

DIVORCE FIGHT FREQUENCY

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Abstract

This essay attempts to calculate a ball park frequency of “divorce fights” in our apartment block.

My Chinese wife and I live in a large apartment complex. A few times per year we hear couples fighting so badly that we feel that they must inevitably end in divorce. This fighting occurs so regularly that I was prompted to calculate what the annual frequency of such fights should be, given some reasonable assumptions. So I sat down to see if I could confirm theoretically what seems to be the empirical reality of several divorce fights per year.

My basic approach was to calculate the annual divorce probability per 1000 couples in the city I live in which has a 45% divorce rate (i.e. 45% of couples eventually divorce.) Once I had this statistic, I could then calculate the number of couples in the apartment complex I live in and then multiply these two numbers to give me the desired “divorce fight frequency.”

Each floor in my apartment complex has 6 apartments, so assume 6 couples. (There are few singles in my complex.) The buildings are 11 storeys high, so 66 couples per building, and 5 buildings in the complex, so 330 couples, roughly speaking. I assumed the marriage age range was from 25 to 75, i.e. a period of 50 years, so if the divorce rate was 100%, that would be a probability of 2% per year of divorcing. But my city's divorce rate is 45%, so the expected divorce probability per year should be $2.0\% \times 0.45 = 0.9\%$. Now multiply this 0.9% by 330 couples, gives roughly 3 "divorce fights" per year, which is ball park what we hear per year – and we do hear. A divorce fight is as its name suggests – a verbal fight so embittered, loud, and often physically violent, that no such couple could possibly stay together. So its somewhat comforting to know that the empirical number of divorce fights we hear per year is in line with the city's average divorce rate, and that it is not the case that our apartment complex is filled with psycho couples.