

THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL DIVORCE AND CONFLICT
ON A PERSON'S ABILITY TO COPE

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of
California State University, Stanislaus

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Science in Psychology

By
Mathew Steven Cotton
December 2017

CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL DIVORCE AND CONFLICT
ON A PERSON'S ABILITY TO COPE

by
Mathew Steven Cotton

Signed Certification of Approval page
is on file with the University Library

Dr. Gary Williams
Assistant Professor of Psychology

Date

Dr. Victor Luevano
Professor of Psychology

Date

Dr. AnaMarie Guichard
Associate Professor of Psychology

Date

©2017

Mathew Steven Cotton
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

DEDICATION

For my lovely wife, Jordan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to first acknowledge and thank my thesis chair, Dr. Gary Williams. More than once you challenged me to better my writing and advance my research efforts. It is because of you that I attained more than what I could have imagined for myself. Thank you for never giving up on me. Also, thank you to the rest of my committee, Dr. Victor Luevano and Dr. AnaMarie Guichard. I could not have had a better team on my side!

I also want to thank my family and friends, especially those who stuck close by my side through it all. I will never forget the moments of encouragement you provided me at just the right time. Thank you for the many prayers.

Lastly, I want to thank my wife Jordan. Your love for education has inspired me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
List of Figures	viii
Abstract	ix
Introduction and Literature Review	1
Introduction	1
Literature Review	1
Negative Outcomes of Divorce	2
Divorce and Conflict	4
Coping Skills	5
Importance of Divorce, Conflict, & Coping Skills	8
Present Study	9
Hypotheses	9
Divorce	9
Conflict	9
Divorce and Conflict	10
Methodology	11
Participants	11
Measures	12
Children’s Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC)	12
Brief Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (Brief COPE)	13
Demographic Questionnaire	14
Design	14
Procedure	14
Results	16
Data Analyses	16
Hypotheses 1a & 1b	16
Hypotheses 2a & 2b	17
Hypotheses 3a & 3b	17
Discussion	22

Limitations	26
Future Research	27
Conclusion	27
References.....	30
Appendices	
A. The Children’s Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC)	41
B. The Brief Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (Brief COPE).....	43
C. Demographic Questionnaire	47
D. Informed Consent Form.....	49
E. Debriefing Form.....	51

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Correlation between conflict and maladaptive coping skills	19
2. Correlation between conflict and adaptive coping skills	20
3. Relationship between conflict and maladaptive coping, separately for those whose parents divorced and did not divorce	21

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships among two predictor variables (parental divorce status and parental conflict) and two outcome variables (adaptive coping scores and maladaptive coping scores). Participants ($n = 509$) were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (M-Turk). An independent samples t -test found those whose parents divorced had significantly higher maladaptive coping skills scores and marginally significant lower adaptive coping skills scores than those whose parents did not divorce. A bivariate correlation test found a moderate, positive correlation between parental conflict and maladaptive coping skills scores and a weak, negative but non-significant correlation between parental conflict and adaptive coping skills scores. Contrary to my expectations, there was a stronger positive association between conflict and maladaptive coping for those whose parents divorced than those whose parents did not divorce. Overall, the results of this study suggest that parental divorce and conflict are associated with maladaptive, but not adaptive, coping. A major limitation was the inclusion of participants not from the US. Cultural differences may help to explain discrepancies between these results and the existing literature.

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships among divorce, parental conflict, and coping strategies. Parental divorce and parental conflict are considered to be major life stressors (Amato & Keith, 1991; Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995; Emery, 1988; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Furstenberg & Kiernan, 2001; Emery, 1988). The goal of this study is to better understand how parental divorce and parental conflict influence a person's ability to cope.

Literature Review

Divorce is prevalent among Americans, with approximately fifty percent of all marriages ending in divorce (United States Bureau of the Census, 2010). Because divorce is so common, much research has been dedicated to this topic. In order to demonstrate just how much research has been focused on divorce, Amato (2010) utilized the ISI Web of Science bibliographic database in August 2009, and found 1,980 articles published on this topic within the year 2000 alone.

Current research on divorce focuses on factors that influence people's decision to divorce. These factors include stigma, cultural norms, economic stability, and personal morals (Amato, 2010; Balestrino, Ciardi, & Mammini, 2013; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Kreider, Rose, & Renee Ellis, 2011; Thornton, 1989). The present literature review will focus instead on how adult children are affected by the divorce of their parents.

Negative Outcomes of Divorce

Approximately half of all divorces involve children, with approximately 40% of all children having experienced parental divorce (Amato, 2000; Hetherington & Elmore, 2003). With approximately 74 million children (United States Bureau of the Census, 2010) being affected by divorce, it is important for researchers to examine effects of divorce relative to the child, as repercussions can impact children of divorce in all life stages, including adulthood (Loucks Greenwood, 2014).

Divorce is a disruption for American children that can result in negative later-life functioning. Childhood and adolescence (7 – 12 and 13 – 18 years) are critical points of development where cognitive functioning and other important processes are shaped and formed (Cater, Miller, Howell, & Graham-Bermann, 2015; Solé-Padullés et al., 2016). Disruptions during these stages of development, such as the divorce of the child's parents, can have lasting effects. Multiple studies have found that children who have experienced parental divorce are more likely to display behavioral, social, psychological, and academic problems as compared to those who have not (Amato & Keith, 1991; Emery, 1988; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Furstenberg & Kiernan, 2001).

In one of these studies, Furstenberg and Kiernan (2001) found that participants who had experienced the divorce of their parents during childhood reported more negative later-life outcomes as compared to those who had experienced parental divorce in adolescence or adulthood. Interviews were conducted with individuals who had all experienced parental divorce. Participants were divided into

three groups. Participants in the childhood group had experienced the divorce of their parents between the ages of 7 and 16 ($n = 747$). Participants in the transitional group were between the ages of 17 and 20 ($n = 229$) at the time of their parents' divorce and participants in the post-childhood group were 21 and older ($n = 341$). All participants were interviewed at the age of 33.

Participants that had experienced the divorce of their parents during childhood reported lower educational attainment and economic stability than those in the post-childhood group (Furstenberg & Kiernan, 2001). Also, those in the childhood group were more likely to have children out of wedlock and become parents at a younger age (Furstenberg & Kiernan, 2001). Results of the mental health assessment indicated that those who had experienced the divorce of their parents, in any age group, had higher scores of mental health instability (Furstenberg & Kiernan, 2001).

The results of the Furstenberg and Kiernan (2001) study were similar to those of previous studies that examined the effect of divorce on children. For example, children who experienced the divorce of their parents in childhood reported lower levels of psychological well-being, exhibited behavioral issues, and demonstrated lower level educational attainment, as compared to those children who did not experience the divorce of their parents (Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995; Amato & Keith, 1991; Emery, 1988; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991).

Divorce and Conflict

Although experiencing divorce as a child can result in negative outcomes in adulthood (Furstenberg & Kiernan, 2001), other childhood experiences may have a

similar impact. For example, many studies have found that negative outcomes may be related to parental conflict, whether or not divorce occurs (Amato et al., 1995; Emery, 1988; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991). Specifically, adults who grow up in intact two-parent homes with high parental conflict report lower levels of psychological well-being than those that grow up in families of divorce with low parental conflict (Amato et al., 1995; Pelleboer-Gunnink, Van der Valk, Branje, Van Doorn, & Deković, 2015; Pirkey, 2013; Van Lawick & Visser, 2015).

Although both divorce and parental conflict have negative effects on children, the two differ in severity. Specifically, conflict has a greater negative impact on a child's well-being than the divorce of his or her parents (Booth et al., 1991; Cherlin et al., 1991). In fact, some researchers have found that children raised in high conflict homes are better off if the parents divorce rather than continue to subject the children to conflict (Amato et al., 1995; Emery, 1988; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991). Additionally, the timeframe in which parental conflict occurs can have varying effects on the child.

Amato et al. (1995) found that conflict prior to, during, or after divorce is a determining factor for later-life outcomes in children. A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies within the United States and Great Britain found that the highest level of negative outcomes is associated with conflict prior to the occurrence of a divorce (Cherlin et al., 1991). Amato et al. (1995) found that high conflict without the presence of a divorce yielded similar negative outcomes to that of conflict prior to divorce. To explore these outcomes, Amato et al. (1995) considered three main

domains when interviewing participants: psychological distress, overall happiness, and, social resources.

Amato et al. (1995) explored the effect conflict had on participants based on when the conflict occurred--prior to, during, or after the divorce—or whether the parents decided to remain married despite conflict. Results indicated that when low marital conflict was followed by divorce and when high marital conflict was not followed by divorce, each of the three outcomes (psychological distress, happiness, and, use of social resources) were at their lowest.

