

Rebound Marriages No More Likely to End in Divorce

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Many self-help books and well-meaning friends and relatives offer this advice to newly divorced friends: *Don't marry on the rebound. Don't rush into or commit to a serious relationship prematurely. Wait until you are good and ready.*

However, according to new research by Nicholas Wolfinger, associate professor in the University of Utah's Department of Family and Consumer Studies, "There is no relationship between 'the rebound marriage'—that is, a marriage that quickly follows on the heels of the end of another—and divorce. Rebounding into a second marriage is no more or less likely to increase the chance of another divorce than if a person waits a longer period of time.”

Wolfinger, author of *Understanding the Divorce Cycle: The Children of Divorce in Their Own Marriages*, published last year, notes that counseling against a rebound marriage, which, he says, “is intuitive” to most people, perpetuates the myth that marriages will end if one or both parties marry soon after a divorce.

“If you rush into a new relationship, others usually interpret it as you are not ready or that you are overly eager or that you haven't searched long enough for a new partner. He will present his findings this week at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, in Los Angeles.

Wolfinger, who teaches University courses on the family, divorce and

remarriage, said part of his motivation to research the issue came from consistently being asked by students whether second (and subsequent) marriages are more likely to end in divorce if the parties marry too soon. “There were no good studies out there that allowed me to answer this question,” says Wolfinger, also an adjunct associate professor in the University’s Department of Sociology.

Wolfinger’s research analyzed 1,171 adults from the National Survey of Families and Households data to determine whether rebound time, defined as months elapsed between an initial divorce and subsequent remarriage, affects a remarriage’s stability. He measured the end of the first marriage by separation, rather than divorce, as research suggests that the marriage often ends when separation occurs. “Quite often, the interval between separation and formal divorce is the time during which you are just marshalling your resources to be a single person,” he says.

For the study, Wolfinger measured new relationship formation from the time the person remarried or started living with someone who eventually became their spouse. “Many second marriages are preceded by cohabitation,” he says. “You can understand the rationale—‘Let’s live together first’ or ‘Let’s not go through the fancy white dress wedding.’

Many factors that put first marriages at risk—lower levels of education and coming from a divorced family—are also challenges the second time around. “Second marriages have a number of additional factors working against them—the difficulties step kids represent as well as the fact that the second marriage is a population that has shown its willingness to get divorced. They have done it once and, in essence, they are willing to do it again,” he says.

Wolfinger says research indicates that many of the disruptions associated with divorce, like residential mobility, take place within a year or two. Much of the clinical literature on divorce, however, Wolfinger notes, “is

vague in how long emotional recovery takes. It is safer to say different people recover at different rates,” he says.

Wolfinger examined the rebound hypothesis only as it pertains to marriage. “Maybe the rebound effect really does exist in dating relationships,” he says. “Perhaps those relationships are more likely to break up if people rebound quickly into them, but there are not adequate data available to test that question.”

Source: University of Utah

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