Marriage, divorce and remarriage as reproductive strategies in the USA

Biologically men and women have different reproductive strategies

- Costs of reproduction for men are less
- A woman's reproductive abilities decline with age
- Women care for children

Divorce is likely when the reproductive interests of one of the sexes is not being met in marriage

Marriage as a Reproductive Contract: Patterns of marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage.
Buckle, L., G. Gallup, and Z. Todd
Marriage, divorce, and remarriage

- Women divorce early because reproduction will decline while men divorce late because their wife becomes infertile.
- As a consequence, females are more likely to petition for divorce than males. As proof the following slide shows a negative correlation between women petitioning for divorce and age and a positive correlation for men. Slide 4
- Remarriage: women much less likely to remarry than men. After divorce, the number of years for women prior to remarriage is greater than that of men. This is because their reproductive value declines and they cannot compete as effectively with younger women.
Reasons given for divorce

- Adultery
- Cruelty/Behavior
- Desertion

Percent of divorces

- Husband
- Wife

Reason given by petitioner
Cause of divorce and purpose of marriage

One way to study the purpose or function of marriage is to understand the causes of divorce.

This is reasonable because divorce occurs presumably because one or more of the purposes of marriage are not being met.

Reproductive issues loom large.
Divorce and Children: Children Stabilize Marriage

Divorce and Number of Children in Family

does not control for duration of marriage (the longer one is married the less likely they are to divorce)
Comparison of Primary Grounds for Divorce Used by Men and Women (HRAF survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grounds</th>
<th>Percent of Causes</th>
<th>Men (Percent of Causes)</th>
<th>Women (Percent of Causes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No divorce allowed</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reproductive problems</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Illicit sex</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>10.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical violence</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Incompatibility</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desertion or neglect</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompatibility with affines</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure in economic or domestic duties</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trivial reason or no reason</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pasternak, Ember, and Ember (after Frayser)
Female and male divorce petitioning as a function of age

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Marriage, divorce, and remarriage

- Divorced women with children had a lower probability of remarriage than childless women and the probability of remarriage decreased with a greater number of children.
- Remarriage rates for males was independent of the number of children they had.
- But previously married males without children were four times more likely to marry a never married women than a previously married woman.
- And previously married men with children were more likely to marry a previously married woman by a factor of two to one.
Mate choices of formerly married males as a function of their parental status

- Parental status of previously divorced males
  - without children
  - with children

- Percent remarried
  - previously unmarried females
  - divorced females
Economic dependency and divorce cross-culturally

Divorce is lowest when there is equal contributions by spouses

Source: Quinlan & Quinlan, 2007 Cross-Cultural Research
Other factors influencing the frequency of divorce or as a consequence of divorce

- Presence of allomothers increases the probability of divorce
  - Suggests that women are more willing to initiate a divorce if they can call on others to assist in childcare/rearing

- Weaning tends to be early in societies with high divorce rates
  - Suggests are a response to the probability of male desertion

- East Eurasian societies have the lowest divorce rates

- Societies with high levels of polygyny have lower rates of divorce
  - Seems to contradict Goody’s model but
    - There were few dowry or plough societies in the sample

Source: Quinlan & Quinlan, 2007 *Cross-Cultural Research*
The longer men are married and the more children they have the less likely they are to "stray".

Figure 1. Number of dependents and proportion of men having an affair per year versus years in marriage. For 10 years and beyond, five-year averages of the proportion of men having an affair per year were used due to declining sample sizes.

Proceedings of the Royal Society B
Tsimane Evidence

Argument made for the “provisioning” as against the “mating effort” model
- Mating effort model predicts that men should seek EPC’s as their wives become older and diminish in reproductive value
- Provisioning model predicts that the more children a man has the less likely he is to seek EPC’s

Examined frequency of extra-marital affairs among Tsimane men (0 to >30 years of marriage).

Findings:
- High rates during initial years of marriage
- Sharp decline with number of children
- Stays low even after wife becomes infertile

Interpretation:
- Men curtail extra-marital sex as number of dependent children increase
- Men do not increase extra-marital affairs as a function of their wives’ fertility – in fact just the opposite occurs