
3 Introduction

4 Marital dissolution or divorce is one of the most
5 dramatic events that can befall a family: Hardly
6 anyone who has undergone a divorce regards it as
7 “just another” transition or event. For many, in
8 fact, their divorces or their parents’ divorces are
9 life-defining events, around which all other experi-
10 ences are organized: “before the divorce” vs.
11 “after the divorce.”

12 Divorce is also relatively ubiquitous in the
13 Western hemisphere. As shown in the next sec-
14 tion, divorce today is so commonplace that even
15 those who are not directly affected by divorce
16 invariably know families and individuals who are
17 so affected. That this reality is a relatively recent
18 phenomenon, largely confined to the last 5
19 decades, is not always appreciated.

20 This chapter will largely focus on divorcing
21 families in the United States that include *chil-*
22 *dren*. There is a separate and largely nonoverlap-
23 ping literature on childless dissolutions not
24 summarized here (for space reasons); that litera-
25 ture shows that the effects tend to be milder and

of shorter duration (Masheter, 1991; Metts & 26
Cupach, 1995) than those described here. In the 27
sections that follow, first, we present the *statisti-* 28
cal picture, putting today’s situation in *historical* 29
context. Next, we explore the *antecedents or pre-* 30
dictors of divorce, distinguishing between 31
“macro” level (factors that move the culture as a 32
whole toward greater or lower rates of divorce) 33
and “micro” level (factors that move specific 34
couples to divorce) influences. Macro-level fac- 35
tors are of greatest interest to sociologists, 36
demographers, economists, historians, policy 37
specialists, and legal scholars whereas micro- 38
level factors are of primary interest to psycholo- 39
gists, family scholars, and therapists. Because 40
this Handbook addresses an interdisciplinary 41
audience, it is appropriate (though unusual) that 42
we consider both sets of antecedents. Consistent 43
with another goal of this Handbook, we briefly 44
review *theories* regarding the ways in which 45
these factors influence divorce. Then we turn to 46
the *consequences of divorce* for mothers and 47
fathers, distinguishing between the legal, behav- 48
ioral, emotional, social, health, and financial 49
consequences. Then we review the effects of divorce 50
on the children involved, noting how the parents’ 51
responses often modulate the impact on children. 52
Because divorce is so fully intertwined with the 53
legal system, we next discuss the legal issues and 54
processes involved when parents divorce. Our 55
final sections cover, respectively, issues, pro- 56
cesses and policies under current debate; meth- 57
odological issues arising in the study of divorcing 58
parents and a concluding section. 59

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Divorce in Historical Perspective

At the founding of America, divorce was extremely rare: only nine divorces occurred in the entire 72-year history of the Plymouth colony (Riley, 1991). It was not until after the Revolutionary War that courts, as opposed to legislatures, took jurisdiction over divorce. Once that occurred, more reliable record-keeping began. There are several indices frequently used to track divorce prevalence: (1) the absolute number of divorces granted; (2) the “crude rate” (i.e., the number of divorces per 1,000 people); (3) the divorce-to-marriage rate (i.e., number of divorces divided by the number of marriage licenses granted); (4) and the “refined rate” (i.e., the number of divorces per 1,000 married women over 15). The latter is the index most demographers prefer, because it is the closest to the index (5, i.e., the “risk rate”) that would be most informative (i.e., what percentage of married couples eventually get divorced). However, short of tracking each individual couple, the latter isn’t readily calculable and can only be estimated by making assumptions. The risk rate for women born between 1948 and 1950 is estimated at 42 % (Bumpass, Martin, & Sweet, 1991; Schoen & Standish, 2001; Teachman, Tedrow, & Hall, 2006).

Figure 21.1 shows the refined divorce rate (index 4) from 1870 to 2000. Fewer than 2 marriages per 1,000 married women ended in divorce in 1870; the figure rose to 18 per 1,000 married women in 2000, with several obvious secular trends over the period. There was an upward “blip” following WWI, as well as a huge but very temporary spike during WWII; both are usually explained as responses to the hardships placed on marriage by the vicissitudes of war. But the pattern from the late 1960s to the late 1970s is the one of greatest interest to contemporary family scholars; during that decade, the divorce rate doubled (Michael, 1988). Since then, the rate has drifted rather steadily but gradually downward. Possible explanations of recent patterns need to account for both of these tendencies.

Antecedents, Causes, or Predictors of Divorce

Macro Level Antecedents

Scholars have explored four groups of factors to account for the divorce rate trends starting around 1968: demographic, legal, economic, and attitudinal/cultural.

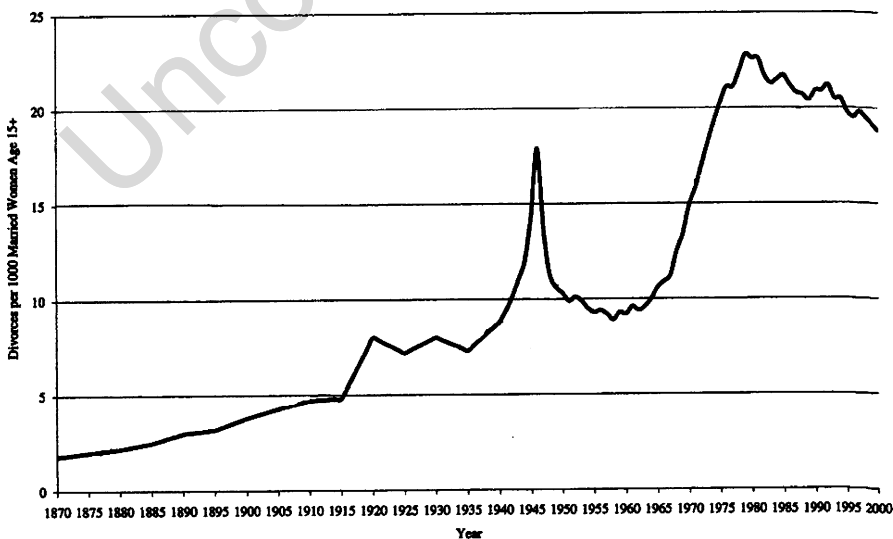


Fig. 21.1 Divorces per 1,000 married women aged 15 and older by year, 1870–2000 (adapted from Jacobson, 1959; Preston & McDonald, 1979)

112 *Demographic factors.* Several demographic trends
 113 are related to divorce rates. For example, the older
 114 the age at marriage, the less likely the couple is to
 115 divorce (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001).
 116 Because couples have recently waited longer to
 117 marry, this may account for the leveling of the
 118 divorce rate in recent years; indeed, Heaton (2002),
 119 found that this factor can account fully for the
 120 divorce trends of the 1975–1995 period. However,
 121 it fails to account for the dramatic earlier increases.
 122 Similarly, educational attainment is associated
 123 (negatively) with divorce (Bumpass et al., 1991;
 124 Heaton, 2002). The tendency for average levels of
 125 education to increase steadily over time corre-
 126 sponds to the reduction in divorce rates since 1980,
 127 but does not explain the increase during the 1970s,
 128 when education levels increased as well.

129 *Legal factors.* One of the most obvious factors that
 130 coincided with the staggering increase in the
 131 divorce rate was the liberalization of divorce laws.
 132 Prior to 1969, couples seeking divorce had to
 133 prove that one spouse had violated the marriage
 134 contract. In that year, the no-fault/unilateral divorce
 135 movement began in California and was emulated
 136 across the nation in the next decade. Thereafter,
 137 one and only one spouse had merely to proclaim
 138 the marriage “irretrievably broken” for the divorce
 139 to be granted (Amato & Irving, 2006). Note that
 140 this timing coincided almost perfectly with the
 141 increase in the divorce rate, leading some (e.g.,
 142 Allen, 1992; Nakonezny, Shull, & Rodgers, 1995;
 143 Parkman, 2000) to conclude that liberalization of
 144 the divorce code was the primary reason for the
 145 increase in divorce. Although this claim makes
 146 some intuitive sense (of course, divorce rates
 147 increase when divorces are easier to obtain), it ulti-
 148 mately must be rejected for two reasons. First, it
 149 does not account for the more recent downturn in
 150 divorce (the laws remain the same now as they
 151 were in the 1970s; Wolfers, 2006); second, more
 152 careful analysis, including state-by-state calcula-
 153 tions (Ellman & Lohr, 1998; Peters, 1992) suggest
 154 that changes in divorce laws tended to follow,
 155 rather than lead, increases in the divorce rate. Thus,
 156 during the critical decade something else appears
 157 to have caused both the increase in divorce and the
 158 passage of legislation facilitating divorce.

Economic factors. One such likely candidate 159
 variable is female labor force participation. The per- 160
 centage of women with school age children working 161
 outside the home increased dramatically, from 28 % 162
 in 1950 to 68 % in 1986 (Hochschild & Machung, 163
 1989). In 1970, for the first time in history, a major- 164
 ity of women were employed (Bergmann, 1986). 165
 Having independent incomes allowed women who 166
 were unhappy in their marriages to contemplate 167
 divorce. Schoen, Astone, Rothert, Standish, and 168
 Kim (2002) found that wives’ incomes were indeed 169
 linked to divorce—but only for marriages that were 170
 unhappy. Nonetheless, female labor force participa- 171
 tion fails to account fully for changing divorce rates, 172
 because it increased gently, year by year, before and 173
 after the critical decade, whereas divorce rates 174
 increased exponentially only after 1968 (Michael, 175
 1988). Further, the percentage of women working 176
 outside the home has continued to increase from the 177
 1980s until today, while the divorce rate has declined 178
 over that period. 179

Cultural/attitudinal factors. The final category of 180
 variables often implicated by scholars involves 181
 cultural and attitudinal factors. There is little 182
 doubt that the public generally became more 183
 accepting of divorce during the late 1960s and 184
 1970s (Thornton, 1989). Commenting on such 185
 features of the “me first” generation (Bellah, 186
 Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985), 187
 Amato and Irving (2006) observed that “American 188
 culture has become increasingly individualistic, 189
 and people have become inordinately preoccu- 190
 pied with the pursuit of personal happiness. 191
 Because people no longer wish to be hampered 192
 with obligations to others, commitment to traditional 193
 institutions that require these obligations, such as 194
 marriage, has eroded” (p. 51). These normative 195
 changes, perhaps better than the other categories 196
 of variables reviewed above, appear to account 197
 for both the dramatic rise and the mild decline in 198
 divorce over the last 50 years. 199

However, two questions need further explica- 200
 tion: (1) what factors precipitated these changes 201
 in values; and (2) to what extent were the changes 202
 pervasive and universal vs. specific to certain 203
 demographic groups or regions? Addressing such 204
 issues definitively is difficult, of course, because 205

206 quantifying precise features of cultural changes
207 over time is a daunting task.

