

# Divorce: the new american dream



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Divorce: The New American Dream Although divorce has always been a part of American culture, it has skyrocketed in the last few decades, reaching an all time high of 50% of all marriages ending in separation. Our culture has changed its view on divorce throughout the years and now accepts divorce in society. In the past, divorce was forbidden. People did not discuss the issue as openly as we do today.

In the past, divorce was never shown in the media and was looked down on. Today's culture has shaped divorce into a more positive decision and has made it relatively easy to file for a separation. With all the hype about marriage and living the American dream, I often wonder what has influenced such an increase in the divorce rate over the last few decades. Perhaps there is more to divorce than the common assumptions such as, stress in relationship or financial issues. Although money and stress attribute to divorce, I believe there is a much bigger cause for the increasing rate.

I believe the increasing divorce rates are attributed to advances in women's rights and their ability to succeed in careers once only suitable for men. Women have pushed for equal rights and in return are not willing to settle considering there well deserved freedom as a women. Unlike in the past, today's culture presents women with equality among gender and job opportunities, making it easier for them to survive without the help of a spouse. They are no longer limited in choices, and are able to fulfill their dreams and find financial stability without a man to provide it for them. In the past women stayed home and tended to house work.

They had little education and rarely worked outside of the home. Women were expected to get married and play the role as Housewife. According to Rosenberg, “ few women had an eight grade education in 1900, where as today, 85 percent finish high school, with more than 22 percent completing college” (245). Considering women’s educational disadvantages in the past, job opportunities were limited so women had no choice but to settle down with a man.

They were expected to cater to their husband and children, while completing housework, a job often looked at as the women’s job. In fact, “ until the middle of the nineteenth century, married women had no right to property of their own. The common law gave a women’s husband absolute right to her services, including any outside income she might earn” (Crittenden 46). Considering women’s rights have become more equal, it’s no wonder they are breaking away from the expectations and creating there own goals in life. Although today’s society has encouraged women’s right and equality among job opportunities, women still feel a great deal of pressure to live up to the housewife standard in a marriage. Women are generally associated with household tasks and taking care of children.

The International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family notes that marriage for women often means more household chores and daily tasks, decreasing the amount of work put in by the male (472). Although men tend to help out, it is usually with more appealing jobs like cooking and outdoor activities, rather than the grueling daily chores like cleaning the bathroom or washing laundry. These tasks are perceived as a women’s job, and although some women find the extra household chores fair, many find it hardly fair because

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they too are taking on busy careers in the workforce. Regardless of women's increasing participation in the workforce, they still handle the bulk of household duties.

Studies have shown a wife's value of domestic housework to add up to astronomical amounts. According to the Edelman Financial Services of Fairfax, Virginia, a housewife's domestic value reaches nearly \$58,000 a month, quickly adding up to a lump sum of \$674,700 a year (Kingston 263). Women are expected to manage tasks such as cooking meals, housekeeping, and caring for children, all the while maintaining their careers and personal relationship with their spouse. Society is evolving to meet the needs of women, changing the role of the housewife we have come to know.

Marriage for a woman means giving up her own dreams which explains the rise in divorce and the reasons women aren't willing to settle. Today's culture has made it possible for women to break free of their shackles marriage has put on them in the past and let them experience life the way they envision it. Men are no longer the only one who can have a career, as more and more women are joining the workforce and finding success in their hard work. Becoming a Wife is much more stress than many women seem to imagine. Household chores are never ending and can be exhausting when trying to juggle family and a career. Even though many women agree with the added work, many more are coming to terms with their life and choosing routes leading far away from marriage.

In today's culture women have better opportunities to work outside of the home. They are treated with respect and often work outside the home just as

much as men, yet the bulk of household chores are still considered the women's job. The international Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family concludes "the lonely and never ending aspects of housework contribute to the increased depression for U. S. housewives," thus leading women to the socially accepted marital separation.

Women are pulling forty hour weeks plus countless hours of household work with out the help of their husband. With all the increased stress, women are now able to make choices such as getting a divorce without the financial fear or reputation once associated with divorce. It's no wonder the divorce rate has increased in the last decades. With the increasing rights of women, they are now able to take on careers and find success for themselves rather than relying on man to give them the sense of achievement. Along with their thriving careers, they are able to juggle household duties making it possible for women to move away from choices involving marriage.

For many, further schooling has become readily available and has aided in the success of women rights. Society has made it possible for women to break away from their binding agreement as "the Wife" and has allowed them success in careers once perceived as only a man's job. In the past marriage was considered the milestone to living the American Dream but now is viewed as a prison meant to enforce the role of wife, which explains the increased divorce rate. Women no longer thrive to settle down and marry but instead break away on their own quest to success, which can explain why two-thirds of all divorces in the U.

S. are initiated by the prevailing wife (Kingston 4). 1, 150