

Divorce and the affects it has on children

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Long-term outcome of psychological trauma in childhood after parents divorce is inevitably difficult to trace or to identify. Many complexly interacting factors shape the lives of children, and the conceptual and methodological problems in studying any single factor or set of factors are formidable. Moreover, society in recent years become increasingly aware of the enduring effects of psychic trauma, and that these effects may not be visible immediately or in subsequent specific behaviors or symptoms, but may forever shatter the individual's guiding conception of the world as relatively safe and reliable . Theoretical issues include the lack of clarity regarding expectable continuity and discontinuity in development; perplexing individual differences and wide variation in immediate and subsequent response to what appear to be similar experiences; methodological issues of cohort problems and the confounding fact that psychological configurations discerned at any cross-sectional vantage point inevitably highlight that which is most salient at that developmental stage and may obscure patterns of behavior that become prominent at a subsequent stage.

Thus, observations about children of divorce at the point of their entry into young adulthood differ significantly from observations of the same group during midadolescence. Beyond the broad considerations that attach to all longitudinal investigations, the study of divorce and its long-range consequences for children within the post divorce or remarried family poses special problems. For divorce, as we have finally recognized, is not a single circumscribed event, but a multistage process of radically changing family relationships. This process begins in the failing marriage, sometimes many

years prior to the marital breakdown, may include one or more separations within the marriage, and extends over years following the decisive separation and the legal divorce. Many families experience not only extended instability in family functioning, but discontinuity in their physical and social environment as well. A goodly number face major decline in their social and economic circumstances, and diminished educational opportunities for their children (Stephanie, p.

24). The remarriage of one or both parents introduces a whole new set of critical factors that once again radically alters relationships and circumstances within the family. Each of these changes in and outside of the family takes on meaning for the child within the overall context of the divorce. Altogether, these changes impose psychological tasks upon the child that represent notable additions to the usual tasks of growing up in our society. For the child, the necessary readjustments are likely, from our observations, to stretch out over the years of childhood and adolescence (Spitz, R.

A. p. 56). For the adult, the divorce also presents a formidable set of new tasks that must be addressed, and that cannot be deferred without unfortunate, even tragic, consequences for themselves and for the children in their care (Spitz, R. A.

p. 71). Psychoanalytic and social learning studies theories suggest that fathers play a central role in the moral development of their sons. According to these theories, children who were not living with their fathers because of separation, divorce, death, or out-of-wedlock birth were considered to be

more likely to present delinquent habits. In a non-clinic study of four- to six-year-olds, researchers found that children whose parents were divorced were more demanding, disobedient, aggressive, and lacking in self-control than those of two-parent households (Silverman, M. p.

10). There are many factors that play a role in child delinquency. Despite impressive evidence from studies on this subject, there are a few points that should not be overlooked. First of all, race and socio-economic status also play a role in child delinquency. Secondly, many adolescents who violate the law are not severely penalized. Delinquency statistics reflect both the child's behavior as well as decisions made by legal professionals.

While family status is related to delinquency, the stability of a child's family is one factor frequently considered in decisions made by the courts on whether to arrest/prosecute a child (Farrington 1979). Third, it must be recognized that every child coming from a divorced family will not necessarily have behavioral problems or delinquent tendencies. Finally, since father absence alone is not linked with externalizing problems among children of divorced families, there is controversy over which factors might account for the increased conduct disorders. Parental conflict and lowered family income are thought to be influences as well. ...