Day, "The Transition to First Intercourse among Racially and Culturally Diverse Youth," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 54 (1992): 749-762.

¹¹² Anthony Biglan, Carol W. Metzler, Roger Wirt, Dennis Ary, John Noell, Linda Ochs, Christine French and Don Hood, "Social and behavioral factors associated with high-risk sexual behavior among adolescents," *Journal of Behavioral Medicine* 13 (1990): 245-261; John O. G. Billy, Karin L. Brewster and William R. Grady, "Contextual effects of the sexual behavior of adolescent women," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 56 (1994): 387-404; Bruce J. Ellis, John E. Bates, Kenneth A. Dodge, David M. Fergusson, L. John Horwood, Gregory S. Pettit, and Lianne Woodward, "Does father absence place daughters at special risk for early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy?" *Child Development* 74 (2003): 801-821; Robert L. Flewelling and Karl E. Bauman, "Family structure as a predictor of initial substance use and sexual intercourse in early adolescence," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 52 (1990): 171-181; Laurie L. Meschke, Janine M. Zweig, Bonnie L. Barber, and Jacquelynne S. Eccles, "Demographic, biological, social, and psychological correlates of the timing of first intercourse," *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 10 (2000): 315-338; Ronald L. Simons and Associates, *Understanding differences between divorced and intact families* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996). As cited in Jenifer K. McGuire and Bonnie L. Barber, "A Person-Centered Approach to the Multifaceted Nature of Young Adult Sexual Behavior," *Journal of Sex Research* 47, no. 4 (2010): 308, 310.

¹¹³ Bruce J. Ellis, John E. Bates, Kenneth A. Dodge, David M. Fergusson, L. John Horwood, Gregory S. Pettit, and Lianne Woodward, "Does Father Absence Place Daughters at Special

For sons, parental divorce is correlated with adolescent sexual intercourse, earlier sexual debut,¹¹⁴ and the acquisition of a sexually transmitted disease.¹¹⁵ Other studies have confirmed that male children of divorce have more relationships and more sexual partners than young men from intact families.¹¹⁶

The influences of divorce on sexual behavior extends into adulthood: Adults raised in divorced families are more likely to engage in short sexual affairs and also have more sexual partners than adults from intact families.¹¹⁷

Sexual Behaviors. Virginity among teenagers of all ages correlates closely with the presence of married parents.¹¹⁸ Each change in family structure during adolescence (from married to divorced, from single to married, or from divorced to stepfamily) increases the risk of initiation of sexual intercourse for many of the teenage children in these unions.¹¹⁹

The children of divorce date more and thus have a higher turnover of dating partners and more failed romantic relationships,¹²⁰ may contribute to a larger number of sexual partners,¹²¹ a risk factor for the acquisition of sexually transmitted diseases¹²² and a host of emotional repercussions. Even without the

Risk for Early Sexual Activity and Teenage Pregnancy?" *Child Development* 74, no. 3 (2003): 810-811.

¹¹⁴ Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr. and Julien O. Teitler, "Reconsidering the Effects of Marital Disruption: What Happens to Children of Divorce in Early Adulthood?" *Journal of Family Issues* 15 (1994): 173-190.

¹¹⁵ Robert F. Anda, Daniel P. Chapman, Vincent J. Felitti, Valerie Edwards, David F. Williamson, Janet B. Croft, and Wayne H. Giles, "Adverse Childhood Experiences and Risk of Paternity in Teen Pregnancy," *Obstetrics and Gynecology* 100 (2002): 37-45.

¹¹⁶ Ed Spruijt and Vincent Duindam, "Problem Behavior of Boys and Young Men after Parental Divorce in the Netherlands," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 34, no. 3/4 (2005): 150.

¹¹⁷ Fridrik H. Jónsson, Urdur Njardvik, Gudlaug Ólafsdóttir, and Sigurdur J. Grétarsson, "Parental Divorce: Long-term Effects on Mental Health, Family Relations, and Adult Sexual Behavior," *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* 41 (2000): 103.

¹¹⁸ Deborah M. Capaldi, Lynn Crosby, and Mike Stoolmiller, "Predicting the Timing of First Sexual Intercourse for At-Risk Adolescent Males," *Child Development* 67 (1996): 344-359.

¹¹⁹ Chris Albrecht and Jay D. Teachman, "Childhood Living Arrangements and the Risk of Premarital Intercourse," *Journal of Family Issues* 24 (2003): 867-894.
Robert J. Quinlan, "Father Absence, Parental Care, and Female Reproductive Development," *Evolution and Human Behavior* 24 (2003): 376-390.

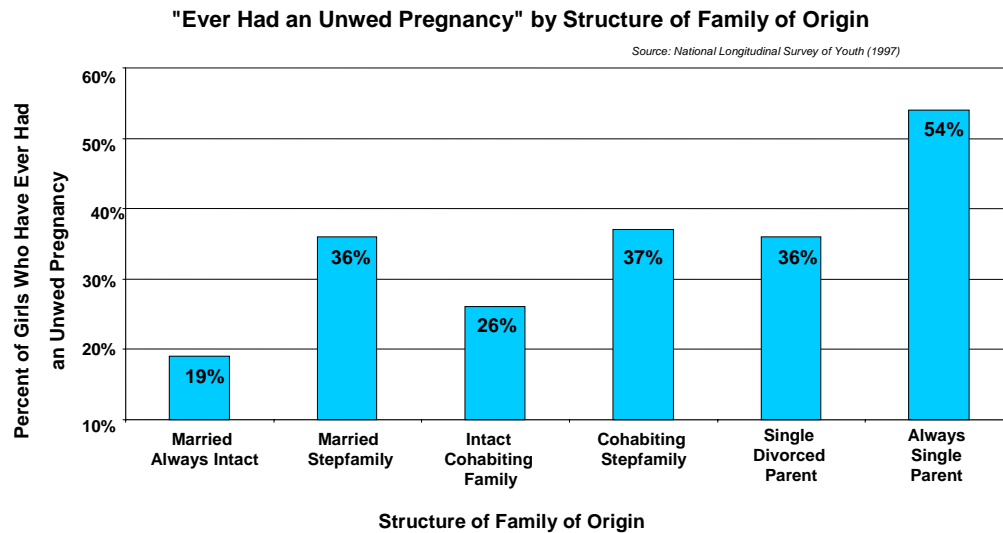
¹²⁰ Medical Institute for Sexual Health, *Sexual Health Today* (Austin, TX: Medical Institute of Sexual Health, 1997), 105.

¹²¹ Alan Booth, David B. Brinkerhoff, and Lynn K. White, "The Impact of Parental Divorce on Courtship," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 46 (1984): 85-94; Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr. and Julien O. Teitler, "Reconsidering the Effects of Marital Disruption: What Happens to Children of Divorce in Early Adulthood?" *Journal of Family Issues* 15 (1994): 173-190; Susan Newcomer and J. Richard Udry, "Parental Marital Status Effects on Adolescent Sexual Behavior," 49 (1987): 235-240. As cited in Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, *A Generation at Risk*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

¹²² Thomas R. Eng and William T. Butler, eds., *The Hidden Epidemic*, The Institute of Medicine (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1997), chapters 3 and 4, 69-174.

addition of a working mother, divorce leads to an above-average number of sexual partners for the children of divorce as adults.¹²³

Following a divorce, most mothers have to work full-time. This combination of divorce and a full-time working mother leads to the highest level of teenage sexual activity¹²⁴ and is significantly correlated with multiple sexual partners in adult life.¹²⁵



Scott Talkington, Ph.D.

Pregnancy. Women whose parents separated during childhood are more likely to have an out-of-wedlock teenage pregnancy,¹²⁶ and men with divorced or separated parents are more likely to father a child with a teenage mother.¹²⁷ In

¹²³ Robert J. Quinlan, "Father Absence, Parental Care, and Female Reproductive Development," *Evolution and Human Behavior* 24 (2003): 376-390.

¹²⁴ John O. G. Billy (1994). As cited in David Larson, *The Costly Consequences of Divorce* (Rockville, MD: National Institute for Healthcare Research, 1995), 131.

¹²⁵ Seidman, Mosher, and Aral (1994). As cited in David Larson, *The Costly Consequences of Divorce* (Rockville, MD: National Institute for Healthcare Research, 1995), 131.

¹²⁶ Robert J. Quinlan, "Father Absence, Parental Care, and Female Reproductive Development," *Evolution and Human Behavior* 24 (2003): 376-390.

Kathleen E. Kiernan and John Hobcraft, "Parental Divorce during Childhood: Age at First Intercourse, Partnership and Parenthood," *Population Studies* 51 (1997): 41-55.

Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr. and Julien O. Teitler, "Reconsidering the Effects of Marital Disruption: What Happens to Children of Divorce in Early Adulthood?" *Journal of Family Issues* 15 (1994): 173-190.

Sara McLanahan and Larry Bumpass, "Intergenerational Consequences of Family Disruption," *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988): 130-152.

¹²⁷ Robert F. Anda, Daniel P. Chapman, Vincent J. Felitti, Valerie Edwards, David F. Williamson, Janet B. Croft, and Wayne H. Giles, "Adverse Childhood Experiences and Risk of Paternity in Teen Pregnancy," *Obstetrics and Gynecology* 100 (2002): 37-45.

Britain, the phenomenon of out-of-wedlock pregnancy to children of divorced parents has also been found.¹²⁸

Abortion. Daughters of divorced parents have more abortions than the daughters of non-divorced parents, according to a Finnish study.¹²⁹

J. Children's Increased Trouble in Romantic Relationships

Trust in Relationships. Parental divorce often leads to low trust among children,¹³⁰ and those who casually date exhibit “the strongest effects of parental divorce, suggesting that the repercussions of parental divorce may be in place before the young adults form their own romantic relationships.”¹³¹ The divorce of their parents makes dating and romance more difficult for children as they reach adulthood. Parental divorce horrifies young adults' heterosexual relationship experiences though the connection is more evident for women than for men, according to one study.¹³²

The effects carry into adulthood. When compared with women from intact families, women from divorced families also reported less trust and satisfaction in romantic relationships.¹³³ Children of divorced parents fear being rejected, and a lack of trust frequently hinders a deepening of their relationship.¹³⁴ One study showed that individuals whose parents divorced were more likely than individuals whose parents remained married to believe that relationships were beset by infidelity and the absence of trust, and they were also more likely to believe that relationships should be approached with caution.¹³⁵

¹²⁸ Andrew J. Cherlin, Kathleen E. Kiernan, and P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, “Parental Divorce in Childhood and Demographic Outcomes in Young Adulthood,” *Demography* 32 (1995): 299-316.

¹²⁹ Hillevi M. Aro and Ulla K. Palosaari, “Parental Divorce, Adolescence, and Transition to Young Adulthood: A Follow-up Study,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 63 (1992): 425.

¹³⁰ Susan E. Jacquet and Catherine A. Surra, “Parental Divorce and Premarital Couples: Commitment and Other Relationship Characteristics,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 627-638.

¹³¹ Susan E. Jacquet and Catherine A. Surra, “Parental Divorce and Premarital Couples: Commitment and Other Relationship Characteristics,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 627.

¹³² Susan E. Jacquet and Catherine A. Surra, “Parental Divorce and Premarital Couples: Commitment and Other Relationship Characteristics,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 634.

¹³³ Susan E. Jacquet and Catherine A. Surra, “Parental Divorce and Premarital Couples: Commitment and Other Relationship Characteristics,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 627.

¹³⁴ Stacy Glaser Johnston and Amanda McCombs Thomas, “Divorce versus Intact Parental Marriage and Perceived Risk and Dyadic Trust in Present Heterosexual Relationships,” *Psychological Reports* 78 (1996): 387-390.

¹³⁵ Daniel J. Weigel, “Parental Divorce and the Types of Commitment-Related Messages People Gain from Their Families of Origin,” *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 47 (2007): 23.

General Attitudes toward Marriage. One study reported that persons raised in divorced families have less positive attitudes towards marriage, and more positive attitudes towards divorce. This negative attitude about marriage leads to decreased commitment to romantic relationships, which in turn is related to lower relationship quality.¹³⁶ In Sweden, where parental rejection is very high, no significant differences were found between individuals from divorced and intact families in their attitudes towards marriage and divorce.¹³⁷ Thus the more common divorce and rejection is among adults, the more the attitudes and expectations of rejection are mainstreamed among children, even those raised in intact married families.