Results of the Amato et al. (1995) study, along with others (Booth et al., 1991; Cherlin et al., 1991), suggest that long-term negative consequences may be due to the level of parental conflict individuals are subjected to, rather than the divorce alone. Parental conflict and divorce have been shown to be predictors of later-life well-being and so it would be important to continue to examine the relationship between conflict and divorce.

Coping Skills

A person's psychological well-being can be determined, in part, by the assessment of his or her ability to cope (Armistead et al., 1990; Kurtz, 1996; Xiaosong, Xiaojie, & Xiangkui, 2007). Although previous studies have examined well-being by focusing on psychosocial factors (Amato et al., 1995; Pelleboer-Gunnink et al., 2015; Pirkey, 2013; Van Lawick & Visser, 2015), I focused on coping skills.

Many refer to coping skills as the ways in which an individual can problem-solve or self-adjust (Chua, Milfont, & Jose, 2015; Folkman & Lazarus, 1988).

Developing coping skills is considered a lifelong process (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). Coping skills play an important role in an individual's ability to manage life stressors including, but not limited to, conflict, death, divorce, bankruptcy, or sudden illness (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). A positive change in an individual's life may also be considered a life stressor. These positive stressors may include the birth of a child, marriage, moving to a new town, or a child leaving the home of their parents. For all types of stressors, a person must have appropriate coping skills in order to manage stress and adjust properly.

There are many different coping styles, which fall into one of two main categories. Adaptive and maladaptive coping, also referred to as proactive and avoidant coping respectively, are the two ways in which a person may attempt to cope with challenges faced in life (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988). Adaptive coping often leads to the issue being resolved. Adaptive coping may include reaching out to others, taking a positive perspective on the situation, and working through the emotional, as well as cognitive details of the stressor (Aebi, Giger, Plattner, Metzke, & Steinhausen, 2014). Maladaptive coping often allows the problem to persist. If the problem is ignored for long periods of time, maladaptive coping may cause an increase in stress, ultimately rendering the individual unable to handle future situations in appropriate ways (Aebi et al., 2014).

Because adaptive and maladaptive are broad, umbrella terms, many subcategories and variations of coping fall under these two terms. One measure used by researchers, Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (COPE), identifies specific adaptive and maladaptive coping skills (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). According to the Brief COPE measure, adaptive coping includes the use of active coping, planning, positive reframing, acceptance, humor, religion, using emotional support, and/or using instrumental support (Carver, 1997). Active coping refers to taking a proactive and purposeful step in relieving the effects of the stressful event experienced (Carver et al., 1989). Planning is thinking of a way to cope with the stressor. Folkman and Lazarus (1988) refer to positive reframing as a way in which the person purposefully seeks to reinterpret the event in a positive light. Carver et al. (1989) argued that a person who demonstrates acceptance, is willing to deal with the event and the effects of it. Although humor was previously considered a maladaptive form of coping, Carver et al. (1989) considers it an adaptive coping mechanism because it relieves stress. Religion offers multiple methods of adaptive coping, such as emotional or instrumental support as well as gaining a positive reinterpretation of the event (Carver et al., 1989). Social support can be either instrumental or emotional (Carver et al., 1989). Instrumental is the tangible help a person may provide, while emotional meets the emotional needs of the person. However, these are not mutually exclusive.

Maladaptive coping includes the use of self-distraction, denial, venting, substance use, behavioral disengagement, and/or self-blame (Carver et al., 1989).

Denial has been known to increase and prolong stress (Tuncay & Musabak, 2015). Self-distraction is an attempt to avoid the stressor. Carver et al. (1989) found venting and substance use to be forms of rumination and self-distraction, keeping the person from working through the emotional and psychological effects. Behavioral disengagement is the process or action of giving up on achieving goals set-forth, especially when the stressor presents itself (Carver et al., 1989). Self-blame is the action of blaming one's self, and has been associated with anxiety, depression, and aggression (Fear et al., 2009).

Importance of Divorce, Conflict, & Coping Skills

Parental divorce and parental conflict are major life stressors. Some researchers even consider these to be among the most stressful events a person can face (Amato & Keith, 1991; Amato et al., 1995; Emery, 1988; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Furstenberg & Kiernan, 2001). These life stressors affect a person's ability to cope (Amato et al., 1995; Emery, 1988; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991). In order to correctly and appropriately adjust to all life circumstances, an individual must be able to cope.

Some studies have examined coping styles utilized by children who have experienced the divorce of their parents (Armistead et al., 1990; Kurtz, 1996; Xiaosong, Xiaojie, & Xiangkui, 2007). Others have examined the effects of parental conflict (Booth et al., 1991; Cherlin et al., 1991). However, I will examine whether the relationship between conflict and coping is different depending on whether the parents divorced.

Present Study

The aim of the present study is to contribute to the research pertaining to the effects of parental divorce and parental conflict on a person's ability to cope.

However, unlike previous research, the present study will examine the relationships among divorce, parental conflict, and coping strategies.

Hypotheses

Divorce.

1a) Participants who experienced the divorce of their parents will have higher maladaptive coping skills scores than those who did not experience the divorce of their parents.

1b) Participants who experienced the divorce of their parents will have lower adaptive coping skills scores than those who did not experience the divorce of their parents.

Conflict.

2a) There will be a positive correlation between parental conflict and maladaptive coping skills scores.

2b) There will be a negative correlation between parental conflict and adaptive coping skills scores.

Divorce & Conflict.

3a) For maladaptive coping, I expect a divorce by conflict interaction. The effect of conflict on maladaptive coping will be different depending on parental divorce. For those who experienced parental divorce, there will be a negative

relationship between parental conflict and maladaptive coping. For those who did not experience parental divorce, there will be a positive relationship between parental conflict and maladaptive coping.

3b) For adaptive coping, I expect a divorce by conflict interaction. The effect of conflict on adaptive coping will be different depending on parental divorce. For those who experienced parental divorce, there will be a positive relationship between parental conflict and adaptive coping. For those who did not experience parental divorce, there will be a negative relationship between parental conflict and adaptive coping.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A total of 509 participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (M-Turk). There were 37 participants excluded due to incomplete data. A single participant skipped one question in the survey, instead of eliminating the participant I used mean replacement. Participants received fifty cents compensation.

All participants were between the ages of 18 and 73 ($M = 32.18$, $SD = 15.27$). Data analysis was conducted on male ($n = 262$) and female ($n = 210$) participants. The sample consisted of 222 Asian (47%), 179 White (37.9%), 25 Hispanic/Latino/Spanish (5.3%), 24 Black/African American (5.1%), 8 American/Alaska Native (1.7%), 8 other race/ethnicity/origin (1.7%), 3 Pacific Islander (.6%), and 3 Middle Eastern/North African (.6%) ethnicity.

There were 97 participants who reported having experienced the divorce of their parents and 375 who did not. The most common age at which participants experienced the divorce of their parents was 12 ($n = 9$). According to the data analysis, the highest percent of divorces experienced was among the Black/African American population (46%). The lowest percent of divorces experienced was among the Asian population (.07%). At minimum, one participant from every ethnic group except Middle Eastern/North African reported having experienced the divorce of their parents.

Measures

Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC)

The CPIC (Appendix A; Grych et al., 1992), a 48 item self-report measure, was used to assess the amount of interparental conflict experienced from the child's viewpoint. The composite score for the conflict subscale includes 13 out of the 48 items. An example item includes, "I felt like I had to take sides when my parents had a disagreement."

Responses to each item are chosen from three options (True, Sort of True, False). Scoring is such that "False" receives a 0, "Sort of True" receives a 1, and "True" receives a 2. Items reverse scored are: 1, 5, and 38. The score is calculated by averaging the responses for all items. A higher score reflects a higher amount of interparental conflict. A lower score reflects a lower amount of interparental conflict.

The CPIC has been used by many researchers around the world because of the measure's ability to produce reliable data (Bickham & Fiese, 1997; Cummings, Davies, & Simpson, 1994; Dadds, Atkinson, Turner, Blums, & Lendich, 1999; Elam, Sandler, Wolchik, & Tein, 2016; Grych, Fincham, Jouriles, & McDonald, 2000; Grych, Harold, & Miles, 2003; Grych, Raynor, & Fosco, 2004; Kline, Wood, & Moore, 2003; Liping & Ziqiang, 2003; Moura, Dos Santos, Rocha, & Matos, 2010; Reese-Weber, & Hesson-McInnis, 2008; Skopp, McDonald, Manke, & Jouriles, 2005; Ulu, & Fişiloğlu, 2002, 2004). Grych et al. (1992) assessed the reliability by two methods: test-retest and internal consistency. Coefficient Alphas were .90 and .89. For my study, I found the CPIC to be a reliable measure ($\alpha = .79$).

