

Recession and Divorce in Ireland: *Coming back for another bite of the cherry*



Dr. Elena Moore
Director of Families and Societies Research Unit,
Centre for Social Science Research
Senior Lecturer, Sociology Department, University of Cape Town
elena.moore@uct.ac.za

DIVORCE, FAMILIES AND EMOTION WORK

'ONLY DEATH WILL
MAKE US PART'

ELENA
MOORE

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN STUDIES
IN FAMILY AND INTIMATE LIFE



"The very word 'divorce' suggests ending. But relationships between the Irish divorced parents Elena Moore interviewed over six years very much lived on, albeit in new ways. Yet the rules have yet to be written, Moore argues, on how parents are 'supposed to feel' in post-divorce life...This book is a carefully researched, clearly written, very important contribution to our understanding of divorce. Many will recognize themselves in her portraits."

-Arlie Hochschild, University of California, USA

"Moore's fine-grained, textured analysis challenges media hyperbole and cultural stereotypes about divorce. [...] This rich, evidence-informed narrative provides a frank, 'up close and personal' portrait of the aftermath of marriage dissolution. Written with deep insight and great clarity of expression, the book will be of interest to the general public and to those who have an interest in the sociology of gender, emotions and intimate relationships."

-Mary Corcoran, Maynooth University, Ireland

"This thought-provoking book takes us deep into the world of emotion work in post-divorce family lives over time. Elena Moore throws a welcome light on the moral identities and gendered inequalities of parenting after separation. The book should be a must-read for family law and policy makers, as well as researchers and students."

-Rosalind Edwards, University of Southampton, UK

Divorce and the Recession in Ireland

- *Less financial resources, less divorce?*
- End of the Celtic Tiger Wives and Divorces
- No clean break - Revisiting Separation Agreements and Divorce Orders [D v D, 2011]
- Divvying up Debt and the Delayed Sale of the Marital Home
 - Living Together when a marriage ends
 - Delaying Divorce: Pitfalls of Restrictive Divorce Requirements. Journal of Family Issues
<http://jfi.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/12/31/0192513X14566620.full>

Findings

- Housing Market, Sale of the Marital Home and 'equitable' division of assets over time
- Redundancies and Maintenance
- Increase cost of everyday life
 - Young adults remain dependent for longer
 - Taxes and Charges
- Poorer working conditions and joint parenting

Housing Market and Divorce

- Waiting for the Sale of the Marital Home

It didn't sell until September 2009. It didn't sell till then so that was a long, long period. It was nearly two and a half years. It went up on January 2007 and then it was 2009 before it sold. So it was a long um...that was hard, that was hard.

(Stacey, employed full time, separated 2007, married 14 years, one 12 year old daughter)

- Unfair settlements

The house here was valued about two years ago (2006), at 1.3 million and I said I'd give him, I gave him all our savings which was over 100,000 and I gave him 425,000 and he retained 25 percent of this house and he's bought another house now which [was cheaper as it] had gone down in value over the last few months. So he benefited, he profited. Not only did he get a house, he profited from mine... So I was kind of like saying, listen it's not really fair that you are profiting from me. But I suppose I don't mind, so to be honest with you, the reason why I did such a stupid deal, which is ridiculous now, was because I just, he had to go somewhere and I wasn't, I just wasn't able to face somebody else taking control of my destiny in the courts and I don't want that whole thing for the children.

(Carol, employed full time, separated 2005, married 19 years, four children)

- Cost of re-housing (pre-2008) and impact on shared parenting
- Availability of Home Loans post 2008

Redundancies and Maintenance

- 7 of the 20 parents in the follow-up study had been made redundant
- Impact on ability to pay maintenance
 - Relevance of returning to the court
 - Cost of revisiting agreements

– Re-negotiating what is fair

He came back for another bite of the cherry. And he wanted to give up the maintenance, which he paid weekly. So he wanted to give that up, he wanted to um...a monthly payment from me or a lump sum from me, and my pension. A portion of my pension. So I said no, no, no to all of those. I said yes, I didn't mind giving that up on the condition that he would give pocket money to my daughter on a weekly basis.

- Choice of living arrangement and contact

Increase Cost of Everyday Life

Increased Education Costs

the separation agreement was that he would provide a certain amount of money for each of the kids. .. he would pay fifty percent of the fees. I think maybe after we met the last year in 2008 he was made redundant. So he had to find another job. So he's taken a big drop in his salary which is, which is...and then he also invested unwisely in the, during the boom time, so I think he had a whole lot in negative equity. So I have to say I wasn't particularly sympathetic because I had to borrow money from my parents to keep the kids and the house

Household Costs

and water charges are coming in now, and the property tax which I have to pay, I don't know how I will manage.

Costs of Dependent Adult Children

I just said to my son, you do realise that because I'm not getting maintenance for you, that you'll have to approach your father for shoes and clothes and that kind of thing.

Working Conditions under Austerity

Work Conditions under Austerity and Joint Parenting

that's why I'm working as I say kind of, because we've had, we've both had cuts to our salary. Our income's gone down 35%. And we employ eleven people, 80% of our costs are staff wages, and we haven't let anyone go and we haven't reduced the wages. So what it's meant is instead of seeing maybe fourteen or fifteen patients in a, in a...a session, we're now seeing nineteen or twenty patients in the morning and nineteen or twenty in the afternoon. It's just a lot, working a lot harder. And that's to just try and maintain the same income, so it's been like that for about five years you know, that's why I'm working so hard you know. I wouldn't really choose to work this hard you know

Divorce in Recession and Recovery

- Not isolated from pre-existing restrictive divorce policies
- Living separately under the one roof
- Inadequate housing solutions
- Ongoing Uncertainty
- Sharing the risk and responsibility during austerity
- Facilitating Shared Parenting