Adult male children of divorced parents show more ambivalence than men from intact families about becoming involved in a relationship,¹³⁸ though they invest more money and tangible goods in casual dating relationships. Women share this ambivalence and demonstrate even more conflict, doubt, and lack of faith in their partner's benevolence and tend to place less value on consistent commitment.¹³⁹ Unwed teen mothers, who have expectations of rejection and divorce in relationships, seem to retain negative attitudes towards men instilled by their parents' divorce.¹⁴⁰

Attitudes about Divorce and Marriage. Compared with children of always-married parents, children of divorced parents have more positive attitudes towards divorce¹⁴¹ and less favorable attitudes towards marriage.¹⁴² Specifically, "adolescents who have experienced their parents' divorces and remarriages may feel that marriage is unpredictable and unstable."¹⁴³ People raised in divorced families are less likely than those from intact families to believe that marriage is

¹³⁶ Ming Cui and Frank D. Fincham, "The Differential Effects of Parental Divorce and Marital Conflict on Young Adult Romantic Relationships," *Personal Relationships* 17 (2010): 340.

¹³⁷ Fridrik H. Jónsson, Urdur Njardvik, Gudlaug Ólafsdóttir, and Sigurdur J. Grétarsson, "Parental Divorce: Long-term Effects on Mental Health, Family Relations, and Adult Sexual Behavior," *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* 41 (2000): 103.

¹³⁸ Susan E. Jacquet and Catherine A. Surra, "Parental Divorce and Premarital Couples: Commitment and Other Relationship Characteristics," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 633.

¹³⁹ Susan E. Jacquet and Catherine A. Surra, "Parental Divorce and Premarital Couples: Commitment and Other Relationship Characteristics," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 627-638.

¹⁴⁰ Stephanie Schamess, "The Search for Love: Unmarried Adolescent Mothers' Views of and Relationships with Men," *Adolescence* 28 (1993): 425-437.

¹⁴¹ Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, "The Consequences of Divorce for Attitudes toward Divorce and Gender Roles," *Journal of Family Issues* 12 (1991): 306-322.

¹⁴² A. Marlene Jennings, Connie J. Salts, and Thomas A. Smith, Jr., "Attitudes Toward Marriage: Effects of Parental Conflict, Family Structure, and Gender," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 17 (1992): 67-78.

¹⁴³ Sharon C. Risch, Kathleen M. Jodl, and Jacquelynne S. Eccles, "Role of the Father-Adolescent Relationship in Shaping Adolescents' Attitudes Toward Divorce," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 66 (2004): 55.

enduring and permanent,¹⁴⁴ are less likely to insist upon a lifelong marital commitment,¹⁴⁵ and are less likely to think positively of themselves as parents.¹⁴⁶

These attitudinal differences among children of divorced parents are noticeable even as early as kindergarten.¹⁴⁷ Children from divorced families are more tolerant of divorce than are children from intact families, though this is only likely if their parents had remarried. Without remarriage, the effect on their views of divorce was not significant.¹⁴⁸ The mothers' accepting attitudes toward divorce causes more children to be accepting of divorce themselves.¹⁴⁹ These positive attitudes towards divorce affect not only likelihood of divorce, but also overall relationship quality.

After controlling for age, high levels of post-divorce interparental conflict are associated with less positive views of marriage among adolescents.¹⁵⁰ One study of adolescents after a parental divorce reported that many children fear that their future marriages will lack love, trust, or communication, and that they will be beset by infidelity, conflict, or abuse. They also worry that their marriages will fail or that their spouse will abandon them,¹⁵¹ a finding common to another study published that year (2008).¹⁵²

In her study of children of divorced parents from Marin County, California, Judith Wallerstein found that the children of divorced parents still had persistent anxiety about their chances of a happy marriage a decade after their parents' divorce. This anxiety interfered with their ability to marry well: Some failed to form satisfying romantic ties, while others rushed impulsively into unhappy

¹⁴⁴ Daniel J. Weigel, "Parental Divorce and the Types of Commitment-Related Messages People Gain from Their Families of Origin," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 47 (2007): 23.

¹⁴⁵ Kristen A. Moore and Thomas M. Stief, "Changes in Marriage and Fertility Behavior: Behavior versus Attitudes of Young Adults" (Child Trends, Inc., July 1989).

¹⁴⁶ Jennifer Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Colleen Dostal, "Retrospective Reports of Family-of-Origin Divorce and Abuse and College Students' Pre-parenthood Cognitions," *Journal of Family Violence* 11 (1996): 331-348.

¹⁴⁷ Elizabeth Mazur, "Developmental Differences in Children's Understanding of Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage," *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 14 (1993): 191-212.

¹⁴⁸ Mick Cunningham and Arland Thornton, "The Influences of Parents' and Offsprings' Experience with Cohabitation, Marriage, and Divorce on Attitudes toward Divorce in Young Adulthood," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 44, no. 1/2 (2005): 131.

¹⁴⁹ Mick Cunningham and Arland Thornton, "The Influences of Parents' and Offsprings' Experience with Cohabitation, Marriage, and Divorce on Attitudes Toward Divorce in Young Adulthood," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 44, no. 1 (2005): 119-144.

¹⁵⁰ Renée Peltz Dennison and Susan Silverberg Koerner, "Post-Divorce Interparental Conflict and Adolescents' Attitudes About Marriage," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 45, no. 1 (2006): 40.

¹⁵¹ Renée Peltz Dennison and Susan Silverberg Koerner, "A Look at Hopes and Worries about Marriage: The Views of Adolescents Following a Parental Divorce," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 48, no. 3/4 (2008): 98.

¹⁵² Heidi R. Riggio and Dana A. Weiser, "Attitudes toward Marriage: Embeddedness and Outcomes in Personal Relationships," *Personal Relationships* 15 (2008): 134.

marriages.¹⁵³ The evidence shows that “adult children of divorce who eventually wed are more likely to divorce than are adult children from intact families.”¹⁵⁴

Expectations to Marry or Divorce. The children of divorced parents, stepfamilies, or single parents are less likely to expect to marry.¹⁵⁵ Children who have experienced parental divorce are more likely to expect to divorce, compared with children of intact families.¹⁵⁶ Children of divorce also have more negative attitudes towards marriage¹⁵⁷ and a preference for smaller family sizes, although the negative attitudes are mitigated by their parents’ remarriage.¹⁵⁸

Likelihood to Marry or Divorce. Clearly, one generation passes on its marital instability to the next.¹⁵⁹ Sons of divorced parents with less educated mothers have an increased tendency to forgo marriage.¹⁶⁰ Additionally, parental divorce

¹⁵³ Judith Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee, *Second Chances: Men, Women & Children a Decade after Divorce: Who Wins, Who Loses— and Why* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1989; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), 169-172. Citations are to the Houghton Mifflin edition.

¹⁵⁴ Susan E. Jacquet and Catherine A. Surra, “Parental Divorce and Premarital Couples: Commitment and Other Relationship Characteristics,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 636.

¹⁵⁵ Paul R. Amato, “Parental divorce and attitudes toward marriage and family life,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 50 (1988): 453-461; William G. Axinn and Arland Thornton, “The influence of parents’ marital dissolutions on children’s attitudes toward family formation,” *Demography* 33 (1996): 66-81; Sarah R. Crissey, “Race/ethnic differences in the marital expectations of adolescents: The role of romantic relationships,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67 (2005): 697-709; Fiona L. Tasker and Martin P. M. Richards, “Adolescents’ attitudes toward marriage and marital prospects after parental divorce: A review,” *Journal of Adolescent Research* 9 (1994): 340-362. As cited in Wendy D. Manning, Monica A. Longmore, and Peggy C. Giordano, “The Changing Institution of Marriage: Adolescents’ Expectation to Cohabit and to Marry,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69 (2007): 559-575.

¹⁵⁶ Patrick F. Fagan and Robert Rector, “The Effects of Divorce on America,” *Backgrounders* 1373 (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 5 June 2000).

¹⁵⁷ William G. Axinn and Arland Thornton, “The Influence of Parents’ Marital Dissolutions on Children’s Attitudes Toward Family Formation,” *Demography* 33 (1996): 73.

¹⁵⁸ William G. Axinn and Arland Thornton, “The Influence of Parents’ Marital Dissolutions on Children’s Attitudes Toward Family Formation,” *Demography* 33 (1996): 73.

¹⁵⁹ Larry L. Bumpass, Teresa Castro Martin, and James A. Sweet, “The Impact of Family Background and Early Marital Factors on Marital Disruption,” *Journal of Family Issues* 12 (1991): 22-42; Verna M. Keith and Barbara Finlay, “The Impact of Parental Divorce on Children’s Educational Attainment, Marital Timing, and Likelihood of Divorce,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 50 (1988): 797-809; Richard A. Kulka and Helen Weingarten, “The Long-term Effects of Parental Divorce in Childhood on Adult Adjustment,” *Journal of Social Issues* 35 (1979): 50-78; Charles W. Mueller and Hallowell Pope, “Marital Instability: A Study of Its Transmission between Generations,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 39 (1977): 83-93; Hallowell Pope and Charles W. Mueller, “The Intergenerational Transmission of Marital Instability: Comparisons by Race and Sex,” *Journal of Social Issues* 32 (1976): 49-66. All as cited in Paul Amato, “Explaining the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 58 (1996): 628.

¹⁶⁰ Verna M. Keith and Barbara Finlay, “The Impact of Parental Divorce on Children’s Educational Attainment, Marital Timing, and Likelihood of Divorce,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 50 (1988): 804.

raises children's likelihood of divorce:¹⁶¹ Children who have experienced parental divorce are more than twice as likely to divorce, compared with children of intact families.¹⁶² One study found that adults who experience parental divorce have chances of divorce 38 percent higher than adults raised in intact families. Significantly, this increase is not seen in children whose parents' marriage ended because of the death of one of the parents.¹⁶³

Children of divorce are 39 percent more likely to marry other children of divorce, after controlling for education. Couples with one spouse from a divorced home are nearly twice as likely to divorce as couples with both spouses from non-divorced families. Worse still, couples with *both* spouses from divorced families over three times more likely to divorce than couples with both spouses from non-divorced families.¹⁶⁴

Children who experience three or more transitions in family structure are much more likely to divorce later in life, compared to children who did not experience such family transitions.¹⁶⁵ That is, 59 percent of the individuals who have never

¹⁶¹ Jay D. Teachman, "Childhood Living Arrangements and the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64 (2002): 717-729.

Nicholas H. Wolfinger, "Beyond the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce: Do People Replicate the Patterns of Marital Instability They Grew Up With?" *Journal of Family Issues* 21 (2000): 1061-1086.

Joan S. Tucker, Howard S. Friedman, Joseph E. Schwartz, Michel H. Criqui, Carol Tomlinson-Keasey, Deborah L. Wingard, and Leslie R. Martin, "Parental Divorce: Effects on Individual Behavior and Longevity," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 73 (1997): 385-386.

Paul R. Amato, "Explaining the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 58 (1996): 628-640.

Verna M. Keith and Barbara Finlay, "The Impact of Parental Divorce on Children's Educational Attainment, Marital Timing, and Likelihood of Divorce," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 50 (1988): 797-809.

Norval D. Glenn and Kathryn B. Kramer, "The Marriages and Divorces of the Children of Divorce," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 49 (1987): 811-825.

Sara McLanahan and Larry Bumpass, "Intergenerational Consequences of Family Disruption," *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988): 130-152.

Paul R. Amato and Brian Keith, "Parental Divorce and Adult Well-being: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 53 (1991): 43-58.

Paul R. Amato and Danelle D. DeBoer, "The Transmission of Marital Instability across Generations: Relationship Skills or Commitment to Marriage?" *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 63 (2001): 1054.

¹⁶² Pamela S. Webster, Terri L. Orbuch, and James S. House, "Effects of Childhood Family Background on Adult Marital Quality and Perceived Stability," *American Journal of Sociology* 101 (1995): 404-432.

¹⁶³ Jay D. Teachman, "Childhood Living Arrangements and the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 64 (2002): 722.

¹⁶⁴ Nicholas H. Wolfinger, "Family Structure Homogamy: The Effects of Parental Divorce on Partner Selection and Marital Stability," *Social Science Research* 32 (2003): 91-92.