208 The first author (working with Jenessa Shapiro)
209 hit upon a promising device to elucidate these
210 issues. Reasoning that popular magazines both
211 reflected and galvanized distinctive cultural views,
212 Braver and Shapiro speculated that subscription
213 rates to certain of these magazines across times and
214 locales could provide an empirical window onto
215 these trends. They thus obtained state-by-state,
216 year-by-year subscription data for the following
217 four magazines: *Lady's Home Journal* (read almost
218 entirely by women with fairly traditional values and
219 interests); *Playboy* (glorifying male hedonism);
220 *Cosmopolitan* (representing lifestyle advice for
221 "fun, fearless females" seeking empowerment, self-
222 improvement, and sexual fulfillment); and *Ms.* (rep-
223 resenting the feminist ideology closely associated
224 with the Women's Movement). Arraying these subscrip-
225 tion rates in a multi-level model against the
226 year-by-year, state-by-state (crude) divorce rates,
227 Braver and Shapiro found (in results not previously
228 published) that changes in divorce rates at the state
229 level were well matched by the state's trends in subscrip-
230 tions to *Ms. Magazine*, and were opposite
231 (though not significantly) to its trends in subscrip-
232 tions to *Lady's Home Journal*. Importantly, they
233 found virtually no association between the state's
234 divorce rate and its subscriptions to *Playboy* or
235 *Cosmopolitan*. Taken together, these data provocatively
236 suggest that some, but not all, value changes
237 are associated with changes in divorce rates.
238 Changing levels of interest in the aspects of self-
239 fulfillment and self-empowerment captured in femi-
240 nist ideology and its antithesis seemed important,
241 whereas changes in the emphasis on either male-
242 specialized or female-specific self-fulfillment and
243 hedonism were unrelated to divorce trends.
244 Strengthening this interpretation, since around
245 1970, about 2 in 3 divorces have been sought by
246 wives (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Braver, Whitley,
247 & Ng, 1993; Pettit & Bloom, 1984), whereas previ-
248 ously, "most divorces were the man's idea"
249 (DeWitt, 1992, p. 54). In addition, findings show
250 that the more that an individual woman agrees
251 with the precepts of the Woman's Movement, the
252 more likely she is to divorce (Finlay, Starnes, &
253 Alvarez, 1985).

254 Micro-level Antecedents

255 Whatever the divorce rate at a particular time, some
256 couples divorce and others do not. There has been
257 extensive research on the micro-level factors that
258 predict divorce (Rodrigues, Hall, & Fincham, 2006;
259 White, 1990). In addition to those demographic vari-
260 ables mentioned earlier (age at marriage and educa-
261 tion levels), race is associated with the risk of divorce:
262 African-American and interracial couples are more
263 likely to divorce than Anglo-American couples
264 (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002; Heaton, 2002). Having
265 lived together before marriage is another risk factor
266 (Bumpass et al., 1991; Heaton, 2002) as is having
267 divorced parents (Amato, 1996; Wolfinger, 1999,
268 2000). This "intergenerational transmission of
269 divorce" seems best explained by the relatively weak
270 commitment to marriage on the part of offspring
271 with divorced parents (Amato & DeBoer, 2001).
272 Belonging to certain religions is associated with
273 reduced risk as well (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002),
274 especially when individuals are highly religious, in
275 whatever faith (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002; Mahoney
276 et al., 2001). Generally, income reduces the risk of
277 divorce (Kurdek, 1993), but as wives earn more, and
278 account for a greater proportion of family income,
279 the risk of divorce increases (Rogers, 2004).
280 A qualification to this pattern are results in a study by
281 Sayer and Bianchi (2000) that wives' financial inde-
282 pendence predicted divorce only if they were
283 unsatisfied in their marriages. Again, we note that
284 the lack of income that once restrained unhappily
285 married women from divorce has become weakened
286 by their collective economic advances. Personality
287 factors, especially neuroticism, are also associated
288 with an elevated risk for divorce (Karney &
289 Bradbury, 1995; Kelly & Conley, 1987). A study by
290 Kiernan (1986) reported, for example, that neuroti-
291 cism measured in adolescence predicted women's
292 divorce by age 32.

293 Notwithstanding these demographic factors,
294 the most important micro-level predictors clearly
295 involve features of the marital relationships them-
296 selves. Before describing the empirical findings,
297 however, we note several relevant theories.

298 *Social exchange theory.* The social exchange the-
299 ory of divorce proposes that couples are constantly

300 (perhaps subconsciously) evaluating their marriages
 301 (and other relationships). They evaluate relation-
 302 ships in terms of reward-cost ratios to either make
 303 a “profit” or at least reduce their perceived losses.
 304 If their perceived costs become too high and contin-
 305 ual losses are experienced, then divorce
 306 becomes more likely. Spouses are also more likely
 307 to choose divorce when the barriers to divorcing
 308 are lower (i.e., resulting in reduced costs) and the
 309 alternatives to staying married seems more attrac-
 310 tive (i.e., the alternative relationships or circum-
 311 stances—even being single—are either more
 312 rewarding or less costly than the current marital
 313 relationship) (Levinger, 1979). Nobel Prize win-
 314 ner Gary Becker (1993) has formulated an entirely
 315 economic or rational choice theory of marriage
 316 positing that men and women “attempt to maxi-
 317 mize their utility by comparing benefits and
 318 costs.... they divorce if that is expected to increase
 319 their welfare” (Becker, pp. 395–396).

320 *Vulnerability—stress—adaptation.* From this per-
 321 spective, three factors are highlighted which comb-
 322 ine to impact likelihood of divorce: (1) Enduring
 323 vulnerabilities—the attributes such as personality
 324 and personal background that each spouse brings
 325 to the marriage; (2) stressful events with which
 326 the partners must cope; and (3) adaptation pro-
 327 cesses—experiences during the marriage describ-
 328 ing the efforts to deal with stress (Karney &
 329 Bradbury, 1995). For example, if the couple has
 330 disparate views about spending (enduring vulner-
 331 abilities), their differences might not cause mar-
 332 ital difficulties, until and unless they experience
 333 financial setbacks (stressful events). In that event,
 334 if they have good conflict resolution skills (adap-
 335 tation processes), the strength of the marriage
 336 might not be affected; But vulnerabilities *plus*
 337 stressful events *plus* poor adaptation processes are
 338 hypothesized to decrease marital quality, which in
 339 turn increases marital instability.

340 *Cascade theory.* Gottman and colleagues have
 341 engaged in extensive research observing, video-
 342 taping, and coding couples discussing their dis-
 343 agreements; from this, they have developed a
 344 comprehensive theory of the “trajectory to
 345 divorce” (Gottman, 1993). According to this

trajectory, couples who eventually divorce are 346
 hypothesized to have been unhappily married for 347
 some time, and only then to seriously consider 348
 dissolution, and only then to actually separate and 349
 then divorce. The happiness of the marriage is 350
 thought to be predicted by each of their behaviors 351
 during their interactions or negotiations. If both 352
 spouses exhibit a higher quantity of positive (e.g., 353
 agreement, validation) than of negative (e.g., dis- 354
 agreement, dismissal, belittling) behaviors, the 355
 couple is deemed to be “regulated.” In “nonregu- 356
 lated” couples, one or both partners emit more 357
 negative than positive acts. Nonregulated couples 358
 are hypothesized to experience early divorce (first 359
 7 years). In contrast, it is the lack of positive *affect* 360
 (enjoyment of being together, satisfaction) that 361
 should predict later (years 7 through 14) divorce 362
 (Gottman & Levenson, 2000). 363

364 *Findings.* There is substantial empirical support 364
 for all the above theories. It has also been found, 365
 perhaps surprisingly, that marital dissatisfaction 366
 is a necessary, but not a sufficient, explanation 367
 for divorce. Some couples remain deeply 368
 dissatisfied, or disengaged, but do not divorce. 369
 For example, Davila and Bradbury (2001) found 370
 that spouses who were concerned about abandon- 371
 ment and their worthiness of love stayed married 372
 even when distressed. Further, although there is a 373
 correlation between the two spouse’s marital hap- 374
 piness, only couples in which husbands are 375
 unhappier than wives have increased risks of 376
 divorce (Gager & Sanchez, 2003). The attribu- 377
 tions spouses (especially distressed wives, 378
 Bradbury & Fincham, 1992; Gottman, Coan, 379
 Carrere, & Swanson, 1998) make about their own 380
 and their partners’ behavior are also informative 381
 (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990). 382

383 Whereas some researchers have simply asked 383
 people why they are unhappy in their marriages 384
 or why they sought divorce, other researchers 385
 consider the partners’ “accounts” less valid 386
 because of retrospective biases, self-serving attri- 387
 butions, face-saving attempts, and cognitive dis- 388
 sonance. Nonetheless, some interesting findings 389
 regarding accounts have surfaced. For one thing, 390
 the reasons given are generally more benign than 391
 might have been thought. “Gradual growing 392

393 apart, losing a sense of closeness"; "serious
394 differences in lifestyle"; "not feeling loved or
395 appreciated" were ranked 1–3 by wives in Braver
396 and O'Connell's (1998) study (cf. Booth &
397 White, 1980; Gigy & Kelly, 1992; Kitson &
398 Sussman, 1982). None of these divorces would
399 have been allowed if fault had to be established;
400 in fact, the only classic "fault ground" to make
401 the top ten was "husband's extramarital affair."
402 For another, the reasons men and women give are
403 very different, leading to the idea that "his" and
404 "her" divorce are quite distinct. In fact, husbands
405 are often quite unclear about why their divorce
406 happened, but wives rarely are (Amato & Previti,
407 2003; Kitson, 1992).

408 Consequences of Divorce for Parents

409 Legal Consequences of Divorce 410 for Parents

411 Divorce typically has radically different legal
412 consequences for mothers and fathers. In 68–88 %
413 of cases, mothers get physical custody of the
414 children, fathers do so in only 8–14 % of cases,
415 and joint physical custody is specified in 2–6 %
416 (Argys et al., 2007; Braver & O'Connell, 1998;
417 DeLusé, 1999; Emery, 1994; Fox & Kelly, 1995;
418 Logan, Walker, Horvath, & Leukefeld, 2003;
419 Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992; Nord & Zill, 1996;
420 Saluter & Lugaila, 1998; Seltzer, 1990). The
421 amounts of time the children spend with non-
422 primary parents (often called visitation, access,
423 contact, or parenting time) has increased recently.
424 Prior to the 1980s, most decrees specified that
425 children should spend every other weekend with
426 those parents, amounting to about 14 % of the
427 children's time (Kelly, 2007). Two studies of ran-
428 domly selected case files in Arizona conducted
429 10 years apart (Braver & O'Connell, 1998;
430 DeLusé, 1999) found non-trivial increases in the
431 parenting time ordered. Venohr and Griffith
432 (2003) found that, by 2001–2002, almost half of
433 the decrees specified 24–32 % of the days per
434 year and another fifth specified 33–50 % of the
435 parenting time for the non-primary parents.
436 Fewer than one in five specified as little as the

437 traditional 14 %. By 2008, 45 % of the decrees
438 specified 15–35 %, 7 % specified 35–49 % of the
439 child's time with the father, and 22 % essentially
440 divided parenting time equally (Venohr &
441 Kaunelis, 2008). In Washington State, 46 % of
442 fathers obtained at least 35 % parenting time in
443 2007–2008 (George, 2008) and in Wisconsin,
444 24 % had equal parenting time decreed in 2003
445 (Brown & Cancian, 2007).

446 Legal custody (who has the legal authority to
447 make decisions regarding medical or educational
448 issues) is more variable from state to state; rates
449 of joint legal custody range from 21 % (Seltzer,
450 1990, national data) to 76 % (Maccoby &
451 Mnookin, 1992, California data) to 93 % (Douglas,
452 2003, New Hampshire) and have also changed
453 much more than levels of physical custody over
454 time. Interestingly, both sets of changes appear
455 spontaneous, i.e., not based on corresponding
456 revisions of formal policy. During one longitudi-
457 nal study conducted by the first author (Braver,
458 Shapiro, & Goodman, 2005), joint legal custody
459 doubled (from about 1/3 to 2/3) over the 3 year
460 course of the study, although there were no dis-
461 cernable changes in any formal or official stan-
462 dards. Rather the informal "culture" among the
463 relevant professionals (judges, attorneys, custody
464 evaluators, mediators, etc.) changed, possibly in
465 response to evidence (e.g., Gunnoe & Braver,
466 2001; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992) that it gener-
467 ally had beneficial effects.

