

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIVORCE  
DURING CHILDHOOD OR ADOLESCENCE AND  
ATTITUDES TOWARD MARRIAGE IN ADULTHOOD

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By  
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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## DEDICATION

For my parents, John and Terri; your love beat the odds, and your marriage didn't become just another statistic. Your support and encouragement over the years have been immeasurable, and I would not be who or where I am in life without you.

For my grandmother, Lorraine "Honey" Macedo, whose spirit inspired and supported the furthering of my education.

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## ABSTRACT

The following study sought to examine the relationship between parental divorce during childhood or adolescence and the possible effects on attitudes toward marriage in adulthood. I hypothesized that individuals who experienced divorce during childhood or adolescence would have more negative attitudes towards marriage and relationships in adulthood, as compared to participants who did not experience divorce during childhood or adolescence. I also hypothesized that individuals who experienced divorce during childhood or adolescence would be more likely to have an insecure attachment style as compared to participants who did not experience divorce. Results of this study did not support either of these hypotheses.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Relative to other countries, the United States (U.S.) has a high divorce rate. According to the 2004 census data, Canada, Australia, and Denmark had divorce rates of 2.46%, 2.52%, and 2.8% respectively, for every 1,000 total population (Crouch & Beaulieu, 2006). In comparison, according to the National Vital Statistic Reports (2010), the rate of divorce in the United States is 3.4% for every 1,000 total population. Additionally, National Vital Statistic Reports (2010) reported that on average, 40-50% of American's marriages will end in divorce. Furthermore, 40% of first marriages end within the first thirteen years and, of those, 20% end within the first five years (Jaffe, 2011). This high divorce rate reflects a 40% increase in divorce since the 1970's (Jaffe, 2001). Because the divorce rate is so high, it is important to explore the causes and consequences of divorce.

### **Causes of Divorce**

Divorce can arise from a variety of complex factors. Historically, people typically divorced for reasons related to religion (e.g., adultery) or cultural pressures, such as a woman not producing a male heir (Coontz, 2007). Additional causes of divorce include stressors related to financial hardships, personality differences, or a desire for romance and passion within the relationship (Coontz, 2007).

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, men and women began to derive much of their life satisfaction from their romantic relationships, especially from their marriages (Coontz, 2007). This indicates a rise in the importance of romantic love, including a desire for companionship and passion, characteristics highly valued in Western

Europe and America (Coontz, 2007). Heightened expectations of romance, passion, and “personal fulfillment” led to greater disappointments and dissatisfaction within the marriage (Coontz, 2007). Furthermore, these factors (i.e., stress put upon marriage as a means for life satisfaction, and high expectations for marital relationships) tend to result in more traumatic divorces if these marital relationships come to an end than those with more realistic expectations (Coontz, 2007).

### **Changing Family Structure**

Divorce can alter the traditional family structure. More specifically, it alters the nuclear family, in which children live with their married biological parents, to include more varieties of non-traditional families (Blackwell, 2010). As the rate of divorce has dramatically increased in industrialized nations since the 1960’s (Afifi, Davis, Denes, & Merrill, 2013), the number of non-traditional families has necessarily increased as well. In the 1970’s the number of children who were considered to be part of a stepfamily was only 14.3%, while that percentage increased to 25% in the 1980’s (Bumpass, Raley, & Sweet, 1995; Manning & Lichter, 1996). Furthermore, the number of children living with a single parent and the parent’s cohabitating partner increased from 3.5% in 1990 to 6% in 2002 (Acs & Nelson, 2003). Although not all single parent households are the direct result of divorce, divorce continues to contribute to changes in family traditional structure and the increasing number of children living in non-traditional families, such as with a single parent (Summers, Forehand, Armistead, & Tannenbaum, 1998).

When the traditional nuclear family structure shifts to a non-traditional family, the child or adolescent must adjust to the new family dynamics. Children being raised

in a nuclear family were less likely to have behavioral issues and reportedly have a higher attention span (e.g. ability to complete chores and homework), have fewer worries, and were more emotionally stable, as compared to those children raised in non-traditional family structures (Blackwell, 2010). Moreover, the change in family dynamics is often accompanied by other factors which may result in negative outcomes for the child (Blackwell, 2010). According to Blackwell (2010), children who live in non-traditional families tend to be disadvantaged financially, are impacted negatively with respect to school (e.g., higher drop-out rates, poorer academic performance), experience behavior problems (e.g., delinquency, promiscuity), and are at higher risk for mental health issues (Blackwell, 2010). For example,

2% of children between the ages of 4–17 who lived in nuclear families often reported feeling unhappy or depressed, compared to 4.4% of children from single-parent families, 3.7% of children in blended families, 3.4% of children in extended families, and 4.9% of children in other family structures. Of those living in nuclear families, 2.8% of those children had severe emotional or behavioral difficulties, as compared to 5.6% of children living in single-parent families, 7.4% in blended families, 5.8% in cohabiting families, and 4.2% in extended families. Less than 1% of children living in nuclear families had received special education for an emotional or behavioral problem, as compared to 3.3% of children living in single-parent families, 2.3% of children in blended families, 3.3% of children in cohabiting families, 2.1% of children in extended families, and 5.2% of children in other family structures (Blackwell, 2010).