¹⁶⁵ Nicholas H. Wolfinger, "Beyond the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce: Do People Replicate the Patterns of Marital Instability They Grew Up With?" *Journal of Family Issues* 21, no. 8 (2000): 1074.

experienced a transition are predicted to never end a marriage, compared to those who experienced three or more transitions, whose likelihood to never divorce is about 33 percent.¹⁶⁶

Daughters of divorced parents divorce more than sons of divorced parents do.¹⁶⁷ The risk of divorce in the first five years is 70¹⁶⁸ to 76¹⁶⁹ percent higher for the daughters of divorced parents than for daughters of intact marriages.¹⁷⁰

Marital Behaviors. Parental divorce is also associated with lower marital quality for their children. This manifests itself in arguing more about the family,¹⁷¹ increased rates of jealousy, moodiness, infidelity, conflicts over money, excessive drinking, and drug use.¹⁷² Analysis of the 1987-1988 wave of the National Survey of Families and Households showed that children of divorce whose marriages were less than “very happy” communicated less and were more than twice as likely to argue frequently and to shout and hit when they argued.¹⁷³

The child with an available father, both in the early and the adolescent years, is more companionable and responsible as an adult.¹⁷⁴ In particular, “boys who feel close to their fathers, regardless of biological status, have better attitudes about intimacy and the prospect of their own married lives than boys who do not feel close to their fathers.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁶ Nicholas H. Wolfinger, “Beyond the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce: Do People Replicate the Patterns of Marital Instability They Grew Up With?” *Journal of Family Issues* 21, no. 8 (2000): 1075.

¹⁶⁷ Norval D. Glenn and Kathryn B. Kramer, “The Marriages and Divorces of the Children of Divorce,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 49 (1987): 811-825.

¹⁶⁸ Paul R. Amato, “Explaining the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 58 (1996): 628.

¹⁶⁹ Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, *A Generation at Risk* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 115.

¹⁷⁰ According to Amato and Booth’s research, the risk is highest when the divorce takes place before the child reaches age 13. The risk that the child will divorce decreases significantly when their parents’ divorce takes place during the teen years. Finally, parental divorce when their offspring are in their twenties may even inoculate them against divorce. See Paul Amato, “Explaining the Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 58 (1996): 638.

¹⁷¹ Susan G. Timmer and Joseph Veroff, “Family Ties and the Discontinuity of Divorce in Black and White Newlywed Couples,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62 (2000): 349-361.

¹⁷² Paul R. Amato and Stacy Rogers, “A Longitudinal Study of Marital Problems and Subsequent Divorce,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 59 (1997): 621.

¹⁷³ Pamela S. Webster, Terri L. Orbuch, and James S. House, “Effects of Childhood Family Background on Adult Marital Quality and Perceived Stability,” *American Journal of Sociology* 101 (1995): 404-432.

¹⁷⁴ John Snarey, *How Fathers Care for the Next Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 163-164.

¹⁷⁵ Sharon C. Risch, Kathleen M. Jodl, and Jacquelynne S. Eccles, “Role of the Father-Adolescent Relationship in Shaping Adolescents’ Attitudes Toward Divorce,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 66 (2004): 55.

K. Increased Cohabitation among Children as Adults

Children of divorced parents are more likely than children of always-married parents to have more positive attitudes towards cohabitation¹⁷⁶ and more negative attitudes towards marriage.¹⁷⁷ When they leave home, they are two to three times as likely to cohabit¹⁷⁸ and to do so earlier,¹⁷⁹ especially if their parents divorced during their teenage years.¹⁸⁰

Daughters of divorced parents anticipated cohabiting before marriage, regardless of the amount of affection between them and their fathers. Among daughters of intact marriages, it was mainly those with poor relationships with their fathers who anticipated they would cohabit.¹⁸¹

II. Effects on Religious Practice: Diminished Faithfulness

Following a divorce, children are more likely to abandon their faith,¹⁸² and they may be less traditional themselves, with a parental model differing from a lifelong commitment to marriage.¹⁸³ Adult offspring raised in stepfamilies are less religious

¹⁷⁶ William G. Axinn and Arland Thornton, "The Influence of Parents' Marital Dissolutions on Children's Attitudes Toward Family Formation," *Demography* 33 (1996) 66-81.

Suzanne Southworth and J. Conrad Schwarz, "Post-Divorce Contact, Relationship with Father, and Heterosexual Trust in Female College Students," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 57 (1987): 379-381.

¹⁷⁷ William G. Axinn and Arland Thornton, "The Influence of Parents' Marital Dissolutions on Children's Attitudes toward Family Formation," *Demography* 33 (1996): 66-81.

¹⁷⁸ Daniel T. Lichter, Deborah Roempke Graefe, and J. Brian Brown, "Is Marriage a Panacea? Union Formation among Economically Disadvantaged Unwed Mothers," *Social Problems* 50 (2003): 60-86.

Rebecca A. Colman and Cathy Spatz Widom, "Childhood Abuse and Adult Intimate Relationships: A Prospective Study," *Child Abuse and Neglect* 28 (2004): 1133-1151.

Jay D. Teachman, "The Childhood Living Arrangement of Children and the Characteristics of Their Marriages," *Journal of Family Issues* 25 (2004): 86-111.

¹⁷⁹ Andrew J. Cherlin, Kathleen E. Kiernan, and P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, "Parental Divorce in Childhood and Demographic Outcomes in Young Adulthood," *Demography* 32 (1995): 299-316.

¹⁸⁰ Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, *A Generation at Risk* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 112.

¹⁸¹ Suzanne Southworth and J. Conrad Schwarz, "Post-Divorce Contact, Relationship with Father, and Heterosexual Trust in Female College Students," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 57 (1987): 379-381.

¹⁸² Sociologists at Nassau Community College in New York developed a profile of former believers who stopped practicing their religious beliefs: William Feigelman, Bernard S. Gorman, and Joseph A. Varacalli, "Americans Who Give Up Religion," *Sociology and Social Research* 76 (1992): 138-143.

¹⁸³ Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, "Consequences of divorce for attitudes toward divorce," *Journal of Family Issues* 12 (1991): 306-322. As cited in Alan Booth and Paul R. Amato, "Parental Pre-Divorce Relations and Offspring Postdivorce Well-Being," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 63 (2001): 207.

(especially compared to those raised in happy married homes).¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, abandoning religious practice deprives children of its beneficial effects in a host of areas: marital stability, sexual restraint, education, income, crime, addictions, physical and mental health, and general happiness.¹⁸⁵

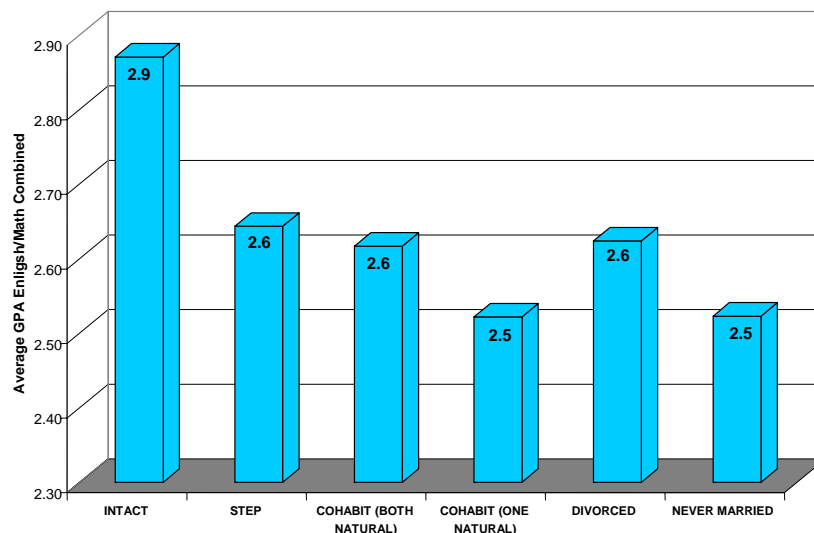
III. Effects on Education: Capacity and Achievement

A. Diminished Learning Capacity

Outcomes and Achievements. Divorce and separation correlate positively with diminished school achievement and performance.¹⁸⁶ Daniel Potter of the University of Virginia found that elementary school children who experience parental divorce immediately begin performing worse academically than their peers from intact families. This gap persists through elementary school.¹⁸⁷

GPA English/Math by Family Structure

Source: Adolescent Health Survey, Wave 1. Adolescents grade 7-12.



¹⁸⁴ Scott M. Myers, “An Interactive Model of Religiosity Inheritance: The Importance of Family Context,” *American Sociological Review* 61 (1996): 864-865.

¹⁸⁵ Patrick F. Fagan, “Why Religion Matters: The Impact of Religious Practice on Social Stability,” *Backgrounders* 1064 (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 25 January 1996).

Patrick F. Fagan, “Why Religion Matters Even More: The Impact of Religious Practice on Social Stability,” *Backgrounders* 1992 (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 18 December 2006).

Patrick F. Fagan, “Religious Practice and Educational Attainment,” (Washington, D.C.: Marriage and Religion Research Institute, September 2010).

¹⁸⁶ E. Milling Kinard and Helen Reinherz, “Effects of Marital Disruption on Children’s School Aptitude and Achievement,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 48 (1986): 289-290.

Paul R. Amato, “Children of Divorce in the 1990s: An Update of the Amato and Keith (1991) Meta-Analysis,” *Journal of Family Psychology* 15 (2001): 355-370.

¹⁸⁷ Daniel Potter, “Psychosocial Well-Being and the Relationship between Divorce and Children’s Academic Achievement,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 72, no.4 (2010): 941.

Children exposed to unilateral divorce are less educated by adulthood.¹⁸⁸ Children have lower educational aspirations and test scores during the process of their parents' marital disruption.¹⁸⁹ Children of divorced parents are also more likely to be held back a grade and have lower GPAs.¹⁹⁰ High school students in intact families have GPAs 11 percent higher than those from divorced families.¹⁹¹ One study (controlling for parental education, parental occupation, family size, etc.), found that children whose parents divorce get about seven tenths of a year less education than children from intact families.¹⁹²

Children whose mothers divorced and remained divorced did worse over time on Peabody Individual Achievement Test reading recognition tests (which gauge children's ability to recognize and pronounce words) than children from intact married families.¹⁹³ By age 13, there is an average difference of half a year in reading ability between children of divorced parents and children from intact families.¹⁹⁴

In the Kent State University Impact of Divorce Project, which used a national sample study of 699 elementary students, children from divorced homes performed worse in reading, spelling, and math and repeated a grade more frequently than did children in intact two-parent families. The project's findings led the researchers to conclude that children and young adolescents suffered long-term negative effects following divorce.¹⁹⁵ Paternal absence is detrimental to cognitive test scores for young children,¹⁹⁶ and paternal presence influences girls'

¹⁸⁸ Jonathan Gruber, "Is Making Divorce Easier Bad for Children? The Long-Run Implications of Unilateral Divorce," *Journal of Labor Economics* 22, no. 4 (2004): 830.

¹⁸⁹ Yongmin Sun and Yuanzhang Li, "Children's Well-being During Parents' Marital Disruption Process: A Pooled Time-Series Analysis," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64 (2002): 479.

¹⁹⁰ William H. Jeynes, "The Effects of Several of the Most Common Family Structures on the Academic Achievement of Eighth Graders," *Marriage and Family Review* 30 (2000): 88.

¹⁹¹ Barry D. Ham, "The Effects of Divorce on the Academic Achievement of High School Seniors," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 38, no. 3 (2003): 176.

¹⁹² M. D. R. Evans, Jonathan Kelley, and Richard A. Wanner, "Educational Attainment of the Children of Divorce: Australia, 1940-1990," *Journal of Sociology* 37, no. 3 (2001): 285.

¹⁹³ Kimberly Anne Shaff, Nicholas H. Wolfinger, Lori Kowaleski-Jones, and Ken R. Smith, "Family Structure Transitions and Child Achievement," *Sociological Spectrum* 28, no. 6 (2008): 691-694.

¹⁹⁴ Jim Stevenson and Glenda Fredman, "The Social Environmental Correlates of Reading Ability," *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 31, no.5 (1990): 689-690.

¹⁹⁵ John Guidubaldi, Joseph D. Perry, and Bonnie K. Nastasi, "Growing Up in a Divorced Family: Initial and Long-Term perspectives on Children's Adjustment," *Applied Social Psychology Annual* 7 (1987): 202-237.