Brief Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (Brief COPE)

The Brief COPE (Appendix B) was used to assess coping strategies (Carver, 1997). This instrument includes 28 items, measuring different ways in which people cope and respond to stress. It has been used in many studies where participants have experienced some form of stress (e.g. Kimemia, Asner-Self, & Daire, 2011; Mohanraj et al., 2015; Snell, Siegert, Hay-Smith, & Surgenor, 2011).

The 28 items are divided between two distinct scales: adaptive versus maladaptive coping (Sami-Abdo, Redhwan, Mustafa, & Krishna, 2011). Adaptive coping includes 16 items and maladaptive coping includes 12 items. An example item from adaptive coping includes, “I try to come up with a strategy about what to do.” An example item from maladaptive coping includes, “I refuse to believe that it has happened.” Responses are based upon a four-point Likert scale: (1) “I Usually don’t do this at all”, (2) “I usually do this a little bit”, (3) “I usually do this a medium amount”, (4) “I usually do this a lot.” Scoring is such that each response increases by a value of 2, with (1) “I usually don’t do this at all” receiving a value of 2 to (4) “I usually do this a lot” receiving a value of 8. In order to calculate maladaptive and adaptive coping scores, the corresponding items are to be summed; none of the items are reverse scored. Higher scores reflect a higher amount adaptive or maladaptive coping. Lower scores reflect a lower amount adaptive or maladaptive coping.

Carver (1997) found the Brief COPE to have good reliability within three samples (sample 1 = 168 participants; sample 2 = 124 participants; sample 3 = 126 participants). Both scales demonstrated reliability, coefficient alpha .50 or above.

Similarly, many other studies found reliability while using the Brief COPE, coefficient alpha .50 or above (Kimemia et al., 2011; Mohanraj et al., 2015; Snell et al., 2011). For my study, I found the adaptive coping scale to demonstrate reliability ($\alpha = .84$). I also found the maladaptive coping scale to demonstrate reliability ($\alpha = .72$).

Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire (Appendix C) includes basic questions concerning the participant's gender, age, highest level of education completed, ethnicity, whether or not he or she had experienced the divorce of their parents, at what age he or she experienced the divorce of their parents, and an open-ended question concerning whether or not the participant would like to share more about his or her family.

Design

This correlational study examined two predictor variables and two outcome variables. The predictor variables were parental divorce status and parental conflict. The outcome variables were adaptive coping scores and maladaptive coping scores. Scores for low versus high parental conflict were determined by the CPIC. Scores for adaptive versus maladaptive coping skills were determined by the Brief COPE questionnaire.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (M-Turk). From M-Turk, participants were directed to complete the study on Qualtrics. All

participants were first asked to electronically sign an informed consent form (Appendix D). If the participant agreed to its terms, he or she provided electronic consent and was then directed to begin the study.

Participants were instructed to answer the CPIC according to when they recalled the highest amount of parental conflict. After completion of the CPIC, the participant was asked to complete the Brief COPE. The CPIC and Brief COPE were presented in random order.

The participant was then directed to complete the demographic questionnaire. After completing the demographic questionnaire, each participant was shown a debriefing screen (Appendix E).

RESULTS

Data Analyses

Reliability analyses were conducted for the CPIC and also separately for the adaptive and maladaptive scales of the Brief COPE. Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted to examine the relationship between divorce and coping skills scores. Bivariate correlation tests were conducted to examine the relationship between parental conflict and coping skills scores. Multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationships among divorce, coping skills scores, and parental conflict.

Hypotheses 1a & 1b

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to examine the hypothesis that participants who had experienced the divorce of their parents would have higher maladaptive coping skills scores than those who did not experience the divorce of their parents (Hypothesis 1a). Those whose parents divorced ($M = 56.29$, $SD = 12.67$) had significantly higher maladaptive coping skills scores than those whose parents did not divorce ($M = 53.02$, $SD = 10.53$), $t(470) = 2.61$ (one-tailed), $p = .005$. Cohen's effect size value ($d = .28$) suggests a small – moderate effect size. An additional independent samples *t*-test was conducted to examine the hypothesis that participants who had experienced the divorce of their parents would have lower adaptive coping skills scores than those who did not experience the divorce of their parents (Hypothesis 1b). Those whose parents divorced ($M = 83.07$, $SD = 16.20$) had

marginally significant lower adaptive coping skills scores than those whose parents did not divorce ($M = 85.61$, $SD = 15.91$), $t(470) = 1.39$ (one-tailed), $p = .082$. Cohen's effect size value ($d = .12$) suggests a small effect size.

Hypotheses 2a & 2b

A bivariate correlation test was conducted to examine the hypothesis that there would be a positive correlation between parental conflict and maladaptive coping skills scores (Hypothesis 2a). There was a positive correlation between parental conflict ($M = .86$, $SD = .43$) and maladaptive coping skills scores ($M = 53.70$, $SD = 11.06$), $r = .34$, $n = 473$, $p < .001$. A scatterplot summarizes the results (Figure 1). An additional bivariate correlation test was conducted to examine the hypothesis that there would will be a negative correlation between parental conflict and adaptive coping skills scores (Hypothesis 2b). There was a weak, negative correlation between parental conflict and adaptive coping skills scores ($M = 85.06$, $SD = 15.98$), $r = -.07$, $n = 473$, $p = .106$. A scatterplot summarizes the results (Figure 2). Overall there was a moderate, positive correlation between parental conflict and maladaptive coping skills scores and a weak, negative but non-significant correlation between parental conflict and adaptive coping skills scores.

Hypotheses 3a & 3b

A multiple linear regression test was conducted to examine the hypothesis that for maladaptive coping, I expected a divorce by conflict interaction. The effect of conflict on maladaptive coping would be different depending on parental divorce. For those who experienced parental divorce, there would be a negative relationship

between parental conflict and maladaptive coping. For those who did not experience parental divorce, there would be a positive relationship between parental conflict and maladaptive coping (Hypothesis 3a). The interaction was statistically significant $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $F(1, 468) = 4.78$, $p = .03$. The results showed that for those who experienced parental divorce there was significant positive association between conflict and maladaptive coping ($\beta = .44$, $p < .001$). Also, for those who did not experience parental divorce there was a significant positive association between conflict and maladaptive coping ($\beta = .29$, $p < .001$). A scatterplot summarizes the results (Figure 3). The Johnson-Neyman technique was used to find regions of significance for the difference in maladaptive coping between those whose parents who were divorced versus not divorced. The difference was significant ($p < .05$) at conflict scores of 1.34 and above: Those whose parents divorced had more maladaptive coping than those whose parents did not.

An additional multiple linear regression test was conducted to examine the hypothesis that for adaptive coping, I expected a divorce by conflict interaction. The effect of conflict on adaptive coping would be different depending on parental divorce. For those who experienced parental divorce, there would be a positive relationship between parental conflict and adaptive coping. For those who did not experience parental divorce, there would be a negative relationship between parental conflict and adaptive coping (Hypothesis 3b). The interaction was not statistically significant $\Delta R^2 = .00$, $F(1, 468) = 0.01$, $p = .94$.