Children living in non-traditional families may also be at an increased risk of experiencing a variety of physical complications (Blackwell, 2010). For example, children living in a single-parent household, tend to have a higher prevalence of dental problems, chronic illness, and general medical problems largely due to limited access to healthcare services. This is associated with the financial disadvantages related to parental divorce. Other areas of children's health and development were also examined, and results indicated that children living in a nuclear family were less likely to be diagnosed with mental retardation or developmental delay as compared to those living in single-parent (4.6%), blended family (3.8%), cohabitating (4.5%), or extended family environments (Blackwell, 2010).

Forehand, Biggar, and Kotchick (1998) examined the short and long-term effects of parental divorce on adolescents and assessed the degree to which parental divorce is a risk factor for various mental, physical, and educational challenges. This study included 251 male and female participants, ranging in age from 11 to 15 years. A cumulative risk index of family stressors was created for each adolescent participant. The risk index included factors such as parental marital status, maternal physical health, maternal depressive symptoms, inter-parental conflict, and the perceived quality of the parent-adolescent relationship as rated by both the adolescent and his or her parent. Participants' mothers (divorced or single-parent) also completed a measure assessing perceived family stressors. Participants' self-report data was used to assess three areas of psychological adjustment including *internalizing problems* (i.e., psychological symptomology), *externalizing problems* (i.e., behavioral problems), and *academic achievement* (i.e., current GPA and highest

level of education completed). Researchers concluded that there is a positive relationship between the number of family risk factors and adolescent psychosocial adjustment problems, which included internalizing problems, externalizing problems, and poor academic achievement (Forehand et al, 1997). Moreover, these negative outcomes were more likely to be present when the number of risk factors increased from three to four. In summary, it appears that there are many long-term and short-term risk factors associated with parent divorce.

### **Stages of Development**

Evidence indicates that consequences of divorce are further influenced by developmental changes. During the time leading up to, or following, a parental divorce, adolescents are also experiencing other changes related to their developmental maturation. One developmental change, the nature and quality of the parent-adolescent relationship, was closely examined by DeGoede, Branje, and Meeus (2009). These researchers utilized a longitudinal methodology to examine the relationship between the adolescent's degree of autonomy from his or her parents and the adolescent's relationship with his or her parents. It was found that an increase in the level of autonomy in early to late adolescence decreases the level of closeness between the parents and the adolescent and leads to conflict. In this study, the presence of conflict was assessed by the child's self-reported disagreement (defiance) regarding the power of the parent over the adolescent, as perceived by the child. As a result of the conflict, the relationship between parent and adolescent tends to become more equal during this developmental stage. Developmental adjustments, as well as a

co-occurring change in family structure due to parental divorce, can be an additional stressor for adolescents.

Summers, Forehand, Armistead, and Tannenbaum (1998) investigated the correlation between parental divorce during the adolescence stage of development and the psychosocial adjustment of young adults. Summers et al. (1998) found that divorce may be associated with different outcomes, depending on the stage of development an individual is in at the time of the divorce. For example, early adolescence is a developmental stage when children are beginning to develop romantic relationships of their own. Summers et al. (1998) concluded that parental divorce during the adolescent stage of development had a negative effect on young adult psychosocial adjustment directly affects the adolescent's security of attachment to romantic partners later in life.

### **Attachment**

Another area of development that can potentially be affected is a child's attachment style. Summers, Forehand, Armistead, and Tannenbaum, (1998) also found that adolescents whose parents divorced were more likely to have attachment (the emotional and relational connection between individuals) issues with romantic partners later in life. Summers et al (1998) describe attachment as levels of commitment, interdependence, trust, and satisfaction levels within a relationship. The study examined variables such as gender, parental relationship, depressive mood, and pre-divorce inter-parental conflict. The results suggested that parental marital status had a significant effect on adolescents' attachment style, such that adolescents whose

parents had divorced were more likely to develop insecure attachment styles in their own romantic relationships later in life.

