

# The effects of divorce on children essay sample

[Family](#), [Divorce](#)



In an article published in *The Christian Century*, Elizabeth Marquardt, author of the book *Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce*, explains that she is shocked by the fact that there are very few resources that discuss the “moral and spiritual impact of divorce on children” (Hoffman et al, 2006). She expresses an understanding of the fact that this type of study is difficult to conduct as there are so many variables at play. It is quite apparent that no two families are similar whether both parents are residing under one roof or not. Thus, the effects, especially in today’s modern world are going to be wide-ranging leaving no black and white but only gray areas for which to evaluate.

Undoubtedly, there are negative effects on the children who are faced with the separation of their parents. However, it seems more likely to be the events leading up to the adults’ decision to part ways rather than the divorce itself. Although there is no research to support such a conclusion, it stands to reason that there is a possibility that a child living with parents who are dealing with problems that would warrant a divorce just might endure the same emotional and social problems as they would had their parents physically distanced themselves from one another. In the same sense, two individuals who are happily married would provide a healthier environment in which a child could be raised to be successful with far fewer personal issues; it is not solely the fact that they are married (Hoffman et al, 2006).

Elizabeth Marquardt does make one statement that is difficult to agree with: “two-thirds of all divorces are unnecessary” (Hoffman et al, 2006). In declaring an act to be “unnecessary” all reasoning would have to be recognized as such. Yet, it is complicated to sort out all explanations for a  
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couple's divorce and further categorize them as being petty or insufficient enough to take action. If her conclusion has been reached based on conversation with children, there are many conflicts and irreconcilable differences in a marriage that may have been purposely hidden, with good reason.

Additionally, Marquardt discusses a need for the church to take a more active role in the lives of its young congregational members. The finalizing act of divorce is not the only incidence of chaos that can take place in the lives of children, but as previously mentioned, it is also the events leading up to the parental breakup. If the only model of an adult relationship that is on display is within the child's home and it is not one of positive influence there is very little hope of the child growing up to sustain a healthy one of their own. This lack of model behavior, though, should not be an acceptable excuse for an adult who is unable to cope with the daily responsibilities of life.

There is a need in today's society for children who have gone through a divorce to be studied. It is unfortunate that the court system, which is a whole other topic in and of itself, is able to allow an emotionally hurt parent to take the rights of a child to see the other parent away through the prevention of visitation. In the United States, this, what has been termed "parental alienation," is reported to occur in countless divorce cases (Hoffman et al, 2006). Hoffman et al (2006) describes the outcome of such a scenario with a quote from a little boy in "marriage ministry" saying "my dad doesn't even like me." It is more likely that the truth of the matter is the mother has

directly or perhaps even indirectly, through badmouthing the father in front of the child, brainwashed him into thinking this. It is this judicial enabling that accounts for a great deal of the “ psychological torture” children across the nation face throughout a vast majority of their young lives and often times into adulthood (Hoffman et al, 2006).

The title of Elizabeth Marquardt’s book, Between Two Worlds, is an excellent metaphor for what happens to the familial relationship when a divorce takes place. When looking at the prerequisite for divorce, which is marriage or the joining of two worlds divorce can be seen as just the opposite. It may well be possible for each parent to lead a new life but the child is tied to each of these worlds and typically lives between them. Now the decision-making no longer rests on the ideas of a joint venture but are two completely separate entities. Thus, the child must extract those values and beliefs that he or she feels to be most beneficial to a personally successful future and manipulate a life on their own. As time goes on, each of these worlds becomes naturally more different from one another as each parent develops “ new relationships, new jobs, new interests” (Marquardt, 2006).

Although it can depend a great deal on the age of the child when the divorce takes place in addition to custody arrangements, the basic need for them to deal with morality issues remains the same. There may be contrasts between the two worlds from which they are thrust back and forth.

Therefore, this responsibility to pass down answers to such questions as: right and wrong; religion; truth; beliefs and belonging lies in the hands of the parents, now on separate but unanimous fields. Sometimes, no matter how

hard the parents attempt civility in the child's presence it is difficult to escape one world being undermined by the other and the child seeing " their parents as polar opposites even when they don't fight" (Marquardt, 2006).

Due to the fact that children of divorce are offered conflicting advice or exposed to different morals and ethical behaviors, they tend to become very independent not only physically but also mentally. The familial relationship they once knew is a blur and they may be forced to care for younger siblings while the single parent is working, take care of the housework as far as cleaning and preparing meals, and they may need to travel between the worlds on their own via airplane, train, or bus, depending upon the circumstances. This seems as though it is not such a bad thing to have a nation of young independent moral thinkers who are programmed for life at such an early age. However, they are losing their childhood, which is " something that we should mourn, not celebrate" (Marquardt, 2006). In many cases, children are unable to perform the tasks being asked of them. This only clarifies the studies that express the fact that children of divorced parents are often three-times more likely than their counterparts, living in a healthy home environment, to face serious problems later in life. Such issues may also be immediate resulting in a numbing of the pain they are feeling with premarital sexual activity, smoking, or addictions to alcohol and drugs (Marquardt, 2006).

It is extremely strenuous on the parents but more so the children when the divorced couple is getting along outside of marriage. This leads the child to feel confused as to why the divorce even took place or have false hopes of

reconciliation. Parental behavior in these situations is critical. Of course it is beneficial for both parents to be equally involved in the child's life no matter the living situation; however, the ethical dilemma arises when the child is being sent mixed signals and not being openly communicated with every step of the way.

#### References

Hoffman, Louis, Kathryn Geier, Jeff Paschal, and Carolyn M. Watkins, and Elizabeth Marquardt. "Children of Divorce." The Christian Century. 123(2006): 44-45.

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