¹⁹⁶ Frank Mott, "Absent fathers and child development: Emotional and cognitive effects at ages 5-9" (prepared for the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 1993, unpublished research). As cited by Mary Ann Powell and Toby L. Parcel, "Effects of Family Structure on the Earnings Attainment Process: Differences by Gender," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 59 (1997): 419.

performance in math.¹⁹⁷ Teenagers who experience parental divorce score lower than their counterparts from intact families on math, science, and history tests.¹⁹⁸

Some studies show that the correlation between adolescent family disruption and educational attainment is weaker after controlling for the family's socioeconomic status. This finding likely reflects the influence of income on each.¹⁹⁹ One of divorce's attendant problems is the financial instability it inflicts on those who experience it.²⁰⁰

Lack of family transitions after divorce does not eliminate the effect of the divorce on student academic performance, but it does provide their performance in math and social studies a certain degree of protection, compared to students who live in unstable families with multiple family transitions.²⁰¹

Age at Divorce. Norwegian research found that children who experience divorce early in life are likely to have lower educational outcomes, finding that the effect of divorce on education is strongest when the child is young.²⁰² An American study, by contrast, found that those who had experienced a late divorce (between grades six and 10) were more likely to get low grades than children who experienced an early divorce (between kindergarten and grade five).²⁰³

Consequences of Moving. Residential mobility accounts for 29 percent of the academic performance gap between children living in stepfamilies and children living with both biological parents.²⁰⁴ Moving tends to increase behavioral, emotional, and academic problems for adolescents.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁷ Goldstein (1982). As cited in David Popenoe, *Life without Father* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1996), 148.

¹⁹⁸ Anna Sanz-de-Galdeano and Daniela Vuri, "Parental Divorce and Students' Performance: Evidence from Longitudinal Data," *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics* 69, no. 3 (2007): 327.

¹⁹⁹ Patrick Fagan, "Marriage and Economic Well-Being: The Economy of the Family Rises or Falls with Marriage" (Washington, D.C.: Marriage and Religion Research Institute, 2011). Available at <http://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF11E70.pdf>.

²⁰⁰ See section titled "Effect on the Marketplace: Financial Struggle."

²⁰¹ Yongmin Sun and Yuanzhang Li, "Postdivorce Family Stability and Changes in Adolescents' Academic Performance: A Growth-Curve Model," *Journal of Family Issues* 30, no. 11 (2009): 1546-1547.

²⁰² Fiona Steele, Wendy Sigle-Rushton, and Øystein Kravdal, "Consequences of Family Disruption on Children's Educational Outcomes in Norway," *Demography* 46, no. 3 (2009): 565.

²⁰³ Jennifer E. Lansford, "Trajectories of Internalizing, Externalizing, and Grades for Children Who Have and Have Not Experienced their Parents' Divorce or Separation," *Journal of Family Psychology* 20, no. 2 (2006): 296.

²⁰⁴ Nan Marie Astone and Sara S. McLanahan, "Family Structure, Residential Mobility, and School Dropout: A Research Note," *Demography* 31 (1994): 582.

²⁰⁵ John P. Hoffman and Robert A. Johnson, "A National Portrait of Family Structure and Adolescent Drug Use," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 60 (1998): 635.

Overall, the less instability of an sort in the child's life following divorce, the less the impact on the child.

B. Behavior at School

Psychosocial Outcomes. One study found that children in pre-disrupted families (whose parents' relationship would later dissolve) exhibit more academic, psychological, behavioral, and drug-related problems than children whose families remained intact.²⁰⁶ Daniel Potter, referenced above, also found that the deleterious effect of divorce on children's psychosocial well-being is an important factor in poor math and reading scores.²⁰⁷

Absence. One study found that children whose parents divorced skipped nearly 60 percent more class periods than children from intact families. Girls appeared to be more affected than boys.²⁰⁸

Dropout, Suspension, or Expulsion. Children who experienced their parents' divorce or separation are less likely to complete high school.²⁰⁹ An Australian study found that children of divorced families are 26 percent more likely to drop out of secondary school than children raised in intact families, and found that remarriage did not alleviate the effects of divorce on children's educational attainment.²¹⁰

C. Less College Attainment for Children

Children whose parents²¹¹ or grandparents²¹² divorce tend to have fewer years of education. Divorce and separation reduces children's likelihood of attending college.²¹³ Furthermore, 33 percent of students who have already completed secondary school but who have experienced their parents' divorce graduate from college, compared to 40 percent among their peers from intact families. However,

²⁰⁶ Yongmin Sun, "Family Environment and Adolescents' Well-Being Before and After Parents' Marital Disruption: A Longitudinal Analysis," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 63 (2001): 699, 704, 709.

²⁰⁷ Daniel Potter, "Psychosocial Well-Being and the Relationship Between Divorce and Children's Academic Achievement," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 72, no. 4 (2010): 944.

²⁰⁸ Barry D. Ham, "The Effects of Divorce on the Academic Achievement of High School Seniors," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 38, no. 3 (2003): 180.

²⁰⁹ Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr. and Julien O. Teitler, "Reconsidering the Effects of Marital Disruption: What Happens to Children of Divorce in Early Adulthood?" *Journal of Family Issues* 15, no. 2 (1994): 179.

²¹⁰ M. D. R. Evans, Jonathan Kelley and Richard A. Wanner, "Educational attainment of the children of divorce: Australia, 1940-90," *Journal of Sociology* 37 (2001): 287.

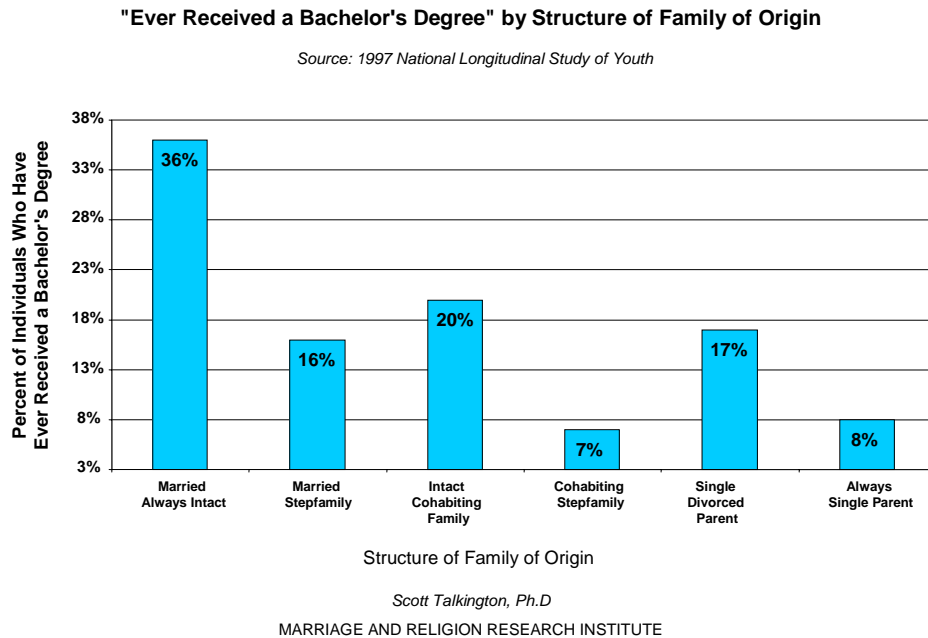
²¹¹ Catherine E. Ross and John Mirowsky, "Parental Divorce, Life-Course Disruption, and Adult Depression," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 61 (1999): 1040.

²¹² Paul R. Amato and Jacob Cheadle, "The Long Reach of Divorce: Divorce and Child Well-being Across Three Generations," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67 (2005): 202.

²¹³ Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr. and Julien O. Teitler, "Reconsidering the Effects of Marital Disruption: What Happens to Children of Divorce in Early Adulthood?" *Journal of Family Issues* 15, no. 2 (1994): 179.

it seems that parental divorce has a greater impact on likelihood to complete secondary school than college.²¹⁴

College Expectations. Youth living in married stepfamilies and cohabiting stepfamilies (i.e., with the mother’s live-in boyfriend/partner) and single-parent families after a divorce or separation have lower college expectations than youth who have always lived in intact families.²¹⁵



IV. Effects on the Marketplace: Financial Struggle

A. Financial Weakness among Children of Divorce as Adults

Much of the economic impact of divorce on children is mediated through the parents, as research below demonstrates. However, parental divorce and separation lead to a greater likelihood of enduring economic hardship,²¹⁶ as well as to decreased asset accumulation in adult life,²¹⁷ eventual lower income²¹⁸ and

²¹⁴ M. D. R. Evans, Jonathan Kelley, and Richard A. Wanner, “Educational Attainment of the Children of Divorce: Australia, 1940–1990,” *Journal of Sociology* 37, no. 3 (2001): 287.

²¹⁵ Kathryn Harker Tillman, “Family Structure Pathways and Academic Disadvantage among Adolescents in Stepfamilies,” *Sociological Inquiry* 77, no. 3 (2007): 408.

²¹⁶ Catherine E. Ross and John Mirowsky, “Parental Divorce, Life-Course Disruption, and Adult Depression,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 61 (1999): 1040.

²¹⁷ Lisa A. Keister, “Race, Family Structure, and Wealth: The Effect of Childhood Family on Adult Asset Ownership,” *Sociological Perspectives* 47 (2004): 179.

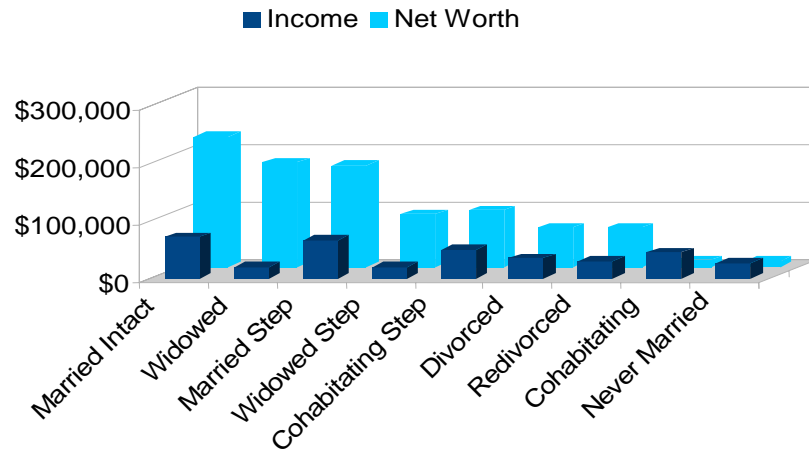
²¹⁸ Frank F. Furstenberg and Kathleen E. Kiernan, “Delayed Parental Divorce: How Much Do Children Benefit?” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 452.

occupational status,²¹⁹ more materialism and compulsive buying,²²⁰ and higher likelihood of living in public housing by age 33.²²¹

Among women whose parents divorced, “statistically significant differences exist in educational attainment, level of household income, [and] receiving welfare...compared with women raised in intact marriages.”²²²

Median Income and Net Worth by Family Type

Derived from Fed. Reserve Board Survey of Consumer Finance 2007



A new concentration of the population into these classes,
A new economy

Family Income. According to 1994 data reported by Mary Corcoran, professor of political science at the University of Michigan, children of divorced or separated parents (though better off than children of always-single parent families) are economically disadvantaged. “During the years children lived with two parents, their family incomes averaged \$43,600, and when these same children lived with one parent, their family incomes averaged \$25,300.”²²³ The household income of a child’s family dropped, on average, by about 42 percent

²¹⁹ Catherine E. Ross and John Mirowsky, “Parental Divorce, Life-Course Disruption, and Adult Depression,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 61 (1999): 1034-1045.

²²⁰ Aric Rindfleisch, James E. Burroughs, and Frank Denton, “Family Structure, Materialism, and Compulsive Consumption,” *The Journal of Consumer Research* 23 (1997): 320.

²²¹ Frank F. Furstenberg and Kathleen E. Kiernan, “Delayed Parental Divorce: How Much Do Children Benefit?” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 452.

²²² Frank F. Furstenberg and Kathleen E. Kiernan, “Delayed Parental Divorce: How Much Do Children Benefit?” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 452.