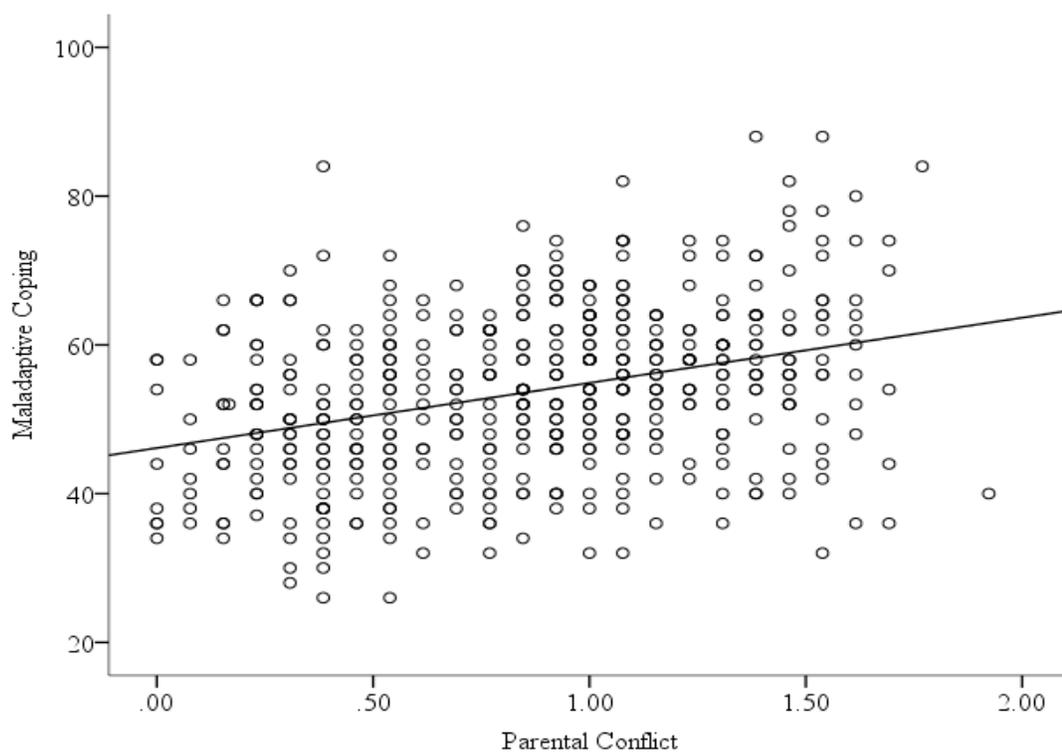


Figure 1. Correlation between conflict and maladaptive coping skills.

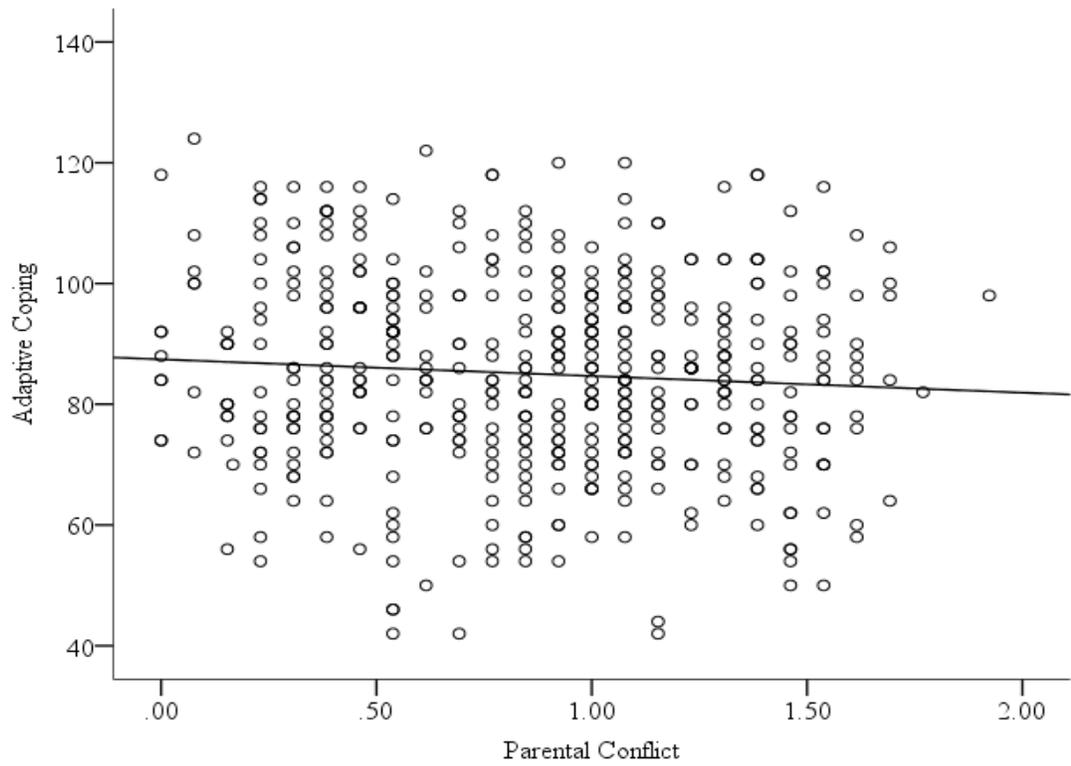


Figure 2. Correlation between conflict and adaptive coping skills.

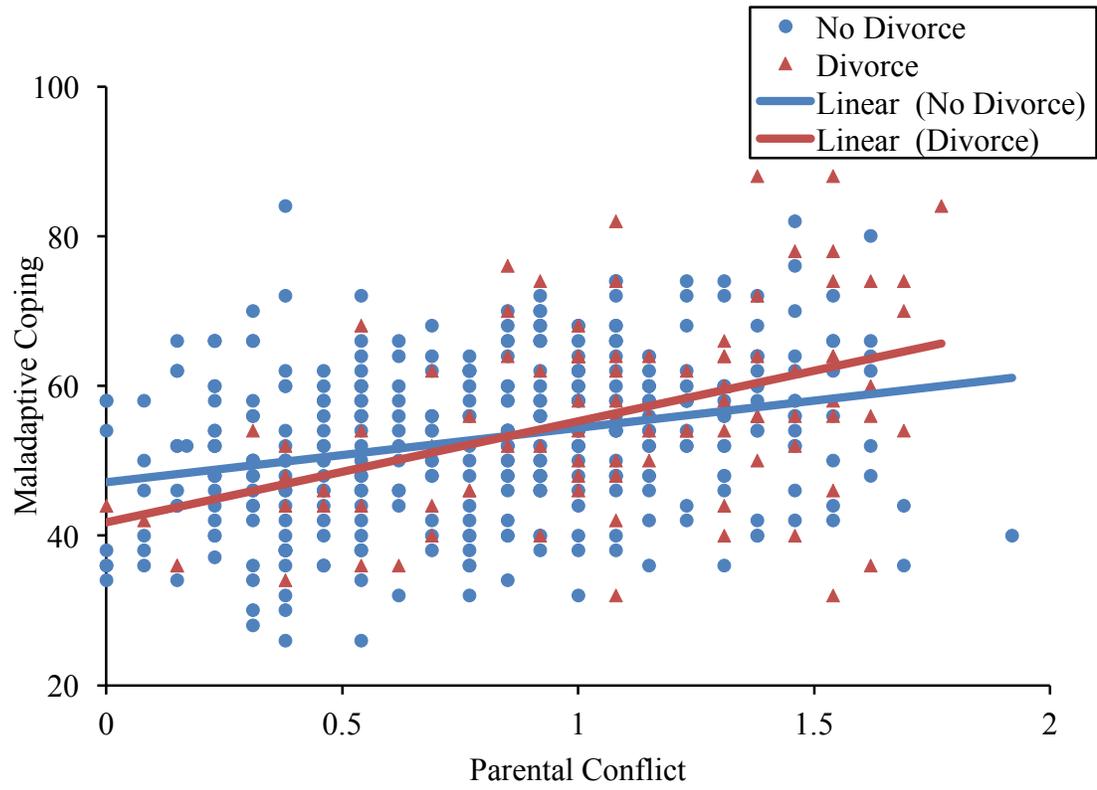


Figure 3. Relationship between conflict and maladaptive coping, separately for those whose parents divorced and did not divorce.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationships among divorce, parental conflict, and coping strategies. It was predicted that participants who had experienced the divorce of their parents would have higher maladaptive coping skills scores than those who did not experience the divorce of their parents (Hypothesis 1a). The results supported my hypothesis. There was a significant effect of divorce on maladaptive coping skills scores. Those who experienced the divorce of their parents were more likely to utilize maladaptive coping skills.

My findings are consistent with previous research related to divorce and maladaptive coping (Armistead et al., 1990; Furstenberg & Kiernan, 2001; Kurtz, 1996; Xiaosong, Xiaojie, & Xiangkui, 2007). For example, previous studies show that those who have experienced the divorce of their parents tend to demonstrate more maladaptive coping compared to those who have not (Armistead et al., 1990; Furstenberg & Kiernan, 2001).

It was also predicted that participants who had experienced the divorce of their parents would have lower adaptive coping skills scores than those who did not experience the divorce of their parents (Hypothesis 1b). There was minimal significance ($p = .082$), and Cohen's effect size value ($d = .12$) suggests a small effect size. The results did not support my hypothesis.

Furstenberg and Kiernan (2001) found that those who experienced the divorce of their parents, reported more negative later-life outcomes. Other studies have found

that children who have experienced parental divorce are more likely to display behavioral, social, psychological, and academic problems as compared to those who have not (Amato & Keith, 1991; Emery, 1988; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Furstenberg & Kiernan, 2001).