While attachment styles typically develop during childhood, parental divorce has been found to influence attachment style. Roisman, Booth-LaForce, Cauffman, and Spieker (2009) supported the initial works of Hazan and Shaver (1987) who found parental divorce to be a contributing factor to patterns of attachment styles. The earliest attachment experiences in a person's life (i.e., such as the relationship between a child and parent provides a fundamental part of the foundation of romantic relationships (i.e., caretaking, attachment, and sexual behaviors; Roisman et al, 2009). More specifically Roisman (2009) found that emotionally negative parent-adolescent relationships can be predictive of poor-quality interactions with romantic partners later in life. In children, attachment styles are identified as either secure, anxious-ambivalent, or anxious-avoidant (Roisman et al., 2009). Although attachment style is initially established in infancy (e.g., nurturance and affection), experiences and social factors during adolescence can affect a person's attachment style in adulthood (e.g., companionship and conflict). The parent-child relationship influences romantic relationships later in life, as these relationships have similar attachment functions (i.e. support, intimacy) (Roisman, et al., 2009).

### **Conflict**

Parental conflict is an important area to examine when looking at a child's level of attachment and predictors of parental divorce, as well as the effects that parental divorce can have in childhood and adolescence. Foshee, Benefield, Suchindran, Ennett, Bauman, Karriker-Jaffe and Mathias (2009) found that

adolescents who lived in single-parent households reported having more severe psychological problems and were the victims or perpetrators of dating abuse more often than adolescents who lived in two-parent households. Foshee et al. (2009) suggest that these results may be indicative of higher exposure to these issues (e.g., psychological problems and abuse) in their environment. For example, 9-12% of adolescents from divorced families reported being physically abused in their dating relationship, and 29% reported having been psychologically abused (Foshee et al., 2009). This correlation is important to examine because abuse in adolescents' relationships can affect them physically (e.g., poor general health), emotionally (e.g., insecure attachment in relationships), and psychologically (e.g., increases in depression and trauma) later in life (Foshee et al., 2009).

An examination of inter-parental conflict is also important because many adolescents often become involved in the conflict between parents during parental divorce (Richardson & McCabe, 2011). Richardson and McCabe (2011) found that parents place more responsibility on adolescents when going through a divorce. This places more pressure on the adolescent, typically in the form of increased household and family responsibilities. It was also found that a greater level of conflict among all family members after parental divorce is negatively associated with the level of adjustment for the adolescents (Richardson & McCabe, 2011). For example, teens reported lower levels of intimacy with their parents, as well as more stressful familial relations when there are high levels of conflict in the home, pre-divorce (Richardson & McCabe, 2011). On the other hand, the more positive the relationship between the adolescent and his or her mother and father, the better his or her psychological and

social state of being. When looking at psychological adjustment, intimacy with an adolescent's mother and father was found to be one of the most important predictors. In other words, having at least one positive parental relationship was found to act as a buffer from the distress that parental divorce can cause; therefore, it is important for adolescents to maintain positive parental relationships after parental divorce. (Richardson & McCabe).

One particular type of parent-child conflict, adolescent avoidance tendencies to the discussing of parental divorce, was examined by Afifi, Afifi, Morse, and Hamrick (2008). These researchers looked at the problems that arise when adolescents avoid discussing divorce with their parents. For example, adolescents who avoided talking about divorce with their parents tended to have more communication and avoidance tendencies (i.e., topic avoidance behaviors such as terminating conversations and showing disinterest) in their adult romantic relationships. Adolescents who participated in the study reported refraining from discussing their parents' divorce and reported feeling "highly uncomfortable" discussing the issue. Researchers concluded that adolescents may learn how to enact avoidance behaviors, avoid certain topics, and partake in secret keeping as a result. Each of these behaviors can then generate difficulties in romantic relationships in adulthood, such as avoidance tendencies and increased likelihood of engaging in secret keeping behaviors with future partners (Afifi et al., 2008).

In addition to increased adolescent avoidance tendencies, Afifi et al. (2008) found that this avoidance often leads to difficulty discussing other important issues with parents in the future, possibly due to feelings of anxiety. The research further

suggests that adolescents who are from divorced families may be especially likely to feel threatened or vulnerable when the topic of parental divorce is raised. This can lead to feeling a need to protect themselves. To further examine this Afifi et al. (2008) constructed a study to compare children's level of avoidance of talking about their parents' relationship with their parents from both divorced and non-divorced families, which was determined by using self-report measures developed by Caughlin and Golish (2002) to assess levels of avoidance. In this study, the researchers found that these avoidance strategies can carry over into other areas such as avoiding conversations regarding negative things that a child has done (or things that have been done to the child) and sexual attitudes and behaviors.