²²³ G. J. Duncan, Wei-Jun Jean Yeung, and W. Rodgers, “Lone-Parent Families in the United States: Dynamics, Economic Status, and Developmental Consequences” (Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1994, unpublished research paper). As cited in Mary E. Corcoran and Ajay Chaudry, “The Dynamics of Childhood Poverty,” *Future of Children* 7 (1997): 47.

following a divorce.²²⁴ Parents' accumulated wealth differs widely across family structures and affects the amount of financial support available for their children's college education. Compared with married parents (59 percent), divorced parents (36 percent) are less likely to pay for all or most of their children's college expenses. Divorced parents (29 percent) are actually more likely than married parents (17 percent) to provide no assistance at all.²²⁵

B. Financial Weakness among Divorced Women

Decreased Income. Many women experience a substantial decline in their financial circumstances after divorce, which in turn affects their children. Analysis of the 1987-1988 and 1992-1994 waves of the National Survey of Families and Households found that household income for a mother and children fell by \$13,000 after divorce. Additionally, their standard of living was 20 percent lower and their odds of owning a home were 12 percentage points lower.²²⁶

The detrimental effects of divorce on women's income vary based on the relative earnings capacity of the husband and wife. Women who experience the largest income losses (38.5 percent for a mother with one child) are "the 'low education' mother[s] who [were] married to a 'high education' man."²²⁷ Conversely, highly educated mothers who were married to a less educated man experience the smallest effect of divorce on their equivalent household income (11.2 percent).²²⁸

Poverty. High divorce rates mean that the children of poor families have fewer adults to support them. Nearly 56 percent of poor families with children had only one adult, but less than 14 percent of non-poor families with children have only one adult.²²⁹ One study goes so far as to assert that "[c]hanges of family structure [i.e., divorce] are by far the major cause of initial spells of poverty among female-headed households."²³⁰

²²⁴ Peggy O. Corcoran (Ann Arbor, MI: Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, 1994, unpublished paper).

²²⁵ Paul R. Amato, Sandra J. Rezac, and Alan Booth, "Helping Between Parents and Young Adult Offspring: The Role of Parental Marital Quality, Divorce, and Remarriage," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 57 (1995): 373.

²²⁶ Thomas L. Hanson, Sara S. McLanahan, and Elizabeth Thomson, "Windows on Divorce: Before and After," *Social Science Research* 27 (1998): 337.

²²⁷ Matthew Gray and Bruce Chapman, "Relationship breakdown and the economic welfare of Australian Mothers and their children" (Crawford School of Economics and Government, The Australian National University, 2007, 2008), 28.

²²⁸ Matthew Gray and Bruce Chapman, "Relationship breakdown and the economic welfare of Australian Mothers and their children" (Crawford School of Economics and Government, The Australian National University, 2007, 2008), 28.

²²⁹ David M. Betson and Robert T. Michael, "Why So Many Children Are Poor," *The Future of Children* 7 (1997): 31.

²³⁰ Julia A. Heath, "Determinants of Spells of Poverty Following Divorce," *Review of Social Economy* 50 (1992): 305-315.

Most women entering welfare dependency do so because of divorce, particularly those women whose family's income (prior to the divorce) was in the bottom half of the income distribution.²³¹ Seventy-five percent of all women who applied for welfare benefits in the late 1980s did so because of a disrupted marriage or a disrupted relationship in which they lived with a man outside of marriage.²³² Mothers who are employed at the time of the dissolution of their marriage are much less likely to become welfare recipients than mothers who are not already employed.²³³

There is some question regarding the efficacy of child support in decreasing poverty. Julia Heath found in 1992 that, particularly for white women, "[t]he most consistent positive predictor of length of poverty spell is number of children," and wrote that this implied "that child support is not being sufficiently ordered by the courts, that the awards rendered are too small, or perhaps that the orders are not being enforced."²³⁴ Philip Robins found in 1986 that "because the current legal system establishes such low child support award amounts, it does not appear to be an effective antipoverty device."²³⁵ In general, as Paul Amato and Alan Booth wrote, "many men appear to view fatherhood as a package deal, accepting responsibility for children only as long as they are married to the mother."²³⁶

V. Effects on Government: Increased Crime, Abuse, and Use of Drugs

A. Increased Crime Rates

Robert Sampson (then professor of sociology at the University of Chicago) reported, after studying 171 cities in the United States with populations over 100,000, that the divorce rate predicted the robbery rate of any given area,

²³¹ Greg J. Duncan, Martha S. Hill, and Saul D. Hoffman, "Welfare Dependence Within and Across Generations," *Science* 239 (1988): 468.

²³² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Factors Affecting the Labor Force Participation of Lone Mothers in the United States" (prepared by the Panel on Evaluation Factors Affecting the Labour Force Participation of Lone Mothers, Paris, 1989). As cited in Patrick F. Fagan, "How Broken Families Rob Children of Their Chances for Future Prosperity," *Backgrounder* 1283 (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 11 June 1999): 3.

²³³ Philip K. Robins, "Child Support, Welfare Dependency, and Poverty," *The American Economic Review* 976 (1986): 775.

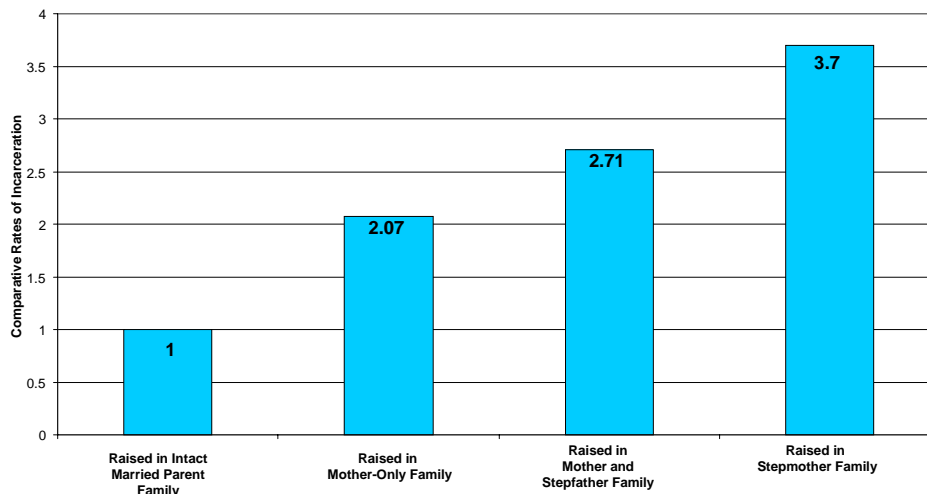
²³⁴ Julia A. Heath, "Determinants of Spells of Poverty Following Divorce," *Review of Social Economy* 50 (1992): 305-315.

²³⁵ Philip K. Robins, "Child Support, Welfare Dependency, and Poverty," *The American Economic Review* 976 (1986): 786.

²³⁶ Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr. and K. Harris, "The disappearing American father? Divorce and the waning significance of biological parenthood," in *The Changing American Family: Sociological and Demographic Perspectives*, eds. Scott J. South and Stewart E. Tolnay (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 197-223. As cited in Paul R. Amato and Alan Booth, *A Generation at Risk* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 68.

regardless of its economic and racial composition. In these communities, he found that lower divorce rates indicated higher formal and informal social controls (such as the supervision of children) and lower crime rates.²³⁷ In 1994, it was reported in Wisconsin that the incarceration rate of juvenile delinquents was 12 times higher among children of divorced parents than among children of married parents.²³⁸ In a British longitudinal study of males aged eight to 32, David P. Farrington, professor of criminology at Cambridge University, found experiencing parental divorce before age 10 to be a major predictor of adolescent delinquency and adult criminality.²³⁹ Adolescents from divorced families (particularly those in divorced single-father families) display more antisocial and violent behavior than adolescents in biologically intact families.²⁴⁰ An Australian parliamentary review of the literature found that divorce increases the likelihood that children will feel hostility and rejection.²⁴¹

Family Structure: Comparative Rates Of Youth Incarceration



Source: C. Harper and S. McLanahan, "Father Absence and Youth Incarceration," ASA Annual Meeting, San Francisco, August 1998. Data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth.

²³⁷ Robert J. Sampson, "Crime in Cities: The Effects of Formal and Informal Social Control," in *Communities and Crime*, vol. 8, *Crime and Justice*, ed. Albert J. Reiss and Michael Tonry (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 271-311.

²³⁸ Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Youth Services, "Family Status of Delinquents in Juvenile Correctional Facilities in Wisconsin" (1994). The data from the report were merged with Current Population Survey data on family structure in Wisconsin for that year to derive rates of incarceration by family structure.

²³⁹ David P. Farrington, "Implications of Criminal Career Research for the Prevention of Offending," *Journal of Adolescence* 13 (1990): 93-113.

²⁴⁰ Kyrre Breivik and Dan Olweus, "Adolescent's Adjustment in Four Post-Divorce Family Structures: Single Mother, Stepfather, Joint Physical Custody and Single Father Families," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 44, no. 3 (2006): 114.

²⁴¹ Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, *To Have and To Hold: Strategies to Strengthen Marriage and Relationships* (Canberra, Australia, Parliament of Australia: 1998), 36.

Children of divorced parents are significantly more likely than children of intact married families to be delinquent by age 15, regardless of when the divorce took place.²⁴² A 1985 study that tracked one thousand families with children ages six to 18 for six years found that children living in intact married families exhibited the least delinquency, while children with stepfathers were more likely to exhibit the most disruptive behavior. (In this study, the behavior of single-parent children fell between that of children of intact and stepfather families.)²⁴³

Parental divorce contributes to what some studies term “externalizing behaviors,” which include weapon carrying, fighting, substance abuse, and binge drinking,²⁴⁴ Another study found that the sons of divorced parents are at no greater risk of involvement in delinquent behavior than boys living in intact families if the mother and father “engage in competent parenting.”²⁴⁵

Good parenting on the part of divorced fathers achieved no such effects for the daughters of divorce, according to this same study. Among adolescent girls, there is a strong correlation between family structure and delinquency,²⁴⁶ hostile behavior,²⁴⁷ drug use, larceny, skipping school,²⁴⁸ and alcohol abuse.²⁴⁹ One study found that parental divorce and maternal nonresidence led to delinquent behavior in girls if the mother-daughter relationship was satisfying: A *stronger* relationship correlated to more frequent exhibition of delinquency.²⁵⁰

²⁴² Abbie K. Frost and Bilge Pakiz, “The Effects of Marital Disruption on Adolescents: Time as a Dynamic,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 60 (1990): 544-555.

Others have found that children of divorced parents are up to six times as likely to be delinquent as children from intact families. See David B. Larson, James P. Swyers, and Susan S. Larson, *The Costly Consequences of Divorce* (Rockville, MD: National Institute for Healthcare Research, 1995), 123.

²⁴³ Annette U. Rickel and Thomas S. Langer, “Short-term and Long-term Effects of Marital Disruption on Children,” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 13 (1985): 599-661.

²⁴⁴ Kathleen Boyce Rodgers and Hilary A. Rose, “Risk and Resiliency Factors among Adolescents Who Experience Marital Transitions,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64 (2002): 1028-1029.

²⁴⁵ Ronald L. Simons, Kuei-Hsiu Lin, Leslie C. Gordon, Rand D. Conger, and Frederick O. Lorenz, “Explaining the Higher Incidence of Adjustment Problems Among Children of Divorce Compared with Those in Two-Parent Families,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61 (1999): 1030.

²⁴⁶ Karen Heimer, “Gender, Interaction, and Delinquency: Testing a Theory of Differential Social Control,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 59 (1996): 39-61.

²⁴⁷ Bilge Pakiz, Helen Z. Reinherz, and Rose M. Giaconia, “Early Risk Factors for Serious Antisocial Behavior at Age 21: A Longitudinal Community Study,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 67 (1997): 92-100.

²⁴⁸ Neil Kalter, Barbara Riemer, Arthur Brickman, and Jade Woo Chen, “Implications of Parental Divorce for Female Development,” *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry* 24, no. 5 (1985): 538-544.

²⁴⁹ Abbie K. Frost and Bilge Pakiz, “The Effects of Marital Disruption on Adolescents: Time as a Dynamic,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 60 (1990): 544-555.

²⁵⁰ Tami M. Videon, “The Effects of Parent-Adolescent Relationships and Parental Separation on Adolescent Well-being,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64 (2002): 498.