It was predicted that there would be a positive correlation between parental conflict and maladaptive coping skills scores (Hypothesis 2a). The results supported my hypothesis. There was a moderate, positive correlation between parental conflict and maladaptive coping skills scores. As parental conflict scores increased, so did maladaptive coping skills scores.

My findings are consistent with previous research related to parental conflict and maladaptive coping skills (Amato et al., 1995; Booth et al., 1991; Cherlin et al., 1991). Amato et al. (1995) found parental conflict to be associated with maladaptive coping. As parental conflict increased, maladaptive coping skills scores increased. In fact, parental conflict has been found to have a greater negative impact than parental divorce (Booth et al., 1991; Cherlin et al., 1991).

It was also predicted that there would be a negative correlation between parental conflict and adaptive coping skills scores (Hypothesis 2b). There was a negative non-significant ($p = .106$) relationship between parental conflict and adaptive coping skills scores. The results did not support my hypothesis.

Previous research shows that those who grow up in homes with high parental conflict report lower levels of psychological well-being than those that grow up in homes with low parental conflict (Amato et al., 1995; Pelleboer-Gunnink et al., 2015;

Pirkey, 2013; Van Lawick & Visser, 2015). Other studies have found that long-term consequences are dependent on the severity of the conflict experienced (Booth et al., 1991; Cherlin et al., 1991). As parental conflict increases, the level of well-being decreases.

For maladaptive coping, I expected a divorce by conflict interaction. The effect of conflict on maladaptive coping would be different depending on parental divorce. For those who experienced parental divorce, there would be a negative relationship between parental conflict and maladaptive coping. For those who did not experience parental divorce, there would be a positive relationship between parental conflict and maladaptive coping (Hypothesis 3a). The interaction was statistically significant. The findings were opposite of what was predicated. For those who experienced parental divorce, there was a significant positive association between conflict and maladaptive coping. For those who did not experience parental divorce, there was a significant positive association between conflict and maladaptive coping. Furthermore, those whose parents divorced had more maladaptive coping than those whose parents did not.

Previous research shows that conflict has a greater negative impact on a child's well-being than does the divorce of his or her parents (Booth et al., 1991; Cherlin et al., 1991). As previously stated, some researchers have found that children raised in high conflict homes are better off if the parents divorce rather than continue to subject the children to conflict (Amato et al., 1995; Emery, 1988; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991). However, regarding my results; in the presence of a divorce,

maladaptive coping scores increased as conflict increased. These findings do not support previous literature.

Some studies show that after a divorce, parents will triangulate their children (Ballard, Holtzworth-Munroe, Applegate, D'Onofrio, & Bates, 2013). For example, children can become the legal messengers between parents, being caught in the middle of the conflict and also used as leverage. Rather than separating the child from conflict by divorce, the conflict increases. This may explain why in the presence of a divorce maladaptive coping scores increase, especially as conflict increases.

For adaptive coping, I expected a divorce by conflict interaction. The effect of conflict on adaptive coping would be different depending on parental divorce. For those who experienced parental divorce, there would be a positive relationship between parental conflict and adaptive coping. For those who did not experience parental divorce, there would be a negative relationship between parental conflict and adaptive coping (Hypothesis 3b). The interaction was not statistically significant. The results are not consistent with the literature. In fact, they contradict the results of past research (Amato et al., 1995; Booth et al., 1991; Cherlin et al., 1991).

The majority of the literature review was based in the US. A major limitation was the inclusion of participants not from the US. For example, the majority of my sample consisted of Asian (47%), having the lowest divorce rate (.07%). With such a low divorce rate (21%) among my entire sample, it is not representative of the US, thus demonstrating low external validity. The results were heavily impacted by the unexpected rate of divorce. However, cultural differences may help to explain

discrepancies between these results and the existing literature. These cultural differences are further explored in the limitations section.

A final point of consideration is in regard to the question, “If there is anything more that I should know or you would like to share about your family dynamics, please comment below.” This question is found on the demographic questionnaire (number 7). The majority of participants chose to respond to this question. For example, one participant reported “I was a foster child. Dad wanted to adopt me and mother did not. There was a lot of fighting on this topic. I was eventually adopted.” Another participant wrote, “I told my parents that getting a divorce was the second best thing they did besides making me. I remember being so stressed as a kid when my parents would argue. When they divorced I felt so at ease, which I guess is strange to say since I was so young, but that’s how I feel. Also, with the more time apart from each other, when they do see each other, there’s less chance of an argument and they are more amicable towards each other.”

Overall, the results of this study suggest that parental divorce and conflict are associated with maladaptive, but not adaptive, coping.

Limitations

Several limitations within this study were identified. The majority of the sample consisted of 222 Asian (47%) and 179 White (37.9%), with 25 Hispanic/Latino/Spanish (5.3%) being the third largest ethnicity. Other sample sizes consisted of 24 Black/African American (5.1%), 8 American/Alaska Native (1.7%), 8 other race/ethnicity/origin (1.7%), 3 Pacific Islander (.6%), and 3 Middle

Eastern/North African (.6%). This demonstrates a large discrepancy among average sample sizes. Amazon's M-Turk has the capability to retrieve responses from all over the world. In order to better control for this, future researchers should consider limiting their sample to a specific location. For example, studies similar to this one used sample sizes averaging 157 participants (Carver, 1997; Grych et al., 1992) and focused on certain, more specific populations. This study used a much larger ($n = 509$) and diverse sample. Although a larger sample size may be more representative of the general population, future research should focus on limiting the sample to people in the US.

Another potential limitation was that only 97 participants reported having experienced the divorce of their parents while 375 did not. Based on US Census data (2010), I expected approximately half of my participants would have experienced the divorce of their parents. The lower than expected percentage of divorce may have been influenced by the diversity among my sample. For example, in some cultures divorce is frowned upon (Toth & Kemmelmeier, 2009). Forty-seven percent of my sample consisted of Asian ($n = 222$) ethnicity, suggesting some were from Asian countries. In Asian countries divorce is considered disgraceful, so much so that suicide rates among those who have divorced are significantly higher compared to other countries (Yip, Yousuf, Chan, Yung, & Wu, 2015). This may explain why my rate of divorce does not reflect the normative US trend.

Future Research

Future studies should also examine the presence, amount, and order of conflict in relation to divorce. For example, Amato et al. (1995) found that conflict prior to, during, or after divorce is a determining factor for later-life outcomes in children. Also, a meta-analysis of longitudinal studies within the United States and Great Britain found that the highest level of negative outcomes is associated with conflict before the occurrence of a divorce (Cherlin et al., 1991). This may help better explain the relationship between divorce, conflict, and coping skills.

Conclusion

The current study examined the relationships among two predictor variables (parental divorce status and parental conflict) and two outcome variables (adaptive coping scores and maladaptive coping scores). Results of this study showed that there was a significant effect of divorce on maladaptive coping skills scores. Also, there was a positive correlation between parental conflict and maladaptive coping skills scores. For those whose parents divorced and for those whose parents did not divorce, there was a significant positive association between conflict and maladaptive coping. However, there was a stronger positive association between conflict and maladaptive coping for those whose parents divorced than those whose parents did not divorce.