Teenagers are generally more vulnerable to depressive symptoms during adolescence due to social and hormonal changes. However, some adolescents also struggle with higher levels of depression as a result of parental divorce. For example, Vujeva and Furman (2011) found that adolescent depression often results from stress related to peer and family relationships. High levels of depression were found to be associated with conflicts in romantic relationships over the course of adolescence and emerging adulthood. These high levels of depression were attributed to difficulty adjusting to the increased involvement with a partner (i.e., spending more time together) that occurs during adolescence.

Depression in adolescents has several negative consequences including feeling less competent, feelings of insecurity, feeling less satisfied about relationships, and feeling less supported in relation to non-depressed peers (Vujeva and Furman, 2011). These research findings were consistent with prior research by Davila, Bradbury,

Cohan, & Tochluk, (1997) that found a link between depressive symptoms in adolescents and difficulties with both peer and familial relationships. Higher levels of depression during adolescence were associated with poor romantic relationship qualities in adulthood. Specifically, higher levels of depression lead to a decrease in problem solving skills and an increase in relationship conflicts. These findings indicate that adolescents who have parental divorce as a life stressor could potentially develop varying levels of depression which may then affect romantic relationships in emerging adulthood (Vujeva and Furman, 2011).

In this study, participants' current attitudes toward marriage and intimate relationships will be explored in relation to family structure during adolescence. This research addressed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Individuals who experienced divorce during childhood or adolescence will have more negative attitudes towards marriage in adulthood, as compared to participants who did not experience divorce during childhood or adolescence.

Hypothesis 2: Individuals who experienced divorce during childhood or adolescence will be more likely to have an anxious attachment style as compared to participants who did not experience divorce.

Hypothesis 3: Individuals who experienced divorce during childhood or adolescence will be more likely to have an avoidant attachment style as compared to participants who did not experience divorce.

Hypothesis 4: Individuals currently in relationships who did not experience parental divorce during childhood or adolescence will have higher relationship satisfaction as compared to those who did experience parental divorce.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODS

#### **Participants**

A convenience sample of approximately 146 male and female (128 females, 17 males, 1 “declined to answer”) undergraduate and graduate students (from traditional and non-traditional families) were recruited through SONA Systems and undergraduate courses at California State University, Stanislaus. Participants were 18 years or older, ranging in age from 18 years old to 76 years old. Of the participants, 24.8 % identified as “white,” 3.4% identified as “black or African American,” 10.3% identified as “Asian,” 1.4% identified as “Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander,” 55.5% as “Hispanic,” 2.1% as “ Middle Eastern,” and 2.1% as “Other.” Participants received incentive for participating (i.e., extra credit in a course). Some participants elected to not complete the entirety of the study, reducing the number of participants (this is possibly due the personal nature of some of the questions that participants may not have wanted to answer).

#### **Materials**

##### **Demographic Questionnaire**

A 9-item demographic questionnaire was created for the purpose of this study. The demographic questionnaire included questions to assess the participants’ age, sex (male or female), ethnicity (African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Middle Eastern, Native American, White, or Other) and primary family structure during adolescence (Married, Divorced, Separated, or Other). This form also included additional statements rated on a 7-point Likert Scale for exploratory analyses (7 being

“Strongly Disagree to 1 being “Strongly Agree”) including: “I can see myself being married in the future”, “Marriage is something that I value,” “I have never thought about or pictured myself being married,” “Marriage is important to me,” and “I do not plan on getting married in the future.”

### **The Marriage Expectation Scale**

An adapted version of The Marriage Expectation Scale (Jones, 1996) was used to measure the participants’ current attitudes toward marriage. The forty-item questionnaire utilized a 7-point Likert scale, which I adapted from the original 5-point scale to increase variability. An example item from this measure is “My marriage will be more intense than any of my other close relationships.” In response to each item the participant was asked to mark the first response that came to mind using a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) response scale. Items 4, 18, 23, 28, 30, 35, and 38 were reverse coded, and then all 40 items were summed. Scores could range from 40-280, where higher scores indicated more idealistic attitudes toward marriage. The internal consistency of this measure was good,  $\alpha=.89$ .