B. Increased Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse is closely related to later delinquency, violence, and crime,²⁵¹ and childhood abuse is more likely in the context of parental divorce.²⁵² Subjection to pre-pubertal sexual contact is more common among children who have experienced their parents' divorce,²⁵³ and individuals who had experienced sexual abuse were significantly more likely than those who had not experienced sexual abuse to have experienced an "adverse childhood event," (such as parental divorce).²⁵⁴ Child neglect, which is frequently more psychologically damaging than physical abuse,²⁵⁵ is much more commonly present in families of separated and divorced persons than of married persons.²⁵⁶

Abuse is much higher among stepchildren (divorced and remarried) than among children of intact families. One study of Brazilian families reported that higher abuse rates in stepfamilies with stepfathers were attributable to higher incidence of *mothers* abusing their children. This study reported that children in stepfamilies with stepfathers were 2.7 times more likely to be abused than children in biologically intact households.²⁵⁷

²⁵¹ Cathy Spatz Widom, "The Cycle of Violence," *Science* 244 (1989): 160-166. As cited in Patrick Fagan, "The Child Abuse Crisis: The Disintegration of Marriage, Family, and the American Community," *Backgrounder* 1115 (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 3 June 1997).

²⁵² Maxia Dong, Robert F. Anda, Vincent J. Felitti, Shanta R. Dube, David F. Williamson, Theodore J. Thompson, Clifton M. Loo, and Wayne H. Giles, "The interrelatedness of multiple forms of childhood abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 28 (2004): 771-784; William J. Oliver, Lawrence R. Kuhns, Elaine S. Pomeranz, "Family structure and child abuse," *Clinical Pediatrics* 45 (2006): 111-118. As cited in Tracie O. Afifi, Jonathan Boman, William Fleisher, and Jitender Sareen, "The Relationship between Child Abuse, Parental Divorce, and Lifetime Mental Disorders and Suicidality in a Nationally Representative Adult Sample," *Child Abuse and Neglect* 33 (2009): 140.

²⁵³ Patrick Leung, Russell L. Curtis, Jr., and Susan C. Mapp, "Incidences of Sexual Contacts of Children: Impacts of Family Characteristics and Family Structure from a National Sample," *Children and Youth Services Review* 32 (2010): 654.

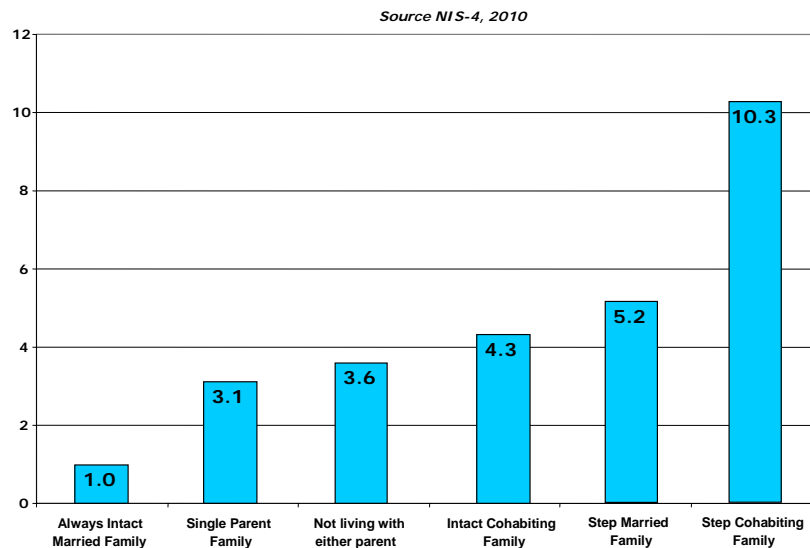
²⁵⁴ Maxia Dong, Robert F. Anda, Shanta R. Dube, Wayne H. Giles, and Vincent J. Felitti, "The Relationship of Exposure to Childhood Sexual Abuse to Other Forms of Abuse, Neglect, and Household Dysfunction during Childhood," *Child Abuse and Neglect* 27 (2003): 632.

²⁵⁵ Byron Egeland, L. Alan Sroufe, and Martha Erickson, "The developmental consequence of different patterns of maltreatment," *Child Abuse and Neglect* 7, no. 4 (1983): 459-469; Debbie Hoffman-Plotkin and Craig T. Twentyman, "A Multimodal Assessment of Behavioral and Cognitive Deficits in Abused and Neglected Preschoolers," *Child Development* 55, no. 3 (1984): 794-802. As cited in Richard Emery, "Abused and Neglected Children," *The American Psychologist* 44 (1989): 324.

²⁵⁶ Yuriko Egami, "Psychiatric Profile and Sociodemographic Characteristics of Adults Who Report Physically Abusing or Neglecting Children," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 153 (1996): 925.

²⁵⁷ Gisele Caldas Alexandre, Paulo Nadanovsky, Caludia Leite Moraes, and Michael Reichenheim, "The Presence of a Stepfather and Child Physical Abuse, as Reported by a Sample of Brazilian Mothers in Rio de Janeiro," *Child Abuse and Neglect* 34 (2010): 963.

Relative Rates of Physical Abuse by Family Structure



Living with a stepfather increases a child's likelihood of subjection to pre-pubertal sexual contact.²⁵⁸ The rate of sexual abuse of girls by their stepfathers is at least six or seven times higher,²⁵⁹ and may be as much as 40 times higher,²⁶⁰ than sexual abuse of daughters by their biological fathers who remain in intact families.

A study of 26 instances of fatal child abuse reported that 62 percent of perpetrators were the stepfathers of the abused children and that 81 percent of perpetrators were engaged in cohabiting relationships with the victimized child's mother (15 percent of perpetrators were married to the victimized child's mother).²⁶¹ Another study reported that children under age five were 50 times more like to suffer fatal abuse if they lived in homes with an unrelated adult (particularly a mother's boyfriend) than if they lived in a biologically intact family.²⁶²

²⁵⁸ Patrick Leung, Russell L. Curtis, Jr., and Susan C. Mapp, "Incidences of Sexual Contacts of Children: Impacts of Family Characteristics and Family Structure from a National Sample," *Children and Youth Services Review* 32 (2010): 654.

²⁵⁹ Diana E. H. Russell, "The Prevalence and Seriousness of Incestuous Abuse: Stepfathers vs. Biological Fathers," *Child Abuse and Neglect* 8 (1984): 15-22.

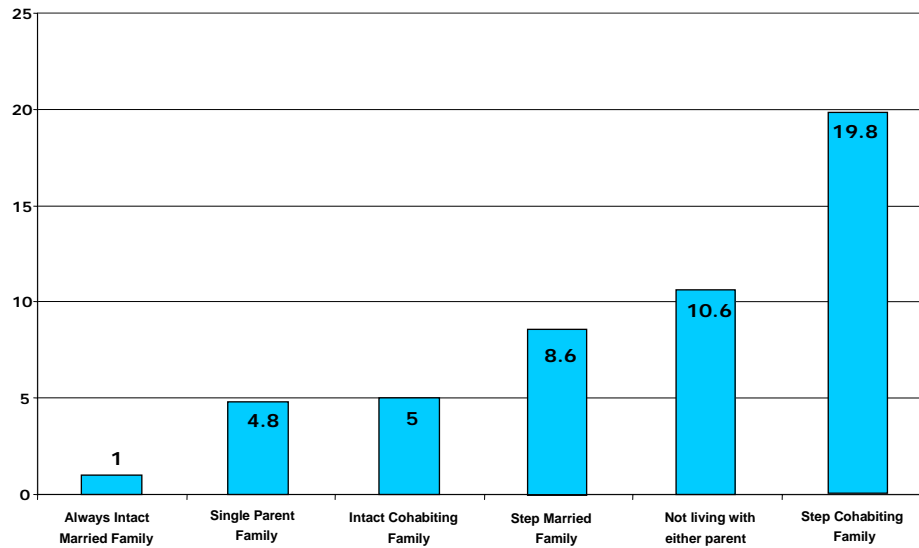
²⁶⁰ Margo Wilson and Martin Daly, "The Risk of Maltreatment of Children Living with Stepparents," in *Child Abuse and Neglect: Biosocial Dimensions, Foundations of Human Behavior*, ed. Richard J. Gelles and Jane B. Lancaster (New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 1987), 228.

²⁶¹ Kate Cavanagh, R. Emerson Dobash, and Russell P. Dobash, "The Murder of Children by Fathers in the Context of Child Abuse," *Child Abuse and Neglect* 31 (2007): 736.

²⁶² Patricia G. Schnitzer and Bernard G. Ewigman, "Child Deaths Resulting from Inflicted Injuries: Household Risk Factors and Perpetrator Characteristics," *Pediatrics* 116 (2005): e690.

Relative Rates of Sexual Abuse by Family Structure

Source NIS-4, 2010



Margo Wilson and Martin Daly, professors of psychology at McMasters University, Canada, reported that children two years old and younger are 70 to 100 times more likely to be killed at the hands of stepparents than at the hands of biological parents.²⁶³ (Younger children are more vulnerable because they are so much weaker physically.) British data are milder, but the research is not as rigorous as the Canadian research. In Britain, fatal abuse of children of all ages occurs three times more frequently in stepfamilies than in intact married families.²⁶⁴

C. Increased Use of Drugs and Alcohol

Parental divorce (as previously stated) predicts externalizing behavior, such as tobacco use, alcohol consumption and binge drinking,²⁶⁵ and marijuana use.²⁶⁶ Parental divorce or separation also predicts increased adolescent use of other illegal drugs.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ Margo Wilson and Martin Daly, "The Risk of Maltreatment of Children Living with Stepparents," in *Child Abuse and Neglect: Biosocial Dimensions, Foundations of Human Behavior*, ed. Richard J. Gelles and Jane B. Lancaster (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1987), 215-232.

²⁶⁴ Patrick Fagan, "The Child Abuse Crisis: The Disintegration of Marriage, Family, and the American Community," *Backgrounder* 1115 (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 3 June 1997).

²⁶⁵ Kathleen Boyce Rodgers and Hilary A. Rose, "Risk and Resiliency Factors among Adolescents Who Experience Marital Transitions," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64 (2002): 1028-1029.

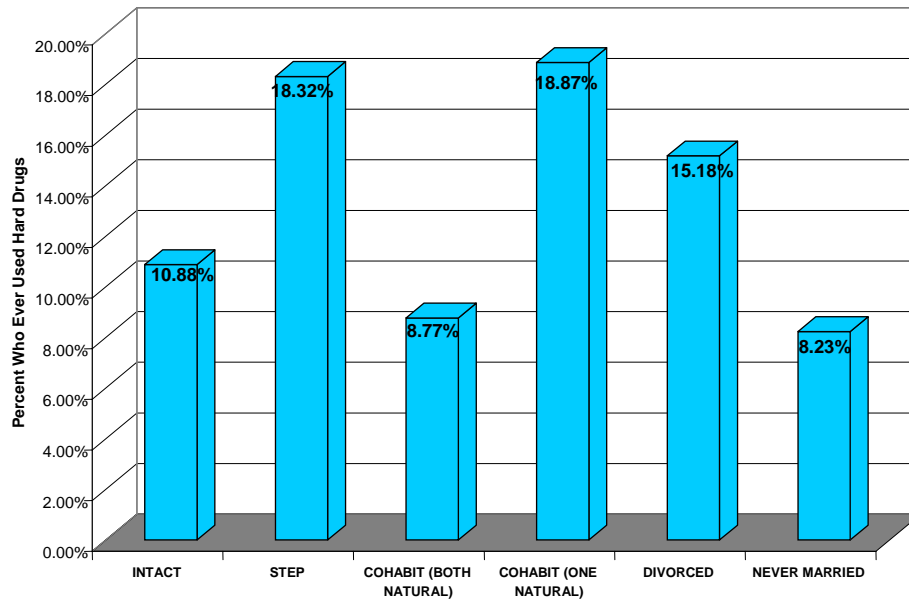
²⁶⁶ John P. Hoffmann, "Exploring the Direct and Indirect Family Effects on Adolescent Drug Use," *Journal of Drug Issues* 23 (1993): 535-557.

²⁶⁷ Richard H. Needle, Susan S. Su, and William J. Doherty, "Divorce, Remarriage, and Adolescent Substance Use: A Prospective Longitudinal Study," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 52 (1990): 162.

Men who experienced their parents' divorce as children (between ages seven and 16) are more likely to smoke as adults.²⁶⁸ Males who have experienced parental divorce are also more likely to use alcohol and drugs.²⁶⁹ Women who experienced parental divorce between ages seven and 16 (but not those whose parents divorced later) are more likely to smoke and to drink heavily as adults than women whose parents remained married.²⁷⁰

Ever Used Hard Drugs by Family Structure

Source: Adolescent Health Survey, Wave I. Adolescents grade 7-12.