468 This change in the informal culture of profes-
469 sionals paralleled changes in public opinion. In
470 2006, 86 % of the voters responded affirmatively
471 to the following advisory (i.e., non-binding) bal-
472 lot question in Massachusetts: "There should be a
473 presumption in child custody cases in favor of
474 joint physical and legal custody, so that the court
475 will order that the children have equal access to
476 both parents as much as possible, except where
477 there is clear and convincing evidence that one
478 parent is unfit, or that joint custody is not possible
479 due to the fault of one of the parents." Braver,
480 Fabricius, and Ellman (2008) gave the identically
481 worded statement to a representative sample of
482 adult citizens in Tucson, AZ, inviting respondents
483 to indicate how much they agreed with the state-
484 ment on a 7-point Likert scale. Ninety percent

485 responded on the “agree” side; 57 % responded 7
 486 (=“strongly agree”) and another 30 % responded 6
 487 (=agree). There were no significant differences by
 488 gender, age, education, income, whether the respon-
 489 dents themselves were currently married, had ever
 490 divorced, had children, had paid or received child
 491 support, or by their political ideology.

492 To explore the depth of commitment to the
 493 preference, Votruba (2008) asked a different rep-
 494 resentative sample of Tucson, AZ, citizens about a
 495 hypothetical custody case. Participants were told
 496 that the mother and father divided pre-divorce
 497 child care “about like average families in which
 498 both parents work full-time (both M-F, 9-to-5).”
 499 The parents were further described as reasonably
 500 good parents who deeply loved their children,
 501 with a family life that was quite average, and chil-
 502 dren who were normally adjusted. Respondents
 503 were asked how they would award parenting time
 504 if they were judges. About 75 % chose the option,
 505 “Live equal amounts of time with each parent.”
 506 Almost all the remainder chose “Live with mother,
 507 see father a lot.” This was in marked contrast with
 508 how they thought parenting time would actually
 509 be allocated in “today’s courts and legal
 510 environment”—fewer than 25 % thought the
 511 equal time arrangement would prevail. *All* of the
 512 others thought that mothers would be awarded
 513 most of the parenting time.

514 This difference between what most people
 515 think proper and what they expect courts to assign
 516 appears to fuel disapproval of courts. When
 517 Braver et al. (2008) asked respondents to
 518 “describe the ‘slant’ of the ... legal system, as a
 519 whole, toward divorcing parents,” 81 % reported
 520 that it favors mothers, and only 16 % saw the sys-
 521 tem as unbiased. This result corresponds well
 522 with what divorcing fathers themselves answered
 523 in a separate investigation (Braver & O’Connell,
 524 1998): 3/4 thought that it favored mothers and not
 525 a single father thought that the system favored
 526 fathers. Mothers tended to agree that the system
 527 was slanted in their favor: while 2/3 thought it
 528 was balanced, three times as many mothers
 529 thought it favored mothers as thought it favored
 530 fathers. Moreover, only 36 % of experienced
 531 divorce attorneys believe that the system is not
 532 slanted, 59 % believe that it favors mothers, and

only 5 % believe that it favors fathers (Braver, 533
 Cookston, & Cohen, 2002). 534

**Psychological and Emotional 535
 Consequences of Divorce for Parents 536**

537 Because divorce has been rated the number one
 538 life stressor (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1974;
 539 Holmes & Rahe, 1967), it is not surprising that
 540 divorced parents are more likely to suffer psycho-
 541 logical and emotional problems than married par-
 542 ents, although most parents are not permanently
 543 damaged by divorce. Divorced parents have
 544 higher risks of depression, anxiety, and unhappi-
 545 ness, physical illnesses, suicide, motor vehicle
 546 accidents, alcoholism, homicide, and overall
 547 mortality (e.g., Aseltine & Kessler, 1993; Bloom,
 548 Asher, & White, 1978; Davies, Avison, &
 549 McAlpine, 1997; Gove & Shin, 1989; Gove,
 550 Style, & Hughes, 1990; Hemstrom, 1996; Joung
 551 et al., 1997; Kitson, 1992; Kposowa, Breault, &
 552 Singh, 1995; Lorenz et al., 1997; Simon &
 553 Marcussen, 1999). Involvement in new relation-
 554 ships (e.g., Wang & Amato, 2000) and remar-
 555 riage (e.g., Demo & Acock, 1996) reduce the risk
 556 of such consequences as do religious or personal
 557 beliefs and values accepting of divorce (Booth &
 558 Amato, 1991; Simon & Marcussen, 1999).

559 *Theories.* Several theorists have attempted to
 560 explain how divorce affects psychological well-
 561 being. Amato (2000) proposed a Divorce-Stress-
 562 Adjustment Model, in which the path between
 563 divorce and adjustment was mediated by stres-
 564 sors such as sole parenting responsibility, loss of
 565 emotional support, continuing conflict with ex-
 566 spouses, economic decline, and other stressful
 567 divorce-related events. The path to adjustment is
 568 also moderated by protective factors such as indi-
 569 vidual, interpersonal, and structural resources,
 570 the definition and meaning of divorce to the indi-
 571 viduals, and demographic characteristics, such as
 572 gender, age, race, ethnicity, and culture. An alter-
 573 native model posits the reverse—that divorce is
 574 driven by preexisting, stable personality charac-
 575 teristics. Individuals who are poorly adjusted
 576 (i.e., those with more severe negative emotional,
 577

577 behavioral, and health outcomes, and difficulty
 578 functioning in new roles), often those who
 579 divorce and never remarry, may select into
 580 divorce and out of remarriage (e.g., they may be
 581 more restless or mentally unstable prior to their
 582 first marriage) (Davies et al., 1997; Kelly &
 583 Conley, 1987; Kitson, 1992; Kurdeck, 1990;
 584 Mastekaasa, 1994).

585 Which gender does better emotionally after
 586 divorce? Despite media portrayals to the contrary
 587 (e.g., *First Wives Club*), women tend to show
 588 greater emotional adjustment and recovery than do
 589 men following divorce (Ahrns & Rodgers, 1987;
 590 Braver & O'Connell, 1998; Chiraboga & Cutler,
 591 1977; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) for several rea-
 592 sons. First, women tend to be better than men at
 593 seeking, building, and using *social support net-*
 594 *works* that buffer the stresses that accompany
 595 divorce (Chiraboga, Coho, Stein, & Roberts, 1979;
 596 Hughes, 1988; Keith, 1986; Kitson, 1992;
 597 McKenry & Price, 1995; Umberson, Chen, House,
 598 Hopkins, & Slaten, 1996), and children themselves
 599 can be sources of support for custodial parents
 600 (Blankenhorn, 1995; McKenry & Price, 1995).
 601 Also, mothers must "hold it together" for the sake
 602 of the children, whereas noncustodial fathers often
 603 do not have this sobering responsibility.

604 Second, as mentioned earlier, women usually
 605 initiate divorce (Ahrns & Rodgers, 1987; Braver,
 606 Whitley, & Ng, 1993; Pettit & Bloom, 1984).
 607 Spouses who initiate divorce tend to experience
 608 more stress *before* the actual decision to divorce,
 609 but *relief* afterwards. In contrast, spouses who do
 610 not initiate divorce experience the most stress
 611 once the divorce process commences. Third, men
 612 are more likely than women to use ineffective or
 613 harmful methods of coping with the stress of
 614 divorce, more often turning to substances and
 615 alcohol to help them cope (Baum, 2003;
 616 Umberson & Williams, 1993).

617 Fourth, role change may be one of the most
 618 important factors contributing to the distress and
 619 unsuccessful adjustment of fathers (Umberson &
 620 Williams, 1993) and the successful adjustment of
 621 mothers (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Women are
 622 more likely to view divorce as a "second chance"—
 623 mothers report improved work opportunities, social
 624 lives, happiness, and self-confidence (Demo &

625 Acock, 1996). Along with divorce, women often
 626 gain higher status within-family roles (e.g., head of
 627 household, breadwinner, etc.) while men often
 628 acquire low-status responsibilities (e.g., gain
 629 domestic roles) and are confused or frustrated by
 630 their new roles as noncustodial parents (Braver &
 631 O'Connell, 1998; Umberson & Williams, 1993).

632 Finally, divorce settlement satisfaction also
 633 affects custodial and noncustodial parents' emo-
 634 tional well-being differentially (Sheets & Braver,
 635 1996). Fathers frequently feel as though they
 636 have experienced gender discrimination at the
 637 hands of the legal system, often for the first time
 638 in their lives (Braver & O'Connell, 1998). In con-
 639 trast, women tend to report higher levels of satis-
 640 faction with most divorce settlements, including
 641 custody, finances, visitation, and property (Sheets
 642 & Braver, 1996).

**Economic Consequences of Divorce
 for Parents**

643 Most parents experience substantial financial set-
 644 backs when they divorce. The costs of the divorce
 645 itself may be very expensive, depending on the
 646 state in which it occurs, the complexity of the
 647 case, the degree of contentiousness and disagree-
 648 ment, and the use of litigating attorneys as
 649 opposed to alternate modes of dispute resolution.
 650 When there are few disagreements and the parties
 651 do not hire lawyers (in many states, *pro se*—with-
 652 out lawyers—divorces are the norm) the costs
 653 can be as low as a few hundred dollars. On the
 654 other hand, some divorces cost well over \$100,000
 655 in legal and associated costs. By one popular esti-
 656 mate, the average divorce costs about \$20,000
 657 per couple (McDonald, 2009).

660 Second, and more enduringly, there will be
 661 added ongoing costs associated with running a sec-
 662 ond household. Most of the literature suggests that
 663 this hardship falls disproportionately on mothers
 664 (Bartfeld, 2000; Bianchi, 1992; Bianchi, Subaiya,
 665 & Kahn, 1999; Burkhauser, Duncan, Hauser, &
 666 Bernsten, 1990, 1991; Corcoran, 1979; David &
 667 Flory, 1989; Duncan & Hoffman, 1985; Espenshade,
 668 1979; Garfinkel, McLanahan, & Hanson, 1998;
 669 Hoffman & Duncan, 1985; Holden & Smock,

670 1991; Peterson, 1996; Sayer, 2006; Smock,
 671 Manning, & Gupta, 1999; Sorenson, 1992;
 672 Teachman & Paasch, 1994; Weiss, 1984).
 673 Weitzman's (1985) findings that women (and chil-
 674 dren) suffered a 73 % decline in their standards of
 675 living after divorce, while fathers enjoyed a 42 %
 676 increase, were the most widely cited, but were later
 677 recanted because they were erroneous (Peterson,
 678 1996; Weitzman, 1996).

679 In contrast, Braver et al. (2005; see also
 680 Braver, 1999; Braver & O'Connell, 1998) have
 681 contended that, if proper accounting is made, the
 682 postdivorce circumstances of fathers and mothers
 683 are largely equal *in the short term*, while in the
 684 long run, the majority of divorced mothers fare
 685 better than their ex-husbands. To understand the
 686 debate requires understanding the operational
 687 definition of "standard of living." Most research-
 688 ers focus on the *income-to-needs ratio*, in which
 689 the household's *annual income* is divided by the
 690 Federal Poverty Threshold (FPT) for comparable
 691 households. Because child support is very fre-
 692 quently paid by one divorced parent and received
 693 by the other (and less frequently, alimony is also
 694 paid), both are virtually always subtracted from
 695 the payer's annual income and added to the recip-
 696 ient's before division by the FPT. But Braver and
 697 his colleagues (2005) argued that at least two cru-
 698 cial, yet obvious factors have been typically
 699 omitted when such calculations are made.