This study is relevant to the field of mental health and may guide the work of a clinician or other mental health professional. Since parental divorce and conflict are common, the understanding of how it can affect a person's ability to cope provides insight to the professional and knowledge for the client. For the general population, it

is important to consider the later-life effects divorce and parental conflict can have on a person's ability to cope.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

- Aebi, M., Giger, J., Plattner, B., Metzke, C. W., & Steinhausen, H. (2014). Problem coping skills, psychosocial adversities and mental health problems in children and adolescents as predictors of criminal outcomes in young adulthood. *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 23*, 283-293. doi:10.1007/s00787-013-0458y
- Ahrons, C. R. (2011). Commentary on "Reconsidering the 'good divorce'". *Family Relations: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies, 60*, 528-532. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3729.2011.00676.x
- Amato, P. R. (2000). The consequences of divorce for adults and children. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62*, 1269-1287. doi:10.1111/j.17413737.2000.01269.x
- Amato, P. R. (2010). Research on divorce: Continuing trends and new developments. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 72*, 650-666. doi:10.1111/j.17413737.2010.00723.x
- Amato, P. R., & Booth, A. (1991). Consequences of parental divorce and marital unhappiness for adult well-being. *Social Forces, 69*, 895-914. doi:10.2307/2579480
- Amato, P. R., & Keith, B. (1991). Parental divorce and the well-being of children: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 110*, 26-46. doi:10.1037/00332909.110.1.26

- Amato, P. R., Loomis, L. S., & Booth, A. (1995). Parental divorce, marital conflict, and offspring well-being during early adulthood. *Social Forces*, *73*, 895-915
doi:10.2307/2580551
- Armistead, L., McCombs, A., Forehand, R., Wierson, M., Long, N., & Fauber, R. (1990). Coping with divorce: A study of young adolescents. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, *19*, 79-84. doi:10.1207/s15374424jccp1901_10
- Balestrino, A., Ciardi, C., & Mammini, C. (2013). On the causes and consequences of divorce. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, *45*, 1-9.
doi:10.1016/j.socec.2013.02.006\
- Ballard, R. H., Holtzworth-Munroe, A., Applegate, A. G., D'Onofrio, B. M., & Bates, J.E. (2013). A randomized controlled trial of child-informed mediation. *Psychology, Public Policy, And Law*, *19*, 271-281. doi:10.1037/a0033274
- Bickham, N. L., & Fiese, B. H. (1997). Extension of the Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale for use with late adolescents. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *11*, 246-250. doi:10.1037/0893-3200.11.2.246
- Booth, A., & Edwards, J. N. (1989). Transmission of marital and family quality over the generations: The effect of parental divorce and unhappiness. *Journal of Divorce*, *13*, 41-58. doi:10.1300/J279v13n02_02
- Booth, A., Johnson, D. R., White, L., & Edwards, J. N. (1991). Marital Instability Over the Life Course: Methodology Report and Code Book for Three Wave Panel Study. Lincoln University of Nebraska: Bureau of Sociological Research.

- Brock, R. L., & Kochanska, G. (2016). Interparental conflict, children's security with parents, and long-term risk of internalizing problems: A longitudinal study from ages 2 to 10. *Development and Psychopathology, 28*, 45-54. doi:10.1017/S0954579415000279
- Carver, C.S. (1997). You want to measure coping but your protocol's too long: Consider the Brief COPE. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 4*, 92-100. doi:10.1207/s15327558ijbm0401_6
- Carver, C. S., Pozo, C., Harris, S. D., Noriega, V., Scheier, M. F., Robinson, D. S. Clark, K.C. (1993). How coping mediates the effect of optimism on distress: A study of women with early stage breast cancer. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 65*, 375-390. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.65.2.375
- Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Weintraub, J. K. (1989). Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 56*, 267-283. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.56.2.267
- Cater, Å. K., Miller, L. E., Howell, K. H., & Graham-Bermann, S. A. (2015). Childhood exposure to intimate partner violence and adult mental health problems: Relationships with gender and age of exposure. *Journal of Family Violence, 30*, 875-886. doi:10.1007/s10896-015-9703-0
- Chase-Lansdale, P. L., Cherlin, A. J., & Kiernan, K. E. (1995). The long-term effects of parental divorce on the mental health of young adults: A developmental perspective. *Child Development, 66*, 1614-1634.

- Cherlin, A. J., Furstenberg, F. F., Chase-Lansdale, P. L., Kiernan, K. E., Robins, P. K. Ruane Morrison, D., & Teitler, J. O. (1991). Longitudinal studies of effects of divorce on children in Great Britain and the United States. *Science*, *252*, 1386-1389. doi:10.1126/science.2047851
- Chua, L. W., Milfont, T. L., & Jose, P. E. (2015). Coping skills help explain how future oriented adolescents accrue greater well-being over time. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *44*, 2028-2041. doi:10.1007/s10964-014-0230-8
- Cooper, C., Katona, C., & Livingston, G. (2008). Validity and reliability of the brief COPE in carers of people with dementia: The LASER-AD study. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, *196*, 838-843.
doi:10.1097/NMD.0b013e31818b504c
- Cummings, E. M., Davies, P. T., & Simpson, K. S. (1994). Marital conflict, gender, and children's appraisals and coping efficacy as mediators of child adjustment. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *8*, 141-149. doi:10.1037/0893-3200.8.2.141
- Dadds, M. R., Atkinson, E., Turner, C., Blums, G. J., & Lendich, B. (1999). Family conflict and child adjustment: Evidence for a cognitive-contextual model of intergenerational transmission. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *13*, 194-208.
doi:10.1037/0893-3200.13.2.194
- Dlugokinski, E. (1977). A developmental approach to coping with divorce. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, *6*, 27-30. doi:10.1080/15374417709532757
- Elam, K. K., Sandler, I., Wolchik, S., & Tein, J. (2016). Non-residential father-child involvement, interparental conflict and mental health of children following

divorce; A person-focused approach. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *45*, 581-593. doi:10.1007/s10964-015-0399-5

Emery, R. E. (1988). *Marriage, divorce, and children's adjustment*. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.

Fear, J. M., Champion, J. E., Reeslund, K. L., Forehand, R., Colletti, C., Roberts, L., & Compas, B. E. (2009). Parental depression and interparental conflict: Children and adolescents' self-blame and coping responses. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *23*, 762-766. doi:10.1037/a0016381

Furstenberg, F. J., & Cherlin, A. J. (1991). *Divided families: What happens to children when parents part*. Cambridge, MA, US: Harvard University Press.

Furstenberg, F. F., & Kiernan, K. E. (2001). Delayed parental divorce: How much do children benefit?. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *63*, 446-457. doi:10.1111/j.17413737.2001.00446.x

Folkman, S. & Lazarus, R. S. (1988). Coping as a mediator of emotion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *54*, 466-475. doi:10.1037/00223514.54.3.466

Gohm, C. L., Oishi, S., Darlington, J., & Diener, E. (1998). Culture, parental conflict, parental marital status, and the subjective well-being of young adults. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *60*, 319-334. doi:10.2307/353851

Grych, J. H., & Fincham, F. D. (1990). Marital conflict and children's adjustment: A cognitive-contextual framework. *Psychological Bulletin*, *108*, 267-290. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.108.2.267

- Grych, J. H., Fincham, F. D., Jouriles, E. N., & McDonald, R. (2000). Interparental conflict and child adjustment: Testing the mediational role of appraisals in the cognitive-contextual framework. *Child Development, 71*, 1648-1661.
doi:10.1111/1467-8624.00255
- Grych, J. H., Harold, G. T., & Miles, C. J. (2003). A prospective investigation of appraisals as mediators of the link between interparental conflict and child adjustment. *Child Development, 74*, 1176-1193. doi:10.1111/14678624.00600
- Grych, J. H., Raynor, S. R., & Fosco, G. M. (2004). Family processes that shape the impact of interparental conflict on adolescents. *Development and Psychopathology, 16*, 649-665. doi:10.1017/S0954579404004717
- Grych, J. H., Seid, M., & Fincham, F. D. (1992). Assessing marital conflict from the child's perspective: The Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale. *Child Development, 63*, 558-572. doi:10.2307/1131346
- Hetherington, E. M., & Elmore, A. M. (2003). Risk and resilience in children coping with their parents' divorce and remarriage. In S. S. Luthar, S. S. Luthar (Eds.), *Resilience and vulnerability: Adaptation in the context of childhood adversities* (pp. 182-212). New York, NY, US: Cambridge University Press.
- Kimemia, M., Asner-Self, K. K., & Daire, A. P. (2011). An exploratory factor analysis of the Brief COPE with a sample of Kenyan caregivers. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 33*, 149-160.
doi:10.1007/s10447-011-91228

- Kline, G. H., Wood, L. F., & Moore, S. (2003). Validation of modified family and interparental conflict scales for use with young adults from divorced and non-divorced families. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, *39*, 125-142.
doi:10.1300/J087v39n03_07
- Kreider, M., & Ellis, R. (2011) "Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: 2009." *Current Population Reports*, 70-125, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2011.
- Kurtz, L. (1996). Relationships between coping resources and strategies in children with divorced and nondivorced parents. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, *25*, 39-59. doi:10.1300/J087v25n03_03
- Liping, C., & Ziqiang, X. (2003). The revision of children's perception of marital conflict scale. *Chinese Mental Health Journal*, *17*, 554-556.
- Loucks Greenwood, J. (2014). Effects of a mid- to late-life parental divorce on adult children. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, *55*, 539-556.
doi:10.1080/10502556.2014.950903
- Mohanraj, R., Jeyaseelan, V., Kumar, S., Mani, T., Rao, D., Murray, K. R., & Manhart, L. E. (2015). Cultural adaptation of the Brief COPE for persons living with HIV/AIDS in Southern India. *AIDS and Behavior*, *19*, 341-351.
doi:10.1007/s10461-014-0872-2
- Moura, O., dos Santos, R. A., Rocha, M., & Matos, P. M. (2010). Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC): Factor structure and

invariance across adolescents and emerging adults. *International Journal of Testing*, *10*, 364-382. doi:10.1080/15305058.2010.487964

Pelleboer-Gunnink, H. A., Van der Valk, I. E., Branje, S. T., Van Doorn, M. D., & Deković, M. (2015). Effectiveness and moderators of the preventive intervention kids in divorce situations: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *29*, 799-805. doi:10.1037/fam0000107

Pirkey, C. M. (2013). Retrospective meaning-making of parental divorce: How experiencing parental divorce during adolescence affects adult views on marriage. *Dissertation Abstracts International*.