VI. Effects on Child Health: Stunted Physical and Psychological Growth

A. Physical Health and Longevity

Parental divorce affects their children's physical health and longevity. Those who experience parental divorce or separation are more likely to have health problems²⁷¹ (often in spite of maternal remarriage²⁷²) such as a significant increase

Kyrre Breivik and Dan Olweus, "Adolescent's Adjustment in Four Post-Divorce Family Structures: Single Mother, Stepfather, Joint Physical Custody and Single Father Families," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 44, no. 3 (2006): 115.

²⁶⁸ Frank F. Furstenberg and Kathleen E. Kiernan, "Delayed Parental Divorce: How Much Do Children Benefit?" *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 453.

²⁶⁹ William J. Doherty and Richard H. Needle, "Psychological Adjustment and Substance Use among Adolescents Before and After a Parental Divorce," *Child Development* 62 (1991): 332.

²⁷⁰ Frank F. Furstenberg and Kathleen E. Kiernan, "Delayed Parental Divorce: How Much Do Children Benefit?" *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 452.

²⁷¹ Paul R. Amato and Bruce Keith, "Parental Divorce and Adult Well-being: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 53 (1991): 49, 54.

²⁷² Jane Mauldon, "The Effect of Marital Disruption on Children's Health," *Demography* 27 (1990): 444.

in injury rates, a doubled risk of asthma,²⁷³ and increased risk of asthma-related emergencies.²⁷⁴ Children whose parents divorce are also more likely to contract cancer of the upper aerodigestive tract, the esophagus, anus, pancreas, lungs, and cervix. The authors add, “The results show that offspring of divorced parents have increased cancer risks at tobacco-related, alcohol-related and sex-related sites.”²⁷⁵ A Swedish study showed that young men with divorced parents had a slightly heightened risk of hospitalization and significantly increased risk of mortality.²⁷⁶

The child of divorced parents has a higher risk of premature death.²⁷⁷ According to one study, parental divorce before the age of 21 is associated with a mortality risk increase of 44 percent²⁷⁸ and a lifespan shortened by an average of 4.5 years.²⁷⁹ A child’s mortality risk increases when his parents’ divorce occurs before reaching age four.²⁸⁰

B. Increased Emotional and Psychiatric Burdens

Divorce wreaks havoc on the psychological stability of many children.²⁸¹ A ranking generated by seventh and eighth grade students through a study in the late 1980s ranked parental divorce as the third most stressful life event of a list of 125 life events or experiences. Parental divorce was only ranked as less stressful than the death of a parent or close family member.²⁸² Furthermore, the psychological effects of divorce are persistent: Children from divorced families

²⁷³ Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, *To Have and To Hold: Strategies to Strengthen Marriage and Relationships* (Canberra, Australia, Parliament of Australia: 1998), 35.

²⁷⁴ Kristen Harknett, “Why Are Children with Married Parents Healthier? The Case of Pediatric Asthma,” *Population Research and Policy Review* 28 (2009): 361.

²⁷⁵ Kari Hemminki and Bowang Chen, “Lifestyle and Cancer: Effect of Parental Divorce,” *European Journal of Cancer Prevention* 15 (2006): 524.

²⁷⁶ Anders Romelsjo, George A. Kaplan, Richard D. Cohen, Peter Allebeck, and Sven Andreasson, “Protective Factors and Social Risk Factors for Hospitalization and Mortality among Young Men,” *American Journal of Epidemiology* 135, no. 6 (1992): 654.

²⁷⁷ Leslie R. Martin, Howard S. Friedman, Kathleen M. Clark, and Joan S. Tucker, “Longevity Following the Experience of Parental Divorce,” *Social Science and Medicine* 61 (2005): 2182.

²⁷⁸ Joseph E. Schwartz, Howard S. Friedman, Joan S. Tucker, Carol Tomlinson-Keasey, Deborah L. Wingard, and Michael H. Criqui, “Sociodemographic and Psychosocial Factors in Childhood as Predictors of Adult Mortality,” *American Journal of Public Health* 85 (1995): 1241.

²⁷⁹ Joseph E. Schwartz, Howard S. Friedman, Joan S. Tucker, Carol Tomlinson-Keasey, Deborah L. Wingard, and Michael H. Criqui, “Sociodemographic and Psychosocial Factors in Childhood as Predictors of Adult Mortality,” *American Journal of Public Health* 85 (1995): 1243.

²⁸⁰ Gopal K. Singh and Stella M. Yu, “U.S. Childhood Mortality, 1950 through 1993: Trends and Socioeconomic Differentials,” *American Journal of Public Health* 86 (1996): 505-512.

²⁸¹ Peter Hill, “Recent Advances in Selected Aspects of Adolescent Development,” *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 34 (1993): 69-99.

²⁸² Jeanne E. Dise-Lewis, “The Life Events and Coping Inventory: An Assessment of Stress in Children,” *Psychosomatic Medicine* 50, no. 5 (1988): 487.

have more emotional problems²⁸³ and negative feelings²⁸⁴ and less psychological well-being²⁸⁵ than adults than those from intact families.

Upon the divorce of their parents, children experience a wide range of emotional reactions, including sadness,²⁸⁶ anger,²⁸⁷ loneliness,²⁸⁸ depression,²⁸⁹ heightened anxiety,²⁹⁰ worry, lower life satisfaction,²⁹¹ lower self-esteem²⁹² and self-confidence,²⁹³ fear, yearning, rejection, conflicting loyalties, and a sense of fault for their parents' problems.²⁹⁴ An analysis by David Popenoe of the National

²⁸³ Andrew J. Cherlin, P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, and Christine McRae, "Effects of Parental Divorce on Mental Health throughout the Life Course," *American Sociological Review* 63 (1998): 245-247.

²⁸⁴ Fridrik H. Jónsson, Urdur Njardvik, Gudlaug Ólafsdóttir, and Sigurdur J. Grétarsson, "Parental Divorce: Long-term Effects on Mental Health, Family Relations, and Adult Sexual Behavior," *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology* 41 (2000): 102.

²⁸⁵ Paul R. Amato, "Reconciling Divergent Perspectives: Judith Wallerstein, Quantitative Family Research," *Family Relations* 52 (2003): 338.

²⁸⁶ Paul R. Amato and Juliana M. Sobolewski, "The Effects of Divorce and Marital Discord on Adult Children's Psychological Well-being," *American Sociological Review* 66 (2001): 917.

²⁸⁷ Judith S. Wallerstein and Joan Berlin Kelly, *Surviving the Breakup: How Children and Parents Cope With Divorce* (1980; repr., New York, NY: Basic Books, 1996). Citations are from the 1996 edition.

²⁸⁸ Randy M. Page, "Adolescent Loneliness: A Priority for School Health Education," *Health Education Quarterly* 15 (1988): 20-23.

Nazmiye Çivitci, Asim Çivitci, and N. Ceren Fiyakali, "Loneliness and Life Satisfaction in Adolescents with Divorced and Non-Divorced Parents," *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice* 9 (2009): 518.

²⁸⁹ Hillevi M. Aro and Ulla K. Palosaari, "Parental Divorce, Adolescence, and Transition to Young Adulthood: A Follow-Up Study," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 62 (1992): 421.

Ronald L. Simons, Kuei-Hsiu Lin, Leslie C. Gordon, Rand D. Conger, and Frederick O. Lorenz, "Explaining the Higher Incidence of Adjustment Problems Among Children of Divorce Compared with Those in Two-Parent Families," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61 (1999): 1030.

Catherine E. Ross and John Mirowsky, "Parental Divorce, Life-Course Disruption, and Adult Depression," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 61 (1999): 1044.

Lisa Strohstein, "Parental Divorce and Child Mental Health Trajectories," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67 (2005): 1286, 1292.

²⁹⁰ Lisa Strohstein, "Parental Divorce and Child Mental Health Trajectories," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67 (2005): 1292.

²⁹¹ Nazmiye Çivitci, Asim Çivitci, and N. Ceren Fiyakali, "Loneliness and Life Satisfaction in Adolescents with Divorced and Non-Divorced Parents," *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice* 9 (2009): 518.

²⁹² Paul R. Amato and Juliana M. Sobolewski, "The Effects of Divorce and Marital Discord on Adult Children's Psychological Well-being," *American Sociological Review*, 66 (2001): 917.

Paul R. Amato, "Children of Divorce in the 1990s: An Update of the Amato and Keith (1991) Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15 (2001): 366.

²⁹³ Michael Workman and John Beer, "Aggression, Alcohol Dependency, and Self-consciousness among High School Students of Divorced and Non-divorced Parents," *Psychological Reports* 71 (1992): 279-286.

²⁹⁴ Berthold Berg and Lawrence A. Kurdek, "Children's Beliefs about Parental Divorce Scale: Psychometric Characteristics and Concurrent Validity," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 55 (1987): 716.

Survey of Children found that divorce was associated with a higher incidence of several mental health problems in children: depression; withdrawal from friends and family; aggressive, impulsive, or hyperactive behavior; and either behaving disruptively or withdrawing from participation in the classroom.²⁹⁵ Parental divorce may also contribute to the development of mood disorders, bipolar I disorder, dysthymia (mild chronic depression), depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.²⁹⁶

When children experience parental divorce before age five, they are particularly vulnerable to emotional conflicts at the time of their parents' separation.²⁹⁷ They will frequently cling to their parents and "regress" to bedwetting and other behaviors more characteristic of younger children. Older children, rather than clinging, frequently withdraw from home life and seek intimacy elsewhere.²⁹⁸ If divorce occurs while the children are teenagers (12 to 15 years old), they tend to react in one of two very different ways: by attempting to avoid growing up or by attempting to "speed through" adolescence.²⁹⁹ Finally, early sexual activity, substance abuse or dependence, hostile behavior, and depression are all more likely following divorce. These reactions are most likely if the parents divorced prior to age five, slightly less so if they divorce after age 10, and seemingly least of all during the five- to 10-year-old phase.³⁰⁰

Divorce is related to increased depression and anxiety for both boys and girls of all ages.³⁰¹ However, boys find parental divorce more emotionally disturbing than girls do,³⁰² and that "boys with divorced parents tended to be more depressed

²⁹⁵ Wells, Rankin, Demo, and Acock. As cited in David Popenoe, *Life without Father* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1996), 62.

²⁹⁶ Tracie O. Afifi, Jonathan Boman, William Fleisher, and Jitender Sareen, "The Relationship between Child Abuse, Parental Divorce, and Lifetime Mental Disorders and Suicidality in a Nationally Representative Adult Sample," *Child Abuse and Neglect* 33 (2009): 142-143.

²⁹⁷ Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, *To Have and To Hold: Strategies to Strengthen Marriage and Relationships* (Canberra, Australia: Parliament of Australia, 1998), 35.

²⁹⁸ Martin P. M. Richards and Maureen Dyson, *Separation, Divorce and the Development of Children: A Review* (London, UK: Department of Health and Social Security, 1982, unpublished report to the DHSS). As cited in Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, *To Have and To Hold: Strategies to Strengthen Marriage and Relationships* (Canberra, Australia, 1998), 34.

²⁹⁹ Murray M. Kappelman, "The Impact of Divorce on Adolescents," *American Family Physician* 35 (1987): 200-206.

³⁰⁰ David M. Fergusson, John Horwood, and Michael T. Lynskey, "Parental Separation, Adolescent Psychopathology, and Problem Behaviors," *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 33 (1994): 1122-1131.

³⁰¹ Lisa Strohschein, "Parental Divorce and Child Mental Health Trajectories," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67 (2005): 1296.