700 First, all such calculations are based on gross
 701 income, yet, only *after tax* income can be used to
 702 support families. It turns out that custodial par-
 703 ents are taxed far more advantageously than non-
 704 custodial parents. Through such tax devices as
 705 the Head of Household filing status, the Earned
 706 Income Credit, and the Child Tax Credit, the IRS
 707 in effect subsidizes the standard of living in the
 708 custodial but not noncustodial households.
 709 Second, most of the above researchers have
 710 assumed that, other than child support, 100 % of
 711 the children's expenses are borne by custodial
 712 parents, while noncustodial parents were assumed
 713 to pay *nothing*: no child meals, no child transpor-
 714 tation costs, \$0 to entertain the children, nothing
 715 to provide room for the children in their homes,
 716 and no share of medical insurance or medical
 717 expenses, etc. In other words, most analyses do

not take into account any kind of visitation 718
 expenses, nor any direct payments by noncusto- 719
 dial parents for the children, although these are 720
 often appreciable (Fabricius & Braver, 2003). 721
 Braver and Stockburger (2004) and Rogers and 722
 Bieniewicz (2004) specify a set of reasonable and 723
 robust assumptions, concerning the cost of chil- 724
 dren relative to adults, and the proportion of 725
 child's expenses that travel with the child, and 726
 economies of scale, that can be used to correct 727
 estimates for those expenses borne by noncusto- 728
 dial parents instead of the custodial parents. 729
 Using such assumptions, Braver and O'Connell 730
 (1998) and Braver (1999) found that the average 731
 standards of living shortly after divorce for moth- 732
 ers and fathers were equivalent. 733

And what of the longer term? Few researchers 734
 have studied anything beyond about 18 months 735
 after the divorce, but two very common events 736
 become significant as time progresses. First, the 737
 salaries of many custodial mothers increase: 738
 Duncan and Hoffman (1985) found that, by 5 739
 years after divorce, women who remained single 740
 increased their standard of living by 34 %. Men's 741
 salaries do not increase similarly because most 742
 already earn close to their maximum capacity at 743
 the time of divorce. Second, most divorced par- 744
 ents remarry as time progresses. According to 745
 Bumpass, Sweet, and Castro-Martin (1990), 746
 about two-thirds of divorced mothers and about 747
 three-quarters of divorced fathers remarry. When 748
 they do, the economics change again. When 749
 mothers remarry, they gain more income than 750
 expenses, whereas fathers do the reverse 751
 (Fabricius, Braver, & Deneau, 2003). Thus, 752
 remarriage tends to make mothers' standards of 753
 living higher than fathers'. If the parents' stan- 754
 dards of living were about equal shortly after the 755
 divorce, these two factors combine to make the 756
 long-term financial effects of divorce, on aver- 757
 age, more favorable to mothers than to fathers. 758

Consequences of Divorce for Parenting 759

The first year or two following divorce are typically 760
 chaotic and highly stressful for both parents and this 761
 may adversely affect parent-child relationships 762

763 (Hetherington, 2003). Divorce often leads to decline
764 in the use of positive parenting strategies (respon-
765 siveness) and increases in reliance on negative par-
766 enting strategies (e.g. harshness; Harold & Conger,
767 1997) by both custodial mothers and noncustodial
768 fathers (Kline-Pruett, Williams, Insabella, & Little,
769 2003; Sturge-Apple, Gondoli, Bonds, & Salem,
770 2003), although the long-term effects on their
771 behavior may be different.

772 *Custodial parents.* Many divorced custodial moth-
773 ers engage in coercive exchanges with their sons
774 that are characterized by punitive discipline, irrita-
775 bility, an escalation of conflict, and aggressiveness
776 (Hetherington, 1993) while struggling to monitor
777 and supervise the activities of their youngsters
778 (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagen, 2002).
779 Interestingly, fathers who gain custody may have
780 more difficulty than custodial mothers supervising
781 and monitoring their adolescents' behavior
782 (Maccoby, Buchanan, Mnookin, & Dornbusch,
783 1993). Children of divorce often have more auton-
784 omy and decision-making power than children in
785 non-divorced families (Hetherington &
786 Clingempeel, 1992). Custodial parents' use of
787 praise, warmth, and other positive parenting strate-
788 gies are often disrupted by divorce, leading a sub-
789 stantial number of children to emotionally disengage
790 from their families (Hetherington, 1993).

791 *Noncustodial parents.* Parents who enter noncus-
792 todial status face very different parenting chal-
793 lenges (Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992) because the
794 amount of contact and involvement with their
795 children will substantially decline for many. The
796 contact the average noncustodial fathers tend to
797 have with their children is increasing. Older
798 research (e.g., Amato, 1986; Fulton, 1979;
799 Furstenberg & Nord, 1985; Hetherington, Cox, &
800 Cox, 1982; Hetherington & Hagan, 1986) had
801 shown very low levels of contact, with many
802 fathers disengaging completely. However, later
803 research (Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, & Sheets,
804 1993a; Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, Fogas, &
805 Zvetina, 1991; Bray & Berger, 1990; Maccoby,
806 Depner, & Mnookin, 1988; Seltzer, 1991) reported
807 higher levels of contact and evidence provided by
808 Cooksey and Craig (1998) indicated that this pat-
809 tern change was a cohort difference (i.e., current

810 generations of divorced fathers visit more). Several
811 researchers (Fabricius & Hall, 2000; Parkinson,
812 Cashmore, & Single, 2005; Smith & Gallop,
813 2001) also have reported that both children and
814 fathers wish for more contact, but this is often
815 precluded by the divorce decree, which accords
816 more closely to mothers' preferences for relatively
817 little visitation for fathers. Interestingly, some
818 children are able to maintain close relationships
819 with nonresident fathers even who they have very
820 little contact (Maccoby et al., 1993).

821 Many noncustodial fathers have difficulty
822 adapting to their new roles because there are no
823 scripts defining noncustodial relationships
824 (Wallerstein & Corbin, 1986; Wallerstein & Kelly,
825 1980). Braver and O'Connell (1998) argued that a
826 number of fathers feel "parentally disenfran-
827 chised," believing they have only a limited amount
828 of control over child-rearing issues and have roles
829 that are not valued by their children's mothers or
830 by the legal system. Noncustodial parents also
831 must cope with changes in the *quality* of their
832 relationships with their children (Amato &
833 Gilbreth, 1999). Many become very permissive
834 and assume the role of companion rather than dis-
835 ciplinary or teacher (Hetherington, 1993).

836 Several theorists have attempted to synthesize
837 information about the factors that predict the
838 amount of contact into *theories* of father-child
839 relationships.

840 *Interactionist-feminist theory.* Arendell (1992a,
841 1992b, 1994, 1995) adapted an interactionist-femi-
842 nist perspective when interpreting results from her
843 qualitative study of 75 recently divorced nonresi-
844 dent fathers. In this perspective, father absence is a
845 masculinist strategy to control situations through
846 conflict and tension. While most fathers compl-
847 ained of "injustice, discrimination, resistance,
848 and frustration and discontent" and expressed rage
849 at the legal system and at their ex-wives, this was
850 due to their use of a "masculinist discourse of
851 divorce," which employed the "rhetoric of rights."

852 *Family systems theory.* The family systems per-
853 spective (Arditti & Kelly, 1994) explains father-
854 child relationships by noting that they occur in
855 the context of the mother-father relationship.
856 They note that even when the formal husband/

857 wife relationship ceases to exist, the continuing
 858 relationship between parents, vis-a-vis their chil-
 859 dren, usually necessitates some level of mutual
 860 involvement, requiring divorced parents to engage
 861 in frequent interactions. The theory posits that
 862 fathers who had closer and less conflictual rela-
 863 tionships with their ex-wives had better relation-
 864 ships with their children. Those who feel that
 865 custody and visitation arrangements are unjust and
 866 unsatisfactory are expected to have had poorer
 867 relationships with both their children and their ex-
 868 wives (Madden-Derdich & Leonard, 2000, 2002).

869 *Role-identity theory.* Role-identity theory (Ihinger-
 870 Tallman, Pasley, & Buehler, 1993; Minton &
 871 Pasley, 1996; Stone & McKenry, 1998) is a “mid-
 872 range” theory in which the father’s parenting role
 873 identity is expected to predict paternal involvement
 874 and child well-being. Father’s role identity included
 875 the dimensions of satisfaction with the father role,
 876 perceived competence in that role, his investment
 877 in the role and its salience. This role identity can be
 878 moderated by such factors as the co-parental rela-
 879 tionship, mother’s views of the father’s parenting,
 880 father’s emotional well-being, the encouragement
 881 father receives from others to engage in parenting,
 882 and the father’s dissatisfaction with the legal sys-
 883 tem and the custody and visitation arrangements.

884 *Role-enactment theory.* Leite and McKenry (2002)
 885 reformulated the above theory into role-enactment
 886 theory. In this theory, a new predictor is father’s role
 887 satisfaction, which is assumed to be reduced by the
 888 fact that aspects of the father role remain salient to
 889 many nonresidential fathers despite the ambiguity
 890 and barriers they encounter. A second added predic-
 891 tor is “institutional role clarity,” the degree to which
 892 arrangements that define expected levels of contact
 893 between nonresidential fathers and children were
 894 clearly specified in the legal documents. The greater
 895 the role satisfaction and the clearer the institutional
 896 role, the greater the contact.

897 *Resource theory.* Foa and Foa’s resource theory
 898 (1980) served as the basis for Rettig, Leichtentritt,
 899 and Stanton’s (1999) model emphasizing that,
 900 through the normal give-and-take of everyday rela-
 901 tionships, people exchange resources. How these

resource exchanges flow between partners deter- 902
 mines interpersonal behaviors and satisfaction. 903
 When viewing noncustodial fathers through this 904
 lens, the father’s own perceived economic and 905
 social psychological well-being, his communica- 906
 tion with the mother during co-parenting, and their 907
 degree of conflict were predicted to affect paternal 908
 involvement with children. 909

Social exchange theory. Social exchange theory 910
 (Braver, Wolchik, Sandler, & Sheets, 1999) closely 911
 resembles resource theory. It postulates that fathers 912
decide how much to invest in father–child rela- 913
 tionships by implicitly comparing the rewards associ- 914
 ated with those relationships with their costs; the 915
 more positive the reward-to-cost trade-off, the more 916
 fathers will invest in relationships. For example, 917
 fathers who enjoyed visits more had greater benefits, 918
 while those who fought less with wives had reduced 919
 costs; either would increase the trade-off, and there- 920
 fore the level of contact. The model was strongly 921
 supported in longitudinal analyses by Braver, 922
 Wolchik, Sandler, Sheets, Fogas, et al. (1993). 923

**Consequences of Divorce 924
 for Inter-parental Relationships 925**

When childless couples divorce, they typically 926
 have either no or relatively neutral relationships 927
 with their ex-spouses years later. In contrast, 928
 because couples with children “divorce each 929
 other but not their children,” they continue to 930
 have relatively involved relationships throughout 931
 most of their lives. Thus, most divorcing couples 932
 with children suffer high degrees of conflict with 933
 ex-partners which persist for 3 years or more 934
 after their divorces are finalized (Ahrons & 935
 Wallisch, 1986; Masheter, 1991). As time contin- 936
 ues, about a quarter achieve working “co-parental” 937
 relationships (Adamsons & Pasley, 2006; Ahrons, 938
 1981; Whiteside, 1998), half have almost no contact 939
 with the other and engage in “parallel parenting” 940
 (Ahrons, 1994; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992) 941
 while the final quarter continue to display great 942
 hostility (Ahrons, 1994). 943

As suggested above, the parents’ conflict with 944
 one another is likely to affect the relationships 945

946 that parents have with their children. For example,
 947 many divorcing parents who are conflicted put
 948 children in the middle of the differences by deni-
 949 grating one another or by sending messages to
 950 the other parents through the children (Arbuthnot
 951 & Gordon, 1997; Buchanan & Heiges, 2001).
 952 Such experiences may lead children to feel that
 953 they need to take sides in the conflict.