### **The Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Questionnaire**

The Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Questionnaire (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000) was used to measure the participants’ adult attachment styles. This thirty-six-item questionnaire used a 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree) scale. This measure yields two subscales: an attachment-related anxiety subscale and an attachment-related avoidance subscale. The anxiety subscale includes item 1-18, where items 9 and 11 are reverse coded, and higher scores reflect higher levels of anxiety. An example item from this subscale is, “I’m afraid that I will lose

my partner's love." An average score is computed for this subscale. The internal consistency for the anxiety subscale was  $\alpha=.94$ . The avoidance subscale includes items 19-36, where items 20, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, and 36 are reverse coded. Higher values on this subscale reflect higher levels of avoidance. An example item from this subscale is, "I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners." The internal consistency for this subscale was  $\alpha=.95$ .

### **The Relationship Satisfaction Scale**

The Relationship Satisfaction Scale, adapted from Burns (1993), was used to measure the participants' level of satisfaction in his or her current relationship. The measure which I adapted, from the original 6-point scale to a 7-point scale to increase variability consisted of 7 items using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly dissatisfied) and (7 strongly satisfied.) Sample items included "Communication and openness," "Intimacy and closeness," and "Satisfaction with the other person's role in the relationship." The internal consistency for this measure was  $\alpha=.93$ .

### **Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale**

Participants were then given the Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (Fincham, 2013) to assess participants' perception of conflictual interaction between parents during childhood and adolescence. The measure consisted of 51 items to be answered utilizing a 3-point Likert scale; "T (True)," "ST (Sort Of True)," or "F (False)" scored as "2," "1," or "0," respectively. Sample items included "I often see or hear my parents arguing," "When my parents have a

disagreement they discuss it quietly,” and “I feel like I have to take sides when my parents have a disagreement.”

### **Procedure**

Participants clicked a link on the study’s SONA page that took them to Qualtrics, where the online study materials were posted. First, participants were presented with the informed consent (see Appendix A). The informed consent included information about participation in study, contact information for the researcher and research supervisor, as well as how to obtain results. After the informed consent was signed electronically, the questionnaires were then given to participants in a random order. The demographics questionnaire (see Appendix B) was also administered, and included questions on participant sex, age, race, marital status, and family structure during adolescence. One questionnaire (The Marriage Expectation Scale, adapted from Jones, 1998) was administered (see Appendix D) to assess attitudes and expectations of marriage. Next, the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Questionnaire (Adapted from Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000) was administered (see Appendix C). The Children's Perception of Interparental Conflict Scale (Fincham, 2013) was also administered to assess participants’ perception of conflictual interaction between parents during childhood and adolescence (see Appendix F). Finally, a Relationship Satisfaction Scale (adapted from Burns, 1993) was used to assess the participants’ level of satisfaction in their current relationship (see Appendix E). Also, participants were presented with a debriefing form (see Appendix G) explaining the purpose of the study and providing the researcher’s contact information in case they have any questions or concerns.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

First, to test the hypothesis that participants who experienced divorce during childhood or adolescence would have more negative expectations about marriage, as compared to those who did not experience divorce, I conducted an independent samples *t*-test. Results indicated that participants who experienced divorce ( $M=192.67$ ,  $SD=21.97$ ) did not have more negative expectations about marriage, as compared to those who did not experience divorce ( $M=196.51$ ,  $SD=25.55$ ),  $t(121)=0.74$ ,  $p=.461$ . Thus, the data did not support my first hypothesis.

Second, to test the hypothesis that participants who experienced divorce would report higher levels of insecure attachment style (attachment related anxiety), as compared to those who did not experience divorce, I conducted an independent samples *t*-test. Contrary to my expectations, participants who experienced divorce ( $M=3.37$ ,  $SD=1.46$ ) did not have higher levels of anxiety, as compared to those who did not experience divorce ( $M=3.47$ ,  $SD=1.25$ ),  $t(121)=0.35$ ,  $p=.724$ .

Next, I conducted an independent samples *t*-test to test the hypothesis that participants who experienced divorce would report higher levels of attachment-related avoidance, as compared to those who did not experience divorce. The results did not support this hypothesis. The participants who experienced divorce ( $M=2.65$ ,  $SD=1.14$ ) did not have higher levels of avoidance, as compared to those who did not experience divorce ( $M=3.04$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ),  $t(120)=1.68$ ,  $p=.10$ .

Unfortunately, I did not ask participants about their current relationship status and was, therefore, unable to assess my fourth hypothesis, which predicted that

participants who had experienced divorce would have lower relationship satisfaction, as compared to those who had not experienced divorce.

Finally, I conducted a series of independent samples *t*-tests comparing the attitudes of participants who had experienced divorce and those who had not experienced divorce toward marriage. These analyses used four single-item questions included in the demographics questionnaire. First, participants who experienced divorce ( $M= 1.87, SD= 1.2$ ) and those who did not ( $M=1.6, SD=1.02$ ) were equally likely to agree with the statement, “Marriage