Reese-Weber, M., & Hesson-McInnis, M. (2008). The children's perception of interparental conflict scale: Comparing factor structures between developmental periods. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *68*, 1008-1023. doi:10.1177/0013164408318765

Sami-Abdo, R. A., Redhwan A. A., Mustafa A. A., & Krishna G. R. (2011). Stress and coping strategies of students in a medical faculty in Malaysia. *Malaysia Journal Medicine Science*, *18*, 57-64.

Skopp, N. A., McDonald, R., Manke, B., & Jouriles, E. N. (2005). Siblings in domestically violent families: Experiences of interparent conflict and adjustment problems. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *19*, 324-333. doi:10.1037/08933200.19.2.324

Snell, D. L., Siegert, R. J., Hay-Smith, E. C., & Surgenor, L. J. (2011). Factor structure of the Brief COPE in people with mild traumatic brain injury. *The*

Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation, 26, 468-477.

doi:10.1097/HTR.0b013e3181fc5e1e

- Solé-Padullés, C., Castro-Fornieles, J., de la Serna, E., Calvo, R., Baeza, I., Moya, J.,...Sugranyes, G. (2016). Intrinsic connectivity networks from childhood to late adolescence: Effects of age and sex. *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*, 17, 35-44. doi:10.1016/j.dcn.2015.11.004
- Thornton, A. (1989). Changing attitudes toward family issues in the United States. *Journal of Marriage and The Family*, 51, 873-893. doi:10.2307/353202
- Toth, K., & Kemmelmeier, M. (2009). Divorce attitudes around the world: Distinguishing the impact of culture on evaluations and attitude structure. *Cross Cultural Research: The Journal of Comparative Social Science*, 43, 280-297. doi:10.1177/1069397109336648
- Tuncay, T., & Musabak, I. (2015). Problem-focused coping strategies predict posttraumatic growth in veterans with lower-limb amputations. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 41, 466-483. doi:10.1080/01488376.2015.1033584
- Ulu, I. P., & Fişiloğlu, H. (2002). The relationship between Turkish children's perceptions of marital conflict and their internalizing and externalizing problems. *International Journal of Psychology*, 37, 369-378. doi:10.1080/00207590244000188
- Ulu, İ. P., & Fişiloğlu, H. (2004). Çocukların Evlilik Çatışmasını Algılaması Ölçeği'nin Geçerlik ve Güvenirlilik Çalışması. = A Validity and Reliability

Study of the Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale. *Türk Psikoloji Yazilari*, 7, 61-75.

United States Bureau of the Census. (2010). *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Retrieved from

https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/marriage_divorce_tables.htm

Van Lawick, J., & Visser, M. (2015). No kids in the middle: Dialogical and creative work with parents and children in the context of high conflict divorces.

Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy, 36, 33-

50. doi:10.1002/anzf.1091

Westrupp, E. M., Rose, N., Nicholson, J. M., & Brown, S. J. (2015). Exposure to interparental conflict across 10 years of childhood: Data from the longitudinal

study of Australian children. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*,

doi:10.1007/s109950151704-3

Xiaosong, G., Xiaojie, Z., & Xiangkui, Z. (2007). The effect of divorce on children's psychological development. *Psychological Science (China)*, 30, 1392-1396.

Yip, P. F., Yousuf, S., Chan, C. H., Yung, T., & Wu, K. C. (2015). The roles of culture and gender in the relationship between divorce and suicide risk: A

meta analysis. *Social Science & Medicine*, 128, 87-94.

doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.12.034

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE CHILDREN'S PERCEPTION OF INTERPARENTAL CONFLICT SCALE

(CPIC)

In every family, there are times when the parents don't get along. When their parents argue or disagree, kids can feel a lot of different ways. Thinking back to when you were a child (before you were 18 years old), we would like to know what kind of feelings you had when your parents had arguments or disagreements.

T = TRUE

ST = SORT OF TRUE

F = FALSE

- *1. T ST F I never witnessed my parents arguing or disagreeing.
- 2. T ST F When my parents had an argument they usually worked it out
- 3. T ST F My parents often got into arguments about things I did at school
- 4. T ST F My parents got really mad when they argued
- *5. T ST F When my parents argued I could do something to make myself feel better
- 6. T ST F I got scared when my parents argued
- 7. T ST F I felt caught in the middle when my parents argued
- 8. T ST F I wasn't to blame when my parents had arguments
- 9. T ST F They may not think I knew it, but my parents argued or disagreed a lot
- *10. T ST F Even after my parents stopped arguing they would stay mad each other
- 11. T ST F My parents had arguments because they were not happy together
- 12. T ST F When my parents had a disagreement they discussed it quietly
- 13. T ST F I didn't know what to do when my parents had arguments
- *14. T ST F My parents were often mean to each other even when I was around
- 15. T ST F When my parents argued I worried about what would happen to me
- *16. T ST F It was usually my fault when my parents argued
- 17. T ST F I often saw or heard my parents arguing
- 18. T ST F When my parents disagreed about something, they would usually come up with a solution
- 19. T ST F My parents' arguments were usually about me
- *20. T ST F The reasons my parents argued never changed
- 21. T ST F When my parents had an argument they said mean things to each other

22. T ST F When my parents argued or disagreed I could usually help make things better
23. T ST F When my parents argued I was afraid that something bad would happen
- *24. T ST F My mom wanted me to be on her side when she and my dad argued
25. T ST F Even if they didn't say it, I knew I was to blame when my parents argued
26. T ST F My parents hardly ever argued
27. T ST F When my parents argued they would usually make up right away
28. T ST F My parents usually argued or disagreed because of things that I did
- *29. T ST F My parents argued because they didn't really love each other
30. T ST F When my parents had an argument they yelled at each other
31. T ST F When my parents argued there was nothing I could do to stop them
32. T ST F When my parents argued I worried that one of them would get hurt
- *33. T ST F I felt like I had to take sides when my parents had a disagreement
34. T ST F My parents often nagged and complained about each other around the house
35. T ST F My parents hardly ever yelled when they had a disagreement
36. T ST F My parents often got into arguments when I did something wrong
- *37. T ST F My parents broke or threw things during arguments
- *38. T ST F After my parents stopped arguing, they were friendly towards each other
39. T ST F When my parents argued I was afraid that they would yell at me too
- *40. T ST F My parents blamed me when they had arguments
41. T ST F My dad wanted me to be on his side when he and my mom argued
42. T ST F My parents pushed or shoved each other during arguments
43. T ST F When my parents argued or disagreed there was nothing I could do to make myself feel better
44. T ST F When my parents argued I worried that they might get divorced
- *45. T ST F My parents still acted mean after they had an argument
46. T ST F My parents had arguments because they didn't know how to get along
47. T ST F Usually it wasn't my fault when my parents had arguments
48. T ST F When my parents argued they didn't listen to anything I said

Note. Items marked with an asterisk are of the conflict subscale.

APPENDIX B

THE BRIEF COPING ORIENTATION TO PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED

(Brief COPE)

We are interested in how people respond when they confront difficult or stressful events in their lives. There are lots of ways to try to deal with stress. This questionnaire asks you to indicate what you generally do and feel, when you experience stressful events. Obviously, different events bring out somewhat different responses, but think about what you usually do when you are under a lot of stress. Then respond to each of the following items by using the response choices listed just below. Please try to respond to each item separately in your mind from each other item. Choose your answers thoughtfully, and make your answers as true FOR YOU as you can. Please answer every item. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, so choose the most accurate answer for YOU--not what you think "most people" would say or do. Indicate what YOU usually do when YOU experience a stressful event.

- 1 = I usually don't do this at all
 2 = I usually do this a little bit
 3 = I usually do this a medium amount
 4 = I usually do this a lot

**1. I turn to work or other activities to take my mind off things.

Not at all	A little	Medium	A lot
1	2	3	4

*2. I concentrate my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in.