954 **Consequences of Divorce for Children**

955 **Developmental Course of Child–Parent**
 956 **Relationships**

957 Parent–child relationships are generally believed
 958 to play a crucial role in shaping children’s devel-
 959 opment and adjustment. Consistent with this
 960 belief, considerable efforts have been made to
 961 examine the developmental course of these rela-
 962 tionships on the welfare and adjustment of chil-
 963 dren. The research has been extensive, with focus
 964 on social skills, psychological health and symp-
 965 tomatology, school behavior and performance, as
 966 well as educational attainment, relationship suc-
 967 cess, delinquency, and life time earnings. Some
 968 aspects of these relationships that are influential
 969 are those that have more positive effects on chil-
 970 dren’s development than others as well as the
 971 effects of parent–child separations and relation-
 972 ship disruptions on children’s subsequent adjust-
 973 ment. In particular, Kelly and Lamb (2000, 2003;
 974 Lamb & Kelly, 2009), among others, have docu-
 975 mented how an understanding of normative devel-
 976 opmental phases informs both our understanding
 977 of how parental separation and divorce may affect
 978 children’s development and adjustment as well as
 979 how the design of postdivorce living arrange-
 980 ments most likely will benefit children.

981 As described by Bowlby (1969), and largely
 982 confirmed by subsequent research (for detailed
 983 review, see Thompson, 2006), infant–parent
 984 attachments pass through several developmental
 985 phases, during the first of which infants learn to
 986 discriminate among adult caregivers and gradually
 987 develop emotional attachments to them. Between
 988 7 and 24 months, attachments become increas-
 989 ingly apparent, as infants preferentially seek to be
 990 near and interact with specific regular caregivers

991 by whom they are more easily soothed than by
 992 strangers. Contrary to Bowlby’s initial speculation
 993 and widespread “common sense,” there is consid-
 994 erable evidence that most infants in two-parent
 995 families form attachments to both parents at about
 996 the same age, around 6–7 months (see Lamb,
 997 2002a, for a review), even though fathers typically
 998 spend less time with their infants than mothers
 999 (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004). This indicates that,
 1000 although a threshold level of interaction is crucial
 1001 for attachments to form, time spent interacting is
 1002 not the only critical dimension.

1003 The amounts of time that infants spend with
 1004 their two parents do not appear to determine
 1005 whether or not the attachment relationships with
 1006 either are insecure or secure. However, the rela-
 1007 tive prominence of the two parents in caring for
 1008 and interacting with their children does appear to
 1009 affect the relative importance of the two relationships
 1010 with respect to their impact on later development
 1011 (Lamb & Lewis, 2011). Nonetheless, both rela-
 1012 tionships remain psychologically important even
 1013 when there are disparities between the two parents’
 1014 levels of participation in child care.

1015 Parents are not equivalently sensitive, of
 1016 course, and individual differences in responsive-
 1017 ness affect the quality or security of the individ-
 1018 ual attachment relationships that form. 1018
 1019 Specifically, insecure attachments are more likely
 1020 to develop when parents are less sensitive, and it
 1021 is quite common for infants to be securely
 1022 attached to one person and insecurely attached to
 1023 another (Ahnert, Pinquart, & Lamb, 2006), pre-
 1024 sumably because one parent has been sensitive
 1025 while the other has been insensitive. The quality
 1026 of both mother- and father–child relationships
 1027 remains the most reliable predictor of individual
 1028 differences in psychological, social, and cogni-
 1029 tive adjustment in infancy, as well as in later
 1030 childhood (Lamb & Lewis, 2011; Thompson,
 1031 2006).

1032 Importantly, infants and toddlers need regular
 1033 interaction with their “attachment figures” in
 1034 order to foster, maintain, and strengthen their
 1035 relationships (Lamb, 2002a; Thompson, 2006).
 1036 This means that young children need to interact
 1037 with both parents in a variety of contexts (feed-
 1038 ing, playing, diapering, soothing, reading, putting
 1039 to bed, etc.) to ensure that the relationships are
 1040

1040 consolidated and strengthened. In the absence of
 1041 such opportunities for regular interaction across a
 1042 broad range of contexts, infant–parent relation-
 1043 ships may weaken rather than grow stronger.
 1044 When toddlers are separated for as little as a few
 1045 days from all of their attachment figures (for
 1046 example, both parents) simultaneously, intense
 1047 distress and disturbances may persist for as long
 1048 as 6 months after reunion (Bowlby, 1973;
 1049 Heinicke, 1956; Heinicke & Westheimer, 1966;
 1050 Robertson & Robertson, 1971). Reactions are
 1051 muted, but not eliminated, when children are
 1052 cared for by other attachment figures or sensitive
 1053 substitute caregivers during the separation
 1054 (Robertson & Robertson). Extended separations
 1055 from parents with whom children have formed
 1056 meaningful attachments are thus undesirable
 1057 because they unduly stress developing attach-
 1058 ment relationships (Bowlby, 1973). The loss or
 1059 attenuation of important attachment relationships
 1060 may cause depression and anxiety, particularly in
 1061 the first 2 years of life, when children lack the
 1062 cognitive and communication skills that would
 1063 enable them to cope with loss. The absence of
 1064 regular contact slowly erodes relationships, such
 1065 that, over time, parents who do not interact regu-
 1066 larly with their infants effectively become
 1067 strangers.

1068 Relationships with parents continue to play a
 1069 crucial role in shaping children’s social, emo-
 1070 tional, personal, and cognitive development into
 1071 middle childhood and adolescence (Lamb &
 1072 Lewis, 2005, 2011). Indeed, the quality of the
 1073 mother- and father–child relationships remain the
 1074 most reliable correlates of individual differences
 1075 in psychological, social, and cognitive adjust-
 1076 ment in infancy, as well as in later childhood
 1077 (Lamb & Lewis, 2011; Thompson, 2006).
 1078 Children are better off with insecure attachments
 1079 than without attachment relationships because
 1080 these enduring ties play essential formative roles
 1081 in later social and emotional functioning.

1082 **Disruptions in Parent–Child**
 1083 **Relationships**

1084 There is also a substantial literature documenting
 1085 the adverse effects of disrupted parent–child

relationships on children’s development and 1086
 adjustment, with a linear relationship between 1087
 age of separation and later attachment quality in 1088
 adolescence. The weakest attachments to parents 1089
 are reported by those whose parents separated in 1090
 the first 5 years of their lives (Woodward, 1091
 Ferguson, & Belsky, 2000). Similarly, in a retro- 1092
 spective study of adolescents whose parents had 1093
 divorced, Schwartz and Finley (2005) found that 1094
 the age at time of divorce was associated with 1095
 ratings of both paternal involvement and nurtur- 1096
 ance, indicating that the earlier the separation, 1097
 the greater the impact on the quality of children’s 1098
 relationships with their fathers. 1099

1100 Particularly over the last 2 decades, many 1100
 large-scale datasets have been plumbed in efforts 1101
 to understand the effects of parental separation or 1102
 divorce on the children involved. The results of 1103
 this research are remarkably consistent: 1104
 Researchers have clearly demonstrated that, on 1105
 average, children benefit from being raised in 1106
 two-parent families rather than separated, 1107
 divorced, or never married single-parent house- 1108
 holds (Amato, 2000; Aquilino, 1996; Carlson, 1109
 2006; Clarke-Stewart & Brentano, 2006; Clarke- 1110
 Stewart, Vandell, McCartney, Owen, & Booth, 1111
 2000; Hetherington, 1999; Hetherington & Kelly, 1112
 2002; McLanahan, 1999; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1113
 1994; McLanahan & Teitler, 1999; Simons & 1114
 Associates, 1996; Simons, Lin, Gordon, Conger, 1115
 & Lorenz, 1999), although there is considerable 1116
 variability within groups, and the differences 1117
 between groups are relatively small. Indeed, 1118
 although children growing up in fatherless fami- 1119
 lies are, on average, disadvantaged relative to 1120
 peers growing up in two-parent families with 1121
 respect to psychosocial adjustment, behavior and 1122
 achievement at school, educational attainment, 1123
 employment trajectories, income generation, 1124
 antisocial, and criminal behavior, as well as inti- 1125
 mate relationships, the majority of children with 1126
 divorced parents enjoy average or better-than- 1127
 average social and emotional adjustment as 1128
 young adults (Booth & Amato, 2001; Clarke- 1129
 Stewart & Brentano, 2006; Hetherington & Kelly, 1130
 2002; Kelly & Emery, 2003). Approximately 1131
 20–25 % (some studies suggest 30–35 %) of chil- 1132
 dren in post-separation and divorced families 1133
 give evidence of adjustment problems, compared 1134

1135 to 12 % (some studies suggest as much as 15 %) 1180
 1136 in married families. Thus, the majority of chil- 1181
 1137 dren from separated families evince no psycho- 1182
 1138 pathology or behavioral symptoms, although they 1183
 1139 are likely to experience psychic pain for at least 1184
 1140 some time (Emery, 1998; Hetherington & Kelly, 1185
 1141 2002; Laumann-Billings & Emery, 2000). 1186

1142 **Factors That Predict Child Adjustment** 1187 1143 **to Divorce** 1188

1144 Such dramatic individual differences in outcomes 1189
 1145 force us to identify more precisely both the ways 1190
 1146 in which divorce/single parenthood may affect 1191
 1147 children's lives and the factors that might account 1192
 1148 for individual differences in children's adjustment 1193
 1149 following their parents' separation. Three inter- 1194
 1150 related factors (economic stress, conflict between 1195
 1151 parents, and changes in the children's relation- 1196
 1152 ships with their parents) appear to be important 1197
 1153 but we focus here especially on both conflict and 1198
 1154 children's relationships with their parents. 1199

1155 As mentioned above, *conflict between the par-* 1200
 1156 *ents* commonly precedes, emerges or increases 1201
 1157 during the separation and divorce processes, and 1202
 1158 often continues for some time beyond them. 1203
 1159 Inter-parental conflict is an important predictor 1204
 1160 of children's psychosocial maladjustment just as 1205
 1161 marital harmony, its conceptual inverse, appears 1206
 1162 to be a reliable correlate of positive adjustment 1207
 1163 (Cummings, Merrilees, & George, 2010; 1208
 1164 Johnston, 1994; Kelly, 2000). The negative 1209
 1165 impacts of high levels of marital conflict on the 1210
 1166 quality of parenting of both mothers and fathers 1211
 1167 have been well documented. In general, parental 1212
 1168 conflict is associated with more rejecting, less 1213
 1169 warm, and less nurturing parenting by mothers, 1214
 1170 and with fathers' withdrawal from parenting and 1215
 1171 increased engagement in intrusive interactions 1216
 1172 with their children (Cummings & Davies, 1994; 1217
 1173 Grych, 2005). Anger-based marital conflict is 1218
 1174 associated with filial aggression and externaliz- 1219
 1175 ing behavior problems, perhaps because such 1220
 1176 parents and children have similar difficulty regu- 1221
 1177 lating negative affect (Katz & Gottman, 1993). 1222
 1178 These and other data support the observation that 1223
 1179 some of the "effects of divorce" are better viewed 1224

