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The Social Effects of Abortion On Children

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by

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One of the most devastating effects of divorce for the child is a loss of trust in and for adults. A child learns to trust others by and through the stability, love and "being there" of his parents on a permanent basis in a family. Divorce destroys that trust through the child's deep feeling that he/she has been abandoned precisely by one who is supposed to love him the most, by one who is supposed to always be there because he is his father and she is his mother. All the empirical studies done on the effects of divorce on the child over a 5-10-15 year period show this clearly.

Later on in life a child of divorce has real difficulty trusting any adult: if the one who was supposed to love him the most abandoned him at a critical time and need, how can he/she trust anybody? There are further devastating results as well: divorce among divorced children, difficulties of women relating to men, sexual promiscuity as the inability to commit to another in love, the "time bomb" syndrome whereby any of the above symptoms can emerge anytime in life. This is called the "sleeper effect."

These empirical studies also show that even children from non-divorcing parents are affected by divorce rates in our society. Since more than half their everyday companions are from divorced families, the tendency quite naturally for these children is to wonder whether they too will soon be the victims of abandonment by a mother or a father. If other parents abandoned their children, won't they too be abandoned? This creates fear even among children whose parents are not divorced. How often do parents now hear, "Are you and Daddy going to get a divorce?"

If ever there was proof of social interaction and influence of the example of people on others in society, it is surely in the area of divorce which is becoming so frequent in the no fault era. But never has the damage to the psyches of children been so great as well. Divorce itself creates children at risk. There are about 1 million new children a year in the U.S. who are directly affected by divorce. Their inability to trust others, to commit to others, to give themselves to others is

becoming pandemic in American society. Their emotional and relational future is problematic at best.

Just as devastating is the social effect of abortion on our children. The only proof we have so far is anecdotal but its probability — perhaps its inevitability — should be doubted by no one. Like divorce, what we are beginning to witness in children is a sort of post traumatic abortion syndrome on children in American society. This is an altogether new and potentially damaging phenomenon for our children.

There are between 1.5-2 million legal abortions in the U.S. each year (that we know of). This number seems to vary from one researcher to another, but such a massive assault on unborn human life for any or no reason, has got to have a social effect on children as well. Unfortunately, no empirical studies on this effect of abortion has yet been forthcoming.

But clearly, even the youngest children learn about abortion in their sex education and AIDS education classes. In some schools, they begin to learn this as early as the second and third grade. In addition, they hear about abortion constantly from parents and other adults, in the movies, on TV — everywhere. And they learn in their very simple way exactly what abortion is: in their concrete minds, it is a violent and intentional expulsion of a baby from its mother. That's the concrete way children learn without the adult evasive and sonorous words of "choice", "reproductive right", and "products of conception." These latter are abstract words, which adults use to escape the reality of what is being done: The violent death of the unborn. A child understands concretely, affectively and realistically: abortion is the violent rejection of a baby just like themselves.

We are beginning to see children asking the same questions as in divorce: "When I was in your belly, Mommy, did you want to abort me?" "Did you ever abort a brother or a sister of mine?" "Did you ever have an abortion?" Those parents who have had abortions (they are in the millions today) will either have to lie to their child or they will have to speak the truth. If a child finds out the truth that their mother aborted an earlier brother or sister, the same feelings of fear and distrust will envelop the child as we see when the child feels abandoned by a loved mother or father in divorce. Only the situation for abortion will be worse: "Why was my sister killed and I was not?" "Will my father and mother now kill me as they killed my brother or sister?" "Was it a brother or a sister?" "Why did you do that?"

These questions are quite unanswerable by a mother who has had an abortion because of the devastating effect this would have on the child. The only answer would be for the parent to lie to the child and thus endanger the core of the parent-child relationship which must always be based on truth.

The social effects of abortion therefore are perhaps much more devastating and destructive than any of us ever suspected, especially those of us who championed the "abortion freedom" as a right. True child abuse is present when children become aware at an early age, that they truly cannot trust adults even to keep them alive.

If divorce is a direct assault on the child because it places him or her at risk of abandonment, the social effects of abortion place the child in direct fear of his very life.