

Final Paper

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In a research article titled *Why women choose divorce: An evolutionary perspective* by Parker et al., it states “When people choose to get married, typically they do so with the intention of staying together forever — ‘till death do us part.’ Nevertheless, roughly half of marriages in the US end in divorce. This is costly to all involved, particularly to women.” Even despite the greater burden that it may cause for women, “women are more likely to initiate divorce and report greater life satisfaction post-divorce than men.” (Parker et al., 2022)

In the movie *Crazy Stupid Love*, they start the film with this exact scenario of a woman asking her husband for a divorce after being married for over twenty years and having three children (Ficarra & Requa, 2012). In Parker et al.’s research they share a few reasons as to why women may desire divorce more. They list reasons such as women making more money and being able to control their fertility which ultimately comes down to lack of interdependence.

“With women’s greater earnings comes less interdependence between partners. This could change women’s willingness to tolerate annoyances in their marriage by altering their welfare trade-off ratio (i.e. the willingness to sacrifice personal welfare to increase partner's welfare. This framework predicts that many women will be less willing to tolerate unsatisfying treatment from their partners and more willing to escalate conflicts and because they are in a better position to walk away.” (Parker et. al., 2022)

This means that because women can choose now whether or not they want to have children and can support themselves without a man's help anymore, they don’t *need* to stay married to a man if they are unhappy.

In *Crazy, Stupid, Love*, Julianne Moore’s character *Emily*, ultimately shares that her reason for wanting a divorce is because she was bored with her husband, *Cal* played by Steve Carroll. She then discloses that she cheated on him with a higher earning man. Which is also in line

with Parker's research where he states that "Regardless of country-level gender equality norms, women reported a higher preference for a long-term partner with good financial prospects than did men." (Parker et. al., 2022)

In our textbook, *Foundations of Couples, Marriage, and Family Counseling* by David Capuzzi and Mark D. Stauffer, it discusses the issue of affairs and states the "up to 20% of adults are unfaithful in their relationships" (Capuzzi and Stauffer, 2021). One fifth, seems like a high likeliness which shows Emily and Cal's circumstances are not unusual.

Cal is absolutely shocked and heartbroken over his wife's infidelity, though. He spends the beginning part of the movie, alone in a bar telling everyone "My wife slept with David Lindhagen" (Ficarra & Requa, 2012). Our text states that in this situation "The betrayed partner feels hurt, deceived, insecure, anxious, agitated, angry, isolated, and abandoned" (Capuzzi and Stauffer, 2021).). Which is exactly how the movie depicts Cal's emotional reactions.

This is when a younger "ladies man", *Jacob* played by Ryan Gosling, approaches Cal. Jacob tells Cal how miserable and desperate he's appearing and offers to take him under his wing to become more appealing to women. He states "Cal, you've got a kind face. You've got a good head of hair. You seem like a nice guy. I'm going to help you rediscover your manhood." (Ficarra & Requa, 2012). Jacob does help give Cal a complete makeover, he takes him shopping for a new wardrobe and teaches him how to talk to women without being desperate. Cal fumbles through it but ultimately gets it down and has a few meaningless hookups with different women. Ultimately though, he continues to show his desire is still for his wife and these hookups are attempts to try to numb the pain of losing her.

Within Emily and Cal's personal struggles with their divorce there are also two younger children put in the middle of it. In an article called *The Psychological Consequences of Children*

of Parental Divorce by Avery Kabyn, she states that “Divorce is the poignant, straining, and permanent legal action that tears families apart. As the source of separation can stem from monetary issues, mistrust, or physical abuse (Ghoreishi, 2013) —just to name a few— such causes can be difficult for a child of the family to comprehend and render them confused and frustrated.” Kabyn then goes on to list several areas that divorce can impact children's lives, including: “Alterations in Parent-Child Relationships”, “The Plummet of Children’s Academic Achievement”, and “Vicissitudes in Self-Esteem”. (Kabyn, 2023) When you think about the impact this divorce will have on their children, it makes Emily’s decision to cheat on her husband because she is bored, seem pretty selfish.