1180 as the effects of pre-separation marital conflict 1181
 1182 and violence (Kelly, 2000). 1183

1184 Unfortunately, the adversarial legal system 1185
 1186 tends to promote conflict between already vul- 1187
 1188 nerable parents because of its win-lose orienta- 1188
 1189 tion and the way it fosters hostile behaviors and 1189
 1190 demands. Although the adversarial process 1190
 1191 purports to focus on children's "best interests," 1191
 1192 parents' psychologically-driven legal strategies 1192
 1193 more often represent their own needs and per- 1193
 1194 ceived entitlements, and the effect is to diminish 1194
 1195 the possibility of future civility, productive com- 1195
 1196 munication, and cooperation (Kelly, 2003). 1196

1197 The quality, quantity, and type of parent-child 1197
 1198 relationships also powerfully affect the post- 1198
 1199 separation/divorce adjustment of school-aged 1199
 1200 children and adolescents. As mentioned earlier, 1200
 1201 deterioration in the quality of parenting after 1201
 1202 separation has long been recognized (Belsky, 1202
 1203 Youngblade, Rovine, & Volling, 1991; Clarke- 1203
 1204 Stewart & Brentano, 2006; Hetherington, 1999; 1204
 1205 Sturge-Apple, Davies, & Cummings, 2006; 1205
 1206 Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Many parents are 1206
 1207 preoccupied, stressed, emotionally labile, angry, 1207
 1208 and depressed following separation, and their 1208
 1209 "diminished parenting" includes less positive and 1209
 1210 affectionate involvement as well as more coercive 1210
 1211 and harsh forms of discipline. Additional 1211
 1212 intrapsychic factors affecting the quality of par- 1212
 1213 enting include the parents' psychological adjust- 1213
 1214 ment, violence, and levels of conflict. External 1214
 1215 factors such as absorption in dating, new part- 1215
 1216 ners, cohabitation, remarriage, poverty, and 1216
 1217 financial instability are also associated with 1217
 1218 reductions in the quality of parenting (Amato, 1218
 1219 2000; Hetherington, 1999; Kelly, 2000; Pruett, 1219
 1220 Williams, Insabella, & Little, 2003; Simons et al., 1220
 1221 1999; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). 1221

1222 Because single mothers need to work more 1222
 1223 extensively outside the home than do married or 1223
 1224 partnered mothers, parents spend less time with 1224
 1225 children in single-parent families and the levels 1225
 1226 of supervision and guidance are lower and less 1226
 1227 reliable than in two-parent families (Hetherington 1227
 & Kelly, 2002; McLanahan, 1999). Reductions in 1227
 the level and quality of parental stimulation and 1227
 attention may affect achievement, compliance, 1227
 and social skills while diminished supervision 1227

1228 makes antisocial behavior and misbehavior more
 1229 likely (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

1230 Many researchers have identified specific
 1231 aspects of parenting that can moderate the impact
 1232 of separation and divorce on children's social,
 1233 emotional, and academic adjustment, thereby
 1234 protecting children against some of the harmful
 1235 impacts of high conflict. Effective parenting by
 1236 separated mothers is characterized by warmth,
 1237 authoritative discipline (setting limits, noncoer-
 1238 cive discipline and control, enforcement of rules,
 1239 appropriate expectations), academic skill encour-
 1240 agement, and monitoring of the children's activi-
 1241 ties (Amato & Fowler, 2002; Buchanan, Maccoby,
 1242 & Dornbusch, 1996; Hetherington, 1999;
 1243 Martinez & Forgatch, 2002; Simons et al., 1999).
 1244 As described in more detail below, more positive
 1245 adjustment following divorce is also associated
 1246 with such effective paternal behaviors as active
 1247 involvement (help with homework and projects,
 1248 emotional support and warmth, mutual discus-
 1249 sion of the children's problems, and involvement
 1250 in school (Amato & Fowler, 2002; Amato &
 1251 Gilbreth, 1999; Hetherington, 1999)).

1252 Divorce commonly disrupts one of the child's
 1253 most important and enduring relationships, that
 1254 with his or her father. As Amato (e.g., Amato &
 1255 Gilbreth, 1999) has shown with particular clarity,
 1256 however, the bivariate associations between
 1257 father absence and children's adjustment are
 1258 much weaker than one might expect. Indeed,
 1259 Amato and Gilbreth's (1999) meta-analysis
 1260 revealed no significant association between the
 1261 frequency of father-child contact and child out-
 1262 comes, largely because of the great diversity in
 1263 the types of "father-present" relationships. We
 1264 might predict that contacts with abusive, incom-
 1265 petent, or disinterested fathers are likely to have
 1266 much different effects than relationships with
 1267 devoted, committed, and sensitive fathers. As
 1268 expected, Amato and Gilbreth (1999) found that
 1269 children's well-being was significantly enhanced
 1270 when their relationships with nonresident fathers
 1271 were positive, when the nonresident fathers
 1272 engaged in "active parenting," and when the con-
 1273 tact was frequent. Dunn, Cheng, O'Connor, and
 1274 Bridges (2004), Simons and Associates (1996),
 1275 Hetherington, Bridges, and Insabella (1998), and

Clarke-Stewart and Hayward (1996) likewise
 reported that children benefited when their non-
 resident fathers were actively involved in routine
 everyday activities, and this conclusion was
 clearly supported in recent analyses by Carlson
 (2006) of data from the National Longitudinal
 Study of Youth. Carlson showed that father
 involvement was associated with better adoles-
 cent adjustment and that paternal involvement
 partially mediated the effects of family structure
 (notably divorce or single parenthood) on adoles-
 cents' behavioral outcomes. Similarly, higher
 levels of paternal involvement in their children's
 schools was associated with better grades, better
 adjustment, fewer suspensions, and lower drop-
 out rates than were lower levels of involvement
 (Nord, Brimhall, & West, 1997). Overall, active
 engagement in a variety of specific activities and
 ongoing school-related discussions between
 fathers and their adolescents significantly low-
 ered the probability of school failure.

Another meta-analysis indicated that, on mul-
 tiple ratings of emotional and behavioral adjust-
 ment and academic achievement by mothers,
 fathers, teachers, and clinicians, children in joint
 physical custody were better adjusted than chil-
 dren in sole custody arrangements (Bauserman,
 2002). In fact, children in shared custody were as
 well adjusted as children whose parents remained
 married. Although joint physical custody parents
 reported less past and current conflict than did
 sole physical custody parents, conflict did not
 explain the superiority of the children in joint cus-
 tody arrangements. Again, the clear implication is
 that active paternal involvement, not simply the
 number or length of meetings between fathers and
 children, predicts child adjustment. This suggests
 that postdivorce arrangements should specifically
 seek to maximize positive and meaningful pater-
 nal involvement rather than simply allow minimal
 levels of visitation. As in non-divorced families,
 in other words, the quality of continued relation-
 ships with the parents—both parents—is crucial
 (Kelly & Lamb, 2000, 2003). Stated differently
 and succinctly, the better (richer, deeper, and more
 secure) the parent-child relationships, the better
 the children's adjustment, whether or not the
 parents live together (Lamb, 2002a, 2002b).

1324 A recent longitudinal study of representative
 1325 samples of adolescents living in low income
 1326 neighborhoods in Boston, San Antonio, and
 1327 Chicago nicely illustrated the associations over
 1328 time between nonresident paternal involvement
 1329 and adolescent delinquency, after statistically
 1330 controlling for the effects of influences such as
 1331 demographic factors and the quality of mother-
 1332 child relationships (Coley & Medeiros, 2007). As
 1333 expected, nonresident paternal involvement was
 1334 associated with less delinquency overall; impor-
 1335 tantly, higher paternal involvement was associ-
 1336 ated with declines in delinquency over time,
 1337 particularly among adolescents who were more
 1338 involved with delinquent activities. In addition,
 1339 as delinquency increased, paternal involvement
 1340 increased too, suggesting that fathers were
 1341 responding to changes in their children's problem
 1342 behavior. Similarly, in another longitudinal study
 1343 of adolescents, Menning (2006) showed that ado-
 1344 lescents whose nonresident fathers were more
 1345 involved were less likely to start smoking.

1346 Given the demonstrated importance of fathers'
 1347 active participation and effective parenting, the
 1348 influence of maternal attitudes on the extent of
 1349 paternal involvement in the marriage and follow-
 1350 ing separation and divorce is important (Cowdery
 1351 & Knudson-Martin, 2005; Pleck, 1997). Mothers
 1352 can be influential "gatekeepers" of paternal
 1353 involvement through attitudes and behaviors that
 1354 limit or facilitate fathers' opportunities to develop
 1355 close relationships with their children. Mothers'
 1356 traditional attitudes toward women's roles, identi-
 1357 ties linked primarily to caregiving, and perceptions
 1358 that mothers are more competent at child care than
 1359 fathers are associated with more active inhibitory
 1360 gate-keeping, particularly following separation.
 1361 These attitudes and perceptions by mothers predict
 1362 lower levels of father involvement (Allen &
 1363 Hawkins, 1999; Fagan & Barnett, 2003).

1364 **Implications for Divorce Policy**

1365 Although a number of factors help account for
 1366 individual differences in the effects of divorce on
 1367 children, therefore, the ability to maintain mean-
 1368 ingful relationships with both parents does appear

1369 to be of central importance. Writing on behalf of
 1370 18 experts on the effects of divorce, Lamb,
 1371 Sternberg, and Thompson (1997, p. 400) observed
 1372 more than a decade ago that: "To maintain high-
 1373 quality relationships with their children, parents
 1374 need to have sufficiently extensive and regular
 1375 interactions with them, but the amount of time
 1376 involved is usually less important than the quality
 1377 of the interaction that it fosters. Time distribution
 1378 arrangements that ensure the involvement of both
 1379 parents in important aspects of their children's
 1380 everyday lives and routines...are likely to keep
 1381 nonresidential parents playing psychologically
 1382 important and central roles in the lives of their
 1383 children."

1384 In order for parents to have a positive impact
 1385 on their children's development, therefore, it is
 1386 important that parents be integral parts of their
 1387 children's lives. This remains especially impor-
 1388 tant as children get older and greater portions of
 1389 their time are occupied outside the family by vir-
 1390 tue of friendships, extracurricular activities,
 1391 sports, and the like. At all ages, it is important for
 1392 parents to know teachers and friends, what's hap-
 1393 pening at school or preschool, how relationships
 1394 with peers are going, what other activities are
 1395 important or meaningful to the children, etc., and
 1396 to be aware of daily ups-and-downs in their chil-
 1397 dren's lives. It is hard to do this without regular
 1398 and extensive first hand involvement in a variety
 1399 of contexts.