³⁰² Ronald L. Simons, Kuei-Hsiu Lin, Leslie C. Gordon, Rand D. Conger, and Frederick O. Lorenz, "Explaining the Higher Incidence of Adjustment Problems Among Children of Divorce Compared with Those in Two-Parent Families," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61 (1999): 1030.

than those from two-parent families regardless of the psychological adjustment, level of conflict, or quality of parenting manifested by their parents.”³⁰³

Psychological problems are less severe for those whose pre-divorce families were high-conflict families.³⁰⁴ According to Paul Amato of the Department of Sociology at Pennsylvania State University, child and adult well-being may actually improve after the end of an *extremely conflicted* marriage.³⁰⁵

International Findings. The British National Longitudinal study of children born in 1958 found that those who experienced parental divorce between ages seven through 16 experienced significant increase in their risk of psychopathology.³⁰⁶ A large Finnish study found that 22-year-old children of divorced parents experienced more job loss, that sons experienced more conflict with supervisors and teachers, and that daughters experienced more interpersonal conflict.³⁰⁷ A large sample from Sweden (over 14,000 participants) confirms the negative effects of parental divorce on mental health, no matter the socioeconomic status of the family.³⁰⁸ German research yields similar findings,³⁰⁹ as does an Australian parliamentary report.³¹⁰

³⁰³ Ronald L. Simons, Kuei-Hsiu Lin, Leslie C. Gordon, Rand D. Conger, and Frederick O. Lorenz, “Explaining the Higher Incidence of Adjustment Problems Among Children of Divorce Compared with Those in Two-Parent Families,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61 (1999): 1020.

³⁰⁴ Susan M. Jekielek, “Parental Conflict, Marital Disruption and Children’s Emotional Well-Being,” *Social Forces* 76 (1998): 905-935. As cited in Catherine E. Ross and John Mirowsky, “Parental Divorce, Life-Course Disruption, and Adult Depression,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 61 (1999): 1044.

³⁰⁵ Paul R. Amato, “The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62 (2000): 1282.

³⁰⁶ P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, Andrew J. Cherlin, and Kathleen E. Kiernan, “The Long-term Effects of Parental Divorce on the Mental Health of Young Adults: A Developmental Perspective,” *Child Development* 66 (1995): 1614-1634.

³⁰⁷ Hillevi M. Aro and Ulla K. Palosaari, “Parental Divorce, Adolescence, and Transition to Young Adulthood: A Follow-up Study,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 63 (1992): 424-425.

³⁰⁸ Duncan W. G. Timms, “Family Structure in Childhood and Mental Health in Adolescence,” Research Report 32 (University of Stockholm, Sweden: Project Metropolitan, Department of Sociology, 1991), 93. As cited in David Popenoe, *Life without Father* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1996), 58.

³⁰⁹ Hans-Christoph Steirhausen, Sigrid von Aster, and Dietmar Göbel, “Family Composition and Child Psychiatric Disorders,” *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 26 (1987): 242-246.

³¹⁰ Wadsworth (1984), Kuh and Mclean (1990). As cited in Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, *To Have and To Hold: Strategies to Strengthen Marriage and Relationships* (Canberra, Australia, Parliament of Australia: 1998), 35.

C. Damaging Behaviors

Suicide. Child suicide is often triggered by thoughts that his divorced parents reject him³¹¹ or have lost interest in him.³¹² The fact that the suicide rate has risen along with the divorce rate is no coincidence.³¹³ One study reported that risk of a suicide attempt was higher in divorced families, though the association was eliminated after controlling for adverse experiences.³¹⁴ As the work of Patricia McCall, a sociology professor at North Carolina State University, shows, the strongest demographic indicator of suicide is the family structure within which a person resides: the divorced family structure has the highest suicide rate.³¹⁵

Women from divorced families are 1.46 times as likely to attempt suicide as women from intact families.³¹⁶ An earlier study by the same author found that women raised in divorced families are 1.33 times as likely to attempt suicide; this finding holds true even after adjusting for various confounding factors, such as age, race, and income.³¹⁷ This link between parental divorce and the rise in adolescent suicide has been found again and again in the literature.³¹⁸ Cross-cultural studies of Japan and the United States have clearly demonstrated the link between divorce and suicidal thought.³¹⁹

³¹¹ David B. Larson, James P. Swyers, and Susan S. Larson, *The Costly Consequences of Divorce*, (Rockville, MD: National Institute for Healthcare Research, 1995), 126.

³¹² John S. Wodarski and Pamela Harris, "Adolescent Suicide: A Review of Influences and the Means for Prevention," *Social Work* 32 (1987): 479.

³¹³ Richard J. Cebula and Tatyana V. Zelenskaya, "Determinants of Youth Suicide: A Friendly Comment with Suggestions," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 65, no. 4 (2006): 996.

³¹⁴ J. Hardt, A. Sidor, R. Nickel, B. Kappis, P. Petrak, and U.T. Egle, "Childhood Adversities and Suicide Attempts: A Retrospective Study," *Journal of Family Violence* 23 (2008): 716.

³¹⁵ Patricia L. McCall and Kenneth C. Land, "Trends in White Male Adolescent, Young-Adult, and Elderly Suicide: Are There Common Underlying Structural Factors?" *Social Science Research* 23 (1994): 57-81.

³¹⁶ Dana Lizardi, Ronald G. Thompson, Katherine Keyes, and Deborah Hasin, "The Role of Depression in the Differential Effect of Childhood Parental Divorce on Male and Female Adult Offspring Suicide Attempt Risk," *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 198, no. 9 (2010): 689.

³¹⁷ Dana Lizardi, Ronald G. Thompson, Katherine Keyes, and Deborah Hasin, "Parental Divorce, Parental Depression, and Gender Differences in Adult Offspring Suicide Attempt," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 197 (2009): 901.

³¹⁸ David B. Larson, James P. Swyers, and Susan S. Larson, *The Costly Consequences of Divorce*, (Rockville, MD: National Institute for Healthcare Research, 1995), 124.

Carmen Noevi Velez and Patricia Cohen, "Suicidal Behavior and Ideation in a Community Sample of Children: Maternal and Youth Reports," *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 27 (1988): 349-356.

Franklyn L. Nelson, Norman L. Farberow, and Robert E. Litman, "Youth Suicide in California: A Comparative Study of Perceived Causes and Interventions," *Community Mental Health Journal* 24 (1988): 31-42.

³¹⁹ David Lester and Kazuhiko Abe, "The Regional Variation of Divorce Rates in Japan and the United States," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 18 (1993): 227-230.

Destructive Behavior. A meta-analysis of 72 studies shows that parental divorce has a very strong effect on the likelihood of engaging in juvenile delinquent acts.³²⁰ Boys from divorced families exhibit more risky behavior than boys from intact families.³²¹ Confirming the Amato conclusion referred to earlier,³²² children in high-conflict households whose parents remain married exhibit more severe destructive behavior than children whose parents actually divorce.³²³

VII. Research Has Not Yet Found the Terminus of These Long-term Effects

Unlike the experience of divorced former spouses, a child's suffering does not reach its peak at the divorce and then level off. Rather, the effect of the parents' divorce can be played and replayed throughout the next three decades of a child's life.³²⁴ For instance, an Australian parliamentary study tracked children whose parents divorced in 1946, and tested them two and three decades later. Even 30 years after the divorce, negative long-term repercussions still clearly affected the income, health, and behavior of many of the grown children.³²⁵ As Paul Amato writes, "Though some adults and children adjust relatively quickly to divorce...others exhibit long-term deficits in functioning."³²⁶ Children's well-being over the long term is determined by circumstances both prior to and after their parents' divorce.³²⁷

Intergenerational Effects. Divorce has a profound intergenerational effect. One study showed that "ever-divorced grandparents live significantly farther away from the parent and grandchild...report a weaker relationship with the

³²⁰ Cynthia Price and Jenifer Kunz, "Rethinking the Paradigm of Juvenile Delinquency as Related to Divorce," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 39 (2003): 126.

³²¹ Ed Spruijt and Vincent Duidam, "Problem Behavior of Boys and Young Men after Parental Divorce in the Netherlands," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 34, no. 3/4 (2005): 150.

³²² See "Effect on Child Health: Stunted Physical and Psychological Growth," Increased Emotional and Psychiatric Burdens.

³²³ Donna Ruane Morrison and Mary Jo Coiro, "Parental Conflict and Marital Disruption: Do Children Benefit When High-conflict Marriages Are Dissolved?" *Journal of Marriage and Family* 61 (1999): 626-637.

³²⁴ Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, *To Have and To Hold: Strategies to Strengthen Marriage and Relationships* (Canberra, Australia, Parliament of Australia: 1998), 39.

³²⁵ Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, *To Have and To Hold: Strategies to Strengthen Marriage and Relationships* (Canberra, Australia, Parliament of Australia: 1998), 35.

³²⁶ Paul R. Amato, "The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62 (2000): 1282.

³²⁷ Frank F. Furstenberg and Kathleen E. Kiernan, "Delayed Parental Divorce: How Much Do Children Benefit?" *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 446.

parent...and are more likely to be part of a family system where both generations have divorced (13 [percent] vs. 3 [percent]).”³²⁸

Paul Amato and Jacob Cheadle studied the long-reaching effects of divorce across three generations and found that “[d]ivorce in the first (G1) generation was associated with lower education, more marital discord, weaker ties with mothers, and weaker ties with fathers in the third (G3) generation. These associations were mediated by family characteristics in the middle (G2) generation, including lower education, more marital discord, and greater tension in the early parent-child relationships.”³²⁹ This study demonstrates that parental divorce has consequences for children and subsequent generations. Amato and Cheadle also reported in this study that “[p]arental divorce doubled the odds of divorce” in the child’s own life.³³⁰

Soon to Come Increase in Costs. Of special note is the finding that children of divorce are less likely to think they should support their parents in old age.³³¹ This finding portends a monumental public cost problem for the frequently-divorced baby boom generation as it becomes the dependent elderly generation in the first half of the 21st century.

Conclusion

The family is the building block of society, and marriage is its foundation. Divorce has pervasive weakening effects on children and on all of the five major institutions of society—the family, the church, the school, the marketplace, and government itself. However, this foundation is growing weaker as fewer adults marry, more adults divorce, and more adults choose single parenthood or cohabitation.³³²

³²⁸ Valarie King, “The Legacy of a Grandparent’s Divorce: Consequences for Ties Between Grandparents and Grandchildren,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 65 (2003): 176.

³²⁹ Paul R. Amato and Jacob Cheadle, “The Long Reach of Divorce: Divorce and Child Well-Being Across Three Generations,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67 (2005): 191.

³³⁰ Paul R. Amato and Jacob Cheadle, “The Long Reach of Divorce: Divorce and Child Well-Being Across Three Generations,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67 (2005): 201.

³³¹ William S. Aquilino, “Later-Life Parental Divorce and Widowhood: Impact on Young Adults’ Assessment of Parent-Child Relations,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 56 (1994): 918.

³³² Between 1960 and 1990, there has been a 41 percent decline in marriage. The number of always-single persons has risen from 21 million in 1970 to 46 million in 1996. At the same time, cohabitation has jumped from 430,000 in 1960 to 4.25 million in 1998, an increase by a factor of 10. The literature also shows that cohabitation itself is linked to an increased likelihood of divorce: those who cohabit before marriage divorce at twice the rate of those who do not. Also, 40 percent of cohabitators separate before marrying; these former cohabitators, when they finally marry, divorce at twice the rate of those who marry their first cohabiting partner and at about four times the rate of those who do not cohabit before marriage. See: Larry L. Bumpass, “What’s Happening to the Family? Interactions Between Demographic and Institutional Change,” Population Association of America, 1990 Presidential Address, *Demography* 27 (1990), 483-498.

Society's major institutions (family, church, school, marketplace and government) all have a great interest in reducing divorce to almost zero, for it weakens each institution by weakening the human capacities of each laborer, citizen, worshiper, and student that it touches. Leaders of these institutions must shoulder their responsibility to end the culture of rejection. Policymakers, pastors, and academics all bear the responsibility to motivate them in that direction.

American children today are weaker than children of previous generations—intellectually, morally, emotionally, and physically, and our human capital is decreasing.³³³ Moreover, the American nation today is socially weaker than in the past, and the America of tomorrow will be weaker still. For instance, few are willing to point to divorce as a major contributor to our economic problem. Americans in the media and in politics are comfortable pointing at a failing educational system or at teenage unwed mothers and the deleterious effects they have on children and society, but no one likes to dwell on the pervasive and broad negative effects of divorce.

It is necessary to know reality and the facts in order that we see and understand the whole bleak picture and are moved to set about the task of rebuilding a culture of families based on marriage, a culture of love and belonging, with all the societal props and protections necessary to make this familial norm normal once again. Each and every child deserves it. The nation needs it.

³³³ Henry Potrykus and Patrick Fagan, "Decline of Economic Growth: Human Capital & Population Change," (Washington, D.C.: Marriage and Religion Research Institute, 3 August 2011). See also forthcoming paper on the effects of divorce on the growth rate of the economy by Potrykus and Fagan.