While Cal and Emily are dealing with their marriage and children issues, the movie shows a love interest with Jacob. Jacob, who typically only has one goal with women, to get them in bed. Takes home a “good” girl, Hannah played by Emma Stone. Hannah, who would not normally do that type of thing but is angry after breaking up with a selfish/shallow boyfriend. Instead of sleeping together though, they stay up all night talking, and Jacob falls in love with her. Later Hannah brings Jacob home to meet her family which is where we find out that she is Cal and Emily’s adult daughter. When they realize the connection, Cal is first very angry that a Jacob is dating his daughter because he knows that Jacob is a womanizer. This is also where Cal discloses that the reason he and Emily got married so young is because Emily was pregnant with Hannah. Which adds a new dynamic to their relationship and reason for divorce. (Ficarra & Requa, 2012)

This now helps tie together that the reason Emily may be bored with or exploratory outside of her marriage is because she feels like she lost her youth to being a young wife and mom. It also shows the difficulty her and Cal might have had growing up together and not apart.

Ultimately though, in the end of the movie, Cal wins Emily back over. It is a beautiful and happy ending to show that when you love someone, you can make it work. A few pieces that may have helped in their situation, is Cal working on himself and not just letting go because he feels comfortable. Along with Emily expressing how she felt and why she cheated.

Though this path was very painful and will have a long road of recovery, that the movie doesn't show. It could probably have probably all been avoided (then of course there wouldn't have been a movie though), though marriage counseling. If, once Emily started feeling disenchanted, alone, and unenchanted in her marriage, instead of saying to Cal "I want a divorce" to Cal and instead said "I think we should go to couples counseling". Then they could have worked on their relationship and she wouldn't have felt the need to cheat on him with another man.

If Cal and Emily were to go see a counselor after the movie ended to help with that journey of mending their relationship, Capuzzi and Stauffer state that "If the partnership is to be mended, counselors must help clients manage indicators that lead to future infidelity". Obviously there will be a lot of insecurity and worry of Emily cheating on him again. Some ways of doing this, the text suggests they "may need to reexamine these values and discuss specific issues with their partner", "discuss the history of deception", and "counselors may wish to facilitate a full-disclosure of betrayal." Finally they state that "If the relationship is to survive, trust must be rebuilt. This rebuilding means the affair must be discussed, secrets disclosed, and both parties' behaviors change" (Cappuzi and Stauffer, 2021).

In addition to keeping these infidelity counseling considerations, Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT), would also be a great theoretical orientation to utilize as a counselor with Cal and Emily. In Capuzzi and Stauffer's text, it states "When a couple enters therapy for

communication and disconnection issues, it is helpful to look for any attachment injuries and then assist the couple in creating a secure connection by learning to be emotionally available and approachable to each other.” Learning this skill would help Cal and Emily to reconnect and feel close again. It goes on to say “We are innately wired to connect to someone who provides a stable emotional support” (Capuzzi and Stauffer, 2021).

Due to the fact that there was a lot of intertwining of their young and adult children throughout the movie, they also could benefit from family therapy. There did not seem to be any major behavioral issues with their children or conflicts between parents and children, so the best technique for this family would be *Bowenian Family Therapy* to process their dynamics and emotions. Some measures for the counselor to utilize are; “Nuclear Family Emotional Process”, “Family Emotional Process” and “Triangulation Research”. Then the techniques that may be beneficial to the family for the counselor to use are; “Calm questioning”, “Helping Family Members Develop One to One” and “Displacement Stories” (Cappuzi and Stauffer, 2021).

Overall, though, the Weaver family in this movie may have their own struggles that are expressed throughout the movie. As the title expresses, they also have a lot of love for each other and willingness to work through these struggles. This makes for a perfect opportunity to counsel and help this family become healthier, happier, and stronger than ever.

References

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