1400 As Kelly and Lamb (2000; Lamb, 2002b;
 1401 Lamb & Kelly, 2001, 2009) reiterated, the ideal
 1402 situation is one in which children with separated
 1403 parents have opportunities to interact with both
 1404 parents frequently in a variety of functional con-
 1405 texts (feeding, play, discipline, basic care, limit-
 1406 setting, putting to bed, etc.). The evening and
 1407 overnight periods (like extended days with nap-
 1408 times) with nonresidential parents are especially
 1409 important psychologically for infants, toddlers,
 1410 and young children. They provide opportunities
 1411 for crucial social interactions and nurturing activ-
 1412 ities (including bathing, soothing hurts and anx-
 1413 eties, bedtime rituals, comforting in the middle of
 1414 the night, and the reassurance and security of
 1415 snuggling in the morning) that 1-3 h long visits
 1416 cannot provide. According to attachment theory

1417 (Lamb, 2002a), these everyday activities promote
 1418 and maintain trust and confidence in the parents,
 1419 while deepening and strengthening child–parent
 1420 attachments, and thus need to be encouraged when
 1421 decisions about access and contact are made.

1422 One implication of these findings is that even
 1423 young children should spend overnight periods
 1424 with both parents when both have been involved
 1425 in their care prior to separation, even though neo-
 1426 analysts have long counseled against this (Kelly
 1427 & Lamb, 2000; Lamb & Kelly, 2001). As Warshak
 1428 (2000) has pointed out, the prohibition of over-
 1429 night “visitation” has been justified by prejudices
 1430 and beliefs rather than by any empirical evidence.
 1431 When both parents have established significant
 1432 attachments and both have been actively involved
 1433 in the child’s care, overnight “visits” help con-
 1434 solidate attachments and child adjustment, not
 1435 undermine them. Consistent with this reasoning,
 1436 the results of research by Pruett and her col-
 1437 leagues showed that regular overnight visits were
 1438 associated with better adjustment on the part of
 1439 toddlers and young children (Pruett et al., 2003).
 1440 Parents who have been actively involved before
 1441 divorce but are then denied overnight access to
 1442 their children are thereby excluded from an
 1443 important array of activities, and the strength or
 1444 depth of their relationships suffer as a result.

1445 To minimize the deleterious impact of extended
 1446 separations from either parent, attachment theory
 1447 tells us there should be more frequent transitions
 1448 than would perhaps be desirable with older chil-
 1449 dren (Kelly & Lamb, 2000). To be responsive to
 1450 young children’s psychological needs, in other
 1451 words, the parenting schedules adopted for chil-
 1452 dren under age 2 or 3 should involve more transi-
 1453 tions, rather than fewer, to ensure the continuity
 1454 of both relationships and to promote the children’s
 1455 security and comfort. Although no empirical
 1456 research exists testing specific parenting plans
 1457 following separation, it is likely, for example, that
 1458 infants and toddlers would remain most comfort-
 1459 able and secure with schedules allowing the chil-
 1460 dren to see their nonresident fathers at least three
 1461 times a week, including at least one overnight
 1462 extended stay (assuming that the fathers are com-
 1463 petent, experienced parents), so that there is no
 1464 separation of greater than 2–3 days. From the

third year of life, the ability to tolerate longer
 separations begins to increase, so that most tod-
 dlers can manage two consecutive overnights
 with each parent without stress.

1465
 1466
 1467
 1468
 1469 Recently, Fabricius and Luecken (2007) found
 1470 that the quality of relationships between univer-
 1471 sity students and their divorced fathers were bet-
 1472 ter the more time they had lived with them, no
 1473 matter how much parental conflict there has been,
 1474 although the amount of exposure to parental
 1475 conflict generally had negative effects. Inter-
 1476 parental conflict should thus be avoided wherever
 1477 possible, but its presence should not be used to
 1478 justify restrictions on children’s access to either
 1479 of their parents.

**Legal Processes Associated
 with Parental Divorce**

1480
 1481
 1482 When parents divorce, they must make formal—
 1483 and legally-binding—arrangements about vari-
 1484 ous matters, including child support, payment of
 1485 the children’s medical expenses and insurance,
 1486 and, most importantly, custody and parenting
 1487 time. Only 2–10 % of divorcing couples in the
 1488 USA have their custody provisions decided by a
 1489 judge (Braver & O’Connell, 1998; Logan et al.,
 1490 2003; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992); the remain-
 1491 der reach agreements themselves that court
 1492 officials then “rubber stamp.” Many steps are
 1493 often involved in reaching such agreements.

1494 Parents typically have one or more court
 1495 appearances or “settlement conferences” before
 1496 final resolution. Often judges exhort parents to
 1497 settle their differences and, when they are making
 1498 too little progress, may order them to special
 1499 classes, and appoint mediators or custody evalua-
 1500 tors. Often, but not always, lawyers are involved.
 1501 In about 30 % of divorces, neither parent is repre-
 1502 sented; in another 30 % only one (most com-
 1503 monly the mother) is; and in the remainder both
 1504 are (Braver & O’Connell, 1998; Logan et al.,
 1505 2003; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992).

1506 Many parents attend “Parent Education”
 1507 classes (Blaisure & Geasler, 1996) which have
 1508 recently become very popular (Arbuthnot, 2002;
 1509 Blaisure & Geasler, 2000), although there is little

1510 evidence that they have the intended effects:
 1511 facilitating negotiations, preventing couples from
 1512 litigating, and improving the quality of their
 1513 agreements (Braver, Salem, Pearson, & DeLusé,
 1514 1996; Douglas, 2006; Goodman, Bonds, Sandler,
 1515 & Braver, 2004; Pollet & Lombreglia, 2008;
 1516 Sigal, Sandler, Wolchik, & Braver, 2011).

1517 About one quarter of parents enter into media-
 1518 tion, which involves neutral professionals helping
 1519 couples resolve disputes about custody, parenting
 1520 time, and sometimes financial issues (Braver &
 1521 O'Connell, 1998; Emery, 1994; Kelly, 2004). In
 1522 some states, mediation is not confidential, and if
 1523 the parents do not forge agreements, the mediators
 1524 make influential recommendation to the courts
 1525 (Douglas, 2006). Australia is pioneering "child
 1526 inclusive" divorce mediation in which the children
 1527 meet separately with specially trained intermediar-
 1528 ies (McIntosh, Wells, Smyth, & Long, 2008).

1529 About 5–10 % of the time, experts (usually psy-
 1530 chologists) are jointly hired by the parents to per-
 1531 form custody evaluations and make non-binding
 1532 recommendations either to the parents or directly to
 1533 the court. However, there have been several recent
 1534 critiques of the legal and ethical propriety as well as
 1535 the value of custody evaluations (Bow & Quinnell,
 1536 2002, 2004; Martin, 2005; Tippins & Wittman,
 1537 2005; Emery, Otto & O'Donohue, 2006).

1538 After one or more of these interventions, the
 1539 final arrangements may diverge substantially
 1540 from the parents' initial intentions. In Braver and
 1541 O'Connell's (1998) study, for example, 70 % of
 1542 the mothers initially wanted sole legal custody,
 1543 and the remainder wanted joint custody, whereas
 1544 75 % of the fathers wanted joint custody, and the
 1545 remainder were equally split between wanting
 1546 sole maternal and sole paternal custody. Similarly,
 1547 Maccoby and Mnookin (1992) reported that 82 %
 1548 of the mothers wanted sole maternal physical
 1549 custody, while equivalent thirds of the fathers
 1550 wanted joint, sole paternal, or sole maternal cus-
 1551 tody arrangements. Two-thirds of the University
 1552 students surveyed by Fabricius and Hall (2000)
 1553 reported that their mothers had wanted to be pri-
 1554 mary residential parents, and almost two-thirds
 1555 reported that their fathers had wanted equal or
 1556 nearly equal living arrangements or to be their
 1557 primary residential parents. In all three studies,

1558 however, the parents ultimately were twice as
 1559 likely to reach agreements reflecting the mothers'
 1560 rather than the fathers' preferences.

1561 Why do mothers' preferences tend to prevail?
 1562 Some have speculated that fathers' stated prefer-
 1563 ences are only bargaining positions later negoti-
 1564 ated away in exchange for concessions on child
 1565 support (Neely, 1984; Singer & Reynolds, 1988;
 1566 Weitzman, 1985), but all three of the empirical
 1567 investigations that have specifically investigated
 1568 this claim have failed to find support (Braver &
 1569 O'Connell, 1998; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992;
 1570 Venohr & Griffith, 2003).

1571 Instead, it is likely that fathers' low level of
 1572 persistence follows the guidance they receive
 1573 from judges, attorneys, custody evaluators, parent
 1574 educators, and mediators (Braver & O'Connell,
 1575 1998; Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992; Mnookin,
 1576 1984; Mnookin & Kornhauser, 1979). But this is
 1577 not inevitable: DeLusé (1999) found that fathers
 1578 who attended Parent Education classes negotiated
 1579 significantly more parenting time, presumably
 1580 because instructors had explained the courts'
 1581 desire to keep both parents involved.

1582 Lawyers may play a particularly important role.
 1583 At an Arizona State Bar convention, Braver et al.
 1584 (2002) distributed a custody scenario to Family
 1585 Law attorneys who were randomly assigned to
 1586 "represent" either the mother or the father.
 1587 Although the facts in the scenario were neutral, the
 1588 attorneys were more likely to tell mothers that they
 1589 would probably prevail in seeking physical cus-
 1590 tody and the majority of parenting time. Note that
 1591 even if courts were indeed completely gender-neu-
 1592 tral, lawyers' views can discourage worthy fathers
 1593 from pursuing their desired arrangements, creating
 1594 a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Current Debates About Divorce

1595 Because its effects on both parents and children
 1596 are so dramatic, and because divorce is so com-
 1597 mon, many aspects of current policy and practice
 1598 are the focus of intense debate.
 1599

1600 *No-fault/unilateral divorce.* Beginning in the late
 1601 1960s, as explained above, no-fault divorce became

1602 the standard throughout the United States. Very
 1603 importantly, divorces also became unilateral,
 1604 because reluctant parties could do nothing to pre-
 1605 vent, delay, or avoid divorce. As noted earlier, the
 1606 surge in the divorce rates coincided with the pas-
 1607 sage of these laws, leading some advocates to press
 1608 for a return to fault-based divorces (Brinig &
 1609 Buckley, 1998). Making divorce harder to obtain
 1610 would perforce reduce the rate of divorce, but efforts
 1611 to repeal no-fault divorce laws are unlikely to pre-
 1612 vail in the current cultural climate (DiFonzo, 1997).
 1613 There is, however, public support for better public
 1614 education about marriage, to prevent couples from
 1615 later seeking divorce. At least one Catholic diocese
 1616 increased the length of marriage preparation classes
 1617 for churchgoers from 6 to 9 months in 2010, and
 1618 many courts now require parties considering separa-
 1619 tion to attend cautionary classes.

