Effects of Divorce on Children’s Education

**Issue:** Family background impacts children’s educational success. Specifically, divorce can significantly jeopardize children’s educational achievement and attainment.

**Achievement**
- Divorce and separation correlate positively with diminished school achievement and performance.
- Elementary school children who experience parental divorce immediately begin performing worse academically than their peers from intact families. This gap persists through elementary school.
- Children of divorced parents are more likely to be held back a grade.
- High school students in intact families with married parents have GPAs 11 percent higher than those from divorced families.
- Children from divorced homes performed worse in reading, spelling, and math, and repeated a grade more frequently than did children in intact two-parent families.

**Educational Attainment**
- Children whose parents divorce get about seven tenths of a year less education than children from intact families.
- Children who experienced their parents’ divorce or separation are less likely to complete high school.
- 85 percent of adolescents in intact biological families graduate from high school, compared to 67.2 percent in single-parent families, 65.4 percent in stepfamilies, and 51.9 percent who live with no parents.
- Divorce and separation reduce children’s likelihood of attending college.

**Children’s Engagement**
- Children whose parents divorced skipped nearly 60 percent more class periods than children from intact families. Girls appeared to be more affected than boys.
- Adolescents who live in an intact married family are least likely to be expelled or suspended from school.

**Conclusion:** The intact, married family delivers fundamental education benefits to children. MARRI research available online shows how divorce can negatively impact children’s achievement and attainment in school.
Note: This study controlled for parental education, parental occupation, family size, etc.

For example, “Marriage, Family Structure, and Children’s Educational Attainment"