Not at all	A little	Medium	A lot
1	2	3	4

**3. I say to myself "this isn't real."

Not at all	A little	Medium	A lot
1	2	3	4

**4. I use alcohol or other drugs to make myself feel better.

Not at all	A little	Medium	A lot
1	2	3	4

*5. I get emotional support from others.

Not at all	A little	Medium	A lot
1	2	3	

- **6. I give up trying to deal with it.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- *7. I take action to try to make the situation better.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- **8. I refuse to believe that it has happened.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- **9. I say things to let my unpleasant feelings escape.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- *10. I get help and advice from other people.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- **11. I use alcohol or other drugs to help me get through it.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- *12. I try to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- **13. I criticize myself.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- *14. I try to come up with a strategy about what to do.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- *15. I get comfort and understanding from someone.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- **16. I give up the attempt to cope.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4

- *17. I look for something good in what is happening.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- *18. I make jokes about it.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- **19. I do something to think about it less, such as going to movies, watching TV, reading, daydreaming, sleeping, or shopping.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- *20. I accept the reality of the fact that it has happened.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- **21. I express my negative feelings.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- *22. I try to find comfort in my religion or spiritual beliefs.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- *23. I try to get advice or help from other people about what to do.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- *24. I learn to live with it.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- *25. I think hard about what steps to take.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- **26. I blame myself for things that happened.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4
- *27. I pray or meditate.
 Not at all A little Medium A lot
 1 2 3 4

*28. I make fun of the situation.

Not at all

A little

Medium

A lot

1

2

3

4

Note. Items marked with a single asterisk are of the adaptive subscale. Items marked with a double asterisk are of the maladaptive subscale.

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please indicate your response for each item.

1. Gender

Male Female Other

2. Age

3. Highest level of education completed

4. Ethnicity

White Black or African American Pacific Islander
 American or Alaska Native Asian Middle Eastern or North African
 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin Some other race, ethnicity, or origin

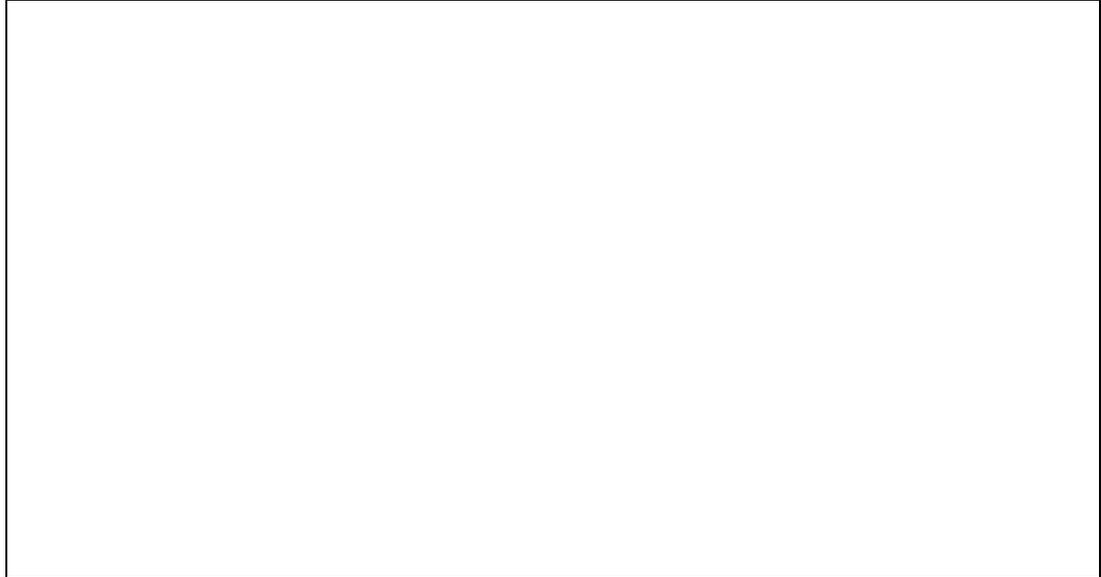
5. Did your parent's divorce?

Yes or No

6. At what age did you experience the divorce of your parents? (If multiple parental divorces were experienced, indicate age at first experienced parental divorce) (Note:

Only shown for those who experienced parental divorce) _____

7. If there is anything more that I should know or you would like to share about your family dynamics, please comment below:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to provide additional comments or information regarding their family dynamics.

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Summary: This research study will examine factors that are related to childhood experiences and coping strategies. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer survey questions about your family experiences as a child and how you now cope with stress.

Your right to withdraw/discontinue: You are free to discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. You may also skip any survey questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

Benefits: Participation in this research study does not guarantee any benefits to you. However, possible benefits include the fact that you may learn something about how research studies are conducted and you may learn something about this area of research.

Additional information: You will be given additional information about the study after your participation is complete.

Time commitment: If you agree to participate in the study, it may take up to 30 minutes to complete.

Guarantee of Confidentiality: All data from this study will be kept from inappropriate disclosure and will be accessible only to the researchers and their faculty advisor. Data collected online will be stored on a password-protected website and de-identified for analyses. The researchers are not interested in anyone's individual responses, only the average responses of everyone in the study.

Risks: The present research is designed to reduce the possibility of any negative experiences as a result of participation. Risks to participants are kept to a minimum. However, if your participation in this study causes you any concerns, anxiety, or distress please contact your nearest appropriate mental health provider, or visit psychologytoday.com to find the nearest therapist.

Researcher Contact Information: This research study is being conducted by Mathew Cotton. The faculty supervisor is Dr. Gary Williams, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology and Child Development, California State University, Stanislaus. If you have questions or concerns about your participation in this study, you may contact the researchers through Dr. Williams at (209) 667-3065.

Results of the Study: You may obtain information about the outcome of the study at the end of the academic year by contacting Dr. Williams.

Psychology Institutional Review Board Contact Information: If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Psychology Institutional Review Board of California State University, Stanislaus, Dr. Jessica Lambert, at jlambert@csustan.edu or (209) 667-3934.

Personal Copy of Consent Form: You may print/download a blank, unsigned copy of this consent form at the beginning of the study by clicking on this link: [INFORMED CONSENT FORM.pdf](#)

Verification of Adult Age: By clicking “Yes” below, you attest that you are 18 years old or older.

Verification of Informed Consent: By clicking “Yes” below, you are indicating that you have freely consented to participate.

- Yes, I give my consent
- No, I do not give my consent

APPENDIX E

DEBRIEFING FORM

Thank you for participating in this study! I am interested in understanding the relationships among coping strategies, parental conflict, and parental divorce. Prior research suggests parental divorce has been linked with negative later-life well-being. In addition, research suggests parental conflict also has a negative impact on later-life well-being. I want to investigate if parental conflict and parental divorce affect coping strategies. We expect to find similar results in our study. Our main prediction is that participants who grew up in households with high levels of conflict will have poor coping skills compared to those who grew up in households with low levels of conflict.

All the information we collected in this study will be kept safe from inappropriate disclosure, and there will be no way of identifying your responses in the data archive. I am not interested in anyone's individual responses; rather, I want to look at the general patterns that emerge when all of the participants' responses are put together. I ask that you do not discuss the nature of the study with others who may later participate in it, as this could affect the validity of my research conclusions.

If you have any questions about the study or would like to learn about the results of the study, you may contact me (Mathew Cotton) through my research supervisor, Dr. Gary Williams, at (209) 667-3065. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Psychology Institutional Review Board of California State University, Stanislaus, Dr. Jessica Lambert, at jlambert@csustan.edu or (209) 667-3934. If your participation in this study causes you any concerns, anxiety, or distress please contact your nearest appropriate mental health provider, or visit psychologytoday.com to find the nearest therapist. You may print/download a copy of this debriefing form by clicking on this link: [DEBRIEFING FORM.pdf](#)

If you would like to learn more about this research topic, we suggest the following references:

Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Weintraub, J. K. (1989). Assessing coping strategies:

A theoretically based approach. *Journal of Personality and Social*

Psychology, 56,267-283. doi:10.1037/00223514.56.2.267

Furstenberg, F. F., & Kiernan, K. E. (2001). Delayed parental divorce: How much do children benefit? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *63*, 446-457.

doi:10.1111/j.17413737.2001.00446.x

Grych, J. H., Seid, M., & Fincham, F. D. (1992). Assessing marital conflict from the child's perspective: The Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict

Scale. *Child Development*, *63*, 558-572. doi:10.2307/113134