1620 *Custody standards.* There has been a consider-
 1621 able debate about the legal standards that guide
 1622 decisions about custody. Since 1970, the prevail-
 1623 ing standard has been the “Best Interests of the
 1624 Child” standard (BIC). The BIC is generally con-
 1625 sidered an improvement over past standards
 1626 because it accords primacy to children’s needs,
 1627 and is egalitarian, flexible, and simple (Chambers,
 1628 1984; Warshak, 2007) but it has been criticized
 1629 for being vague and for allowing judges to rely
 1630 on idiosyncratic biases (Chambers, 1984; Finley
 1631 & Schwartz, 2007). Because rulings are unpre-
 1632 dictable, some argue that it fosters custody dis-
 1633 putes (O’Connell, 2007). The major alternative
 1634 proposals are the Primary Caretaker standard
 1635 (Chambers, 1984; Maccoby, 1999), specifying
 1636 that parents who provided the most childcare dur-
 1637 ing marriage should be primary custodians; the
 1638 Approximation Rule (American Law Institute,
 1639 2002; Lamb, 2007; Warshak, 2007), dictating
 1640 that “the court should allocate custodial responsi-
 1641 bility so that the proportion of custodial time the
 1642 child spends with each parent approximates the
 1643 proportion of time each parent spent performing
 1644 caretaking functions for the child prior to the par-
 1645 ents’ separation” (American Law Institute, 2002,
 1646 p. 1); and the Joint (or Shared) Custody standard,
 1647 specifying that children should reside about
 1648 equally with both parents. Of these, the latter
 1649 standard seems to be gaining the most ground

(Fabricius, Braver, Diaz, & Velez, 2010; 1650
 Parkinson, 2010), if not with feminist groups or 1651
 the Bar. Critics also argue that this standard (like 1652
 all the others) is insensitive to the possible effects 1653
 of domestic violence, which (they argue) are 1654
 more likely to continue when the parents are 1655
 required to have frequent contacts, if only to 1656
 transfer the children. 1657

Processes for obtaining divorce. In addition to 1658
 these substantive issues, considerable controversy 1659
 surrounds the *processes* involved in reaching deci- 1660
 sions. In particular, divorce settlements are guided 1661
 by the courts, which promote an adversarial model 1662
 of dispute resolution. Critics argue that this is inap- 1663
 propriate for divorce and custody disputes because 1664
 the resulting conflict can harm children (Weinstein, 1665
 1997). They urge that alternative systems of dis- 1666
 pute resolution should instead be the norm 1667
 (Firestone & Weinstein, 2004). 1668

Should children have an independent voice 1669
 when disputes involve their welfare (Parkinson 1670
 & Cashmore, 2009)? Should children be 1671
 expected or allowed to testify (“choose between 1672
 his parents”), and if so, to whom and when (in 1673
 open court, to the judge in chambers, to a trained 1674
 and sensitive mental health professional)? 1675
 Should they have their own legal counsel or 1676
guardians ad litem to advocate for them, and/or 1677
 ensure not only that children’s interests, broadly 1678
 defined, but also the specific needs of individual 1679
 children and families, are emphasized (Fabricius, 1680
 2003; Warshak, 2003)? These knotty questions 1681
 are the focus of considerable controversy but 1682
 little research. 1683

Two issues involving professional practice 1684
 standards are also controversial. As noted earlier, 1685
 there is debate about whether custody evaluators 1686
 base their recommendations on sound scientific 1687
 grounds (Bow & Quinnell, 2002, 2004; Martin, 1688
 2005; Tippins & Wittman, 2005) and a new role 1689
 of Parenting Coordinator has developed (Sullivan, 1690
 2005). Parenting Coordinators are professionals 1691
 (typically psychologists and counselors) who are 1692
 appointed by courts to handle ongoing visitation 1693
 disputes and other parenting issues for postdi- 1694
 vorce families. Whether judges can or should 1695
 cede some of their legal authority to helping 1696

1697 professionals who decide disputes promptly on
1698 behalf of the courts while dispensing family therapy
1699 is hotly disputed.

1700 **Methodological Issues in Studying** 1701 **Marital Dissolution**

1702 A number of methodological issues surface in the
1703 voluminous research on divorce, its causes and
1704 its aftermath. We focus here on two categories of
1705 issues: (1) the sources of information; and (2) the
1706 research designs.

1707 *Data sources and measures.* When exploring
1708 divorce, researchers have access to some more or
1709 less *objective* data, including employment and
1710 labor force data, tallies of divorces, child support
1711 payments logged by administrative agencies
1712 (Braver, Fitzpatrick, & Bay, 1991) and various
1713 official court filings (Braver & Bay, 1992; Braver,
1714 Whitley, & Ng, 1993). However, most of the infor-
1715 mation sought by researchers can only be obtained
1716 by querying the family members involved, yet it is
1717 well known that such self-report data may be erro-
1718 neous and biased. Unfortunately, researchers too
1719 often fail to determine whether there are valid mea-
1720 sures of the constructs at issue, to ensure that the
1721 measures are standardized across studies (for the
1722 sake of comparability), or to document that the
1723 measures have adequate psychometric properties.

1724 An example of a measure that *has* shown con-
1725 vincing validity is the Child Behavior Checklist
1726 (CBCL, Achenbach, 1978, 1991a; Achenbach &
1727 Edelbrock, 1979; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2007).
1728 Painstakingly developed over many decades, this
1729 measure is often thought to be the “gold standard”
1730 of children’s behavioral and mental health prob-
1731 lems. One-week test-retest reliabilities average
1732 0.89 (Achenbach, 1991b) and its concurrent valid-
1733 ity using clinical referred vs. non-referred groups is
1734 excellent (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983). CBCL
1735 scores also correlate reasonably well with diagno-
1736 ses obtained via structured interview by trained
1737 clinicians (cf. Bird et al., 1987). The original 118-
1738 item measure has been shortened to a widely used
1739 32-item version called the Behavior Problems
1740 Index (BPI; Peterson & Zill, 1986) while Moore,

Halle, Vandivere, and Mariner (2002) have suc- 1741
cessfully created an even shorter 6 item version. 1742

1743 At the other extreme, the amount of contact
1744 children have with their nonresidential fathers is
1745 often inconsistently—and rather poorly—mea-
1746 sured (Smyth, 2002). Comparing six datasets,
1747 Argys et al. (2007) concluded that, “What is most
1748 striking about the reports of father-child contact
1749 ... and perhaps most alarming to researchers, is
1750 the magnitude of the differences in the reported
1751 prevalence of father-child contact across the dif-
1752 ferent surveys” (p. 383). In particular, *quantita-*
1753 *tive scales* are often more reliable and valid than
1754 ordinal items. For example, Fabricius and
1755 Luecken (2007) asked young adults four ques-
1756 tions about the typical number of days and nights
1757 they spent with their fathers and converted those
1758 to the percentage of the child’s parenting time
1759 spent with the father. In addition, of course,
1760 researchers have argued that the construct of
1761 father involvement needs to be better conceptual-
1762 ized before it can be well measured (Fabricius
1763 et al., 2010; Pasley & Braver, 2003).

1764 Researchers also need to consider who pro-
1765 vided the information. Among others, Marsiglio,
1766 Day, and Lamb (2000) have called attention to
1767 the discrepancies among respondents’ reports.
1768 Generally, there are two sorts of informant bias in
1769 this area of research: a “self-serving” bias, with
1770 informants describing themselves in more
1771 socially desirable terms than warranted (Cialdini,
1772 Braver, & Lewis, 1974; Miller & Ross, 1975;
1773 Sicol & Ross, 1977); and an “ex-spouse-bash-
1774 ing” bias (Braver et al., 1991; Sonenstein &
1775 Calhoun, 1990) characterized by exactly the
1776 opposite tendencies when informants are describ-
1777 ing their former spouses. It is thus desirable to
1778 “triangulate” reports by obtaining matched
1779 reports from both mothers and fathers whenever
1780 feasible. Pasley and Braver (2003) also suggested
1781 that researchers obtain retrospective reports from
1782 adult children because they appear to “split the
1783 difference” between the two parents’ views.

1784 *Research design issues.* Divorce processes unfold
1785 over long periods of time, but researchers typically
1786 take “snapshots” at one point in time. Correlations
1787 among variables in such cross-sectional datasets
1788

1788 unfortunately cannot elucidate the causal processes
 1789 involved. And very few studies have involved lon-
 1790 gitudinal designs, with the same family members
 1791 repeatedly observed over longer periods so that
 1792 causal processes can be explored. Maccoby and
 1793 Mnookin (1992) and Braver and O'Connell (1998)
 1794 are rare exceptions who have obtained *prospective*
 1795 longitudinal studies, in which the families were
 1796 initially observed *before* the divorce and were then
 1797 reassessed (Braver & O'Connell, 1998; Maccoby
 1798 & Mnookin, 1992). Among the causal questions
 1799 that could be addressed more reliably using such
 1800 data was whether fathers' greater contact made
 1801 fathers better child support payers or vice versa. In
 1802 fact, Braver and colleagues found that a third vari-
 1803 able, the experience of parental disenfranchise-
 1804 ment, explained both of these behaviors (Braver,
 1805 Wolchik, Sandler, Sheets, Fogas, et al., 1993).

1806 Another important research design issue limits
 1807 the generalizability of certain key findings, includ-
 1808 ing, for example, Bauserman's (2002) meta-analytic
 1809 conclusion that children in joint custody
 1810 families fare better than those in sole custody.
 1811 Because virtually all families self-select or are
 1812 selected into the custody arrangements they experi-
 1813 ence (custody is not assigned at random), they
 1814 are likely to differ in several important ways from
 1815 families with other custody arrangements. Such
 1816 concomitant differences, as opposed to the arrange-
 1817 ment per se, may account for differences in chil-
 1818 dren's outcomes. Accordingly, Emery, Otto, and
 1819 O'Donohue (2005) questioned whether the same
 1820 benefits would accrue if joint custody was *imposed*
 1821 on less-than-willing families. Fabricius et al.
 1822 (2010) have advocated that such important ques-
 1823 tions can better be explored using alternative
 1824 research designs, such as natural experiments and
 1825 using sophisticated statistical methods to control
 1826 for preexisting differences and self-selection or
 1827 predisposing factors (Gunnoe & Braver, 2001).

1828 **Conclusions, and Applying**
 1829 **the Knowledge of the Chapter**

1830 Divorce began to become much more common in
 1831 the late 1960s, but rates have stabilized in the last
 1832 2 decades. The increased reliance on divorce in

the late twentieth century was attributable to a 1833
 variety of factors, with changes in the role and 1834
 attitudes of women (within families and in soci- 1835
 ety more generally) being particularly significant, 1836
 along with changing laws that made divorce 1837
 easier to attain by obviating the need to prove 1838
 that either party was at fault. Although divorce 1839
 proved beneficial to many of those who sought it, 1840
 marital dissolution has profound influences on all 1841
 the individuals involved, as several decades of 1842
 research have documented. Specifically, mothers, 1843
 fathers, and children are all affected emotionally, 1844
 psychologically, and economically by divorce, 1845
 with variations in the ways parents negotiate 1846
 divorce playing a particularly important role in 1847
 determining how children are affected psycho- 1848
 logically. This realization is sometimes credited 1849
 with recent declines in the rates of divorce, with 1850
 at least some parents concluding that divorce 1851
 should be deferred "for the sake of the children" 1852
 and a number of programs around the world have 1853
 been designed to forestall hasty divorces. Such 1854
 efforts have also been complemented by the 1855
 design of programs, exemplified by those intro- 1856
 duced in Australia in 2008, designed to minimize 1857
 the adverse effects of divorce by encouraging 1858
 parents to make decisions with their children's 1859
 interests in mind. Ongoing evaluations of pro- 1860
 grams such as these will doubtless affect social 1861
 policy in other jurisdictions. 1862

1863 One implication of such programs is the
 1864 implicit recognition that divorce per se is nei-
 1865 ther good nor bad in all circumstances—the
 1866 effects are extremely variable. This means that
 1867 both researchers and policy makers need to
 1868 undertake much more nuanced and sensitive
 1869 research than might have been warranted when
 1870 divorce was viewed as a similar experience for
 1871 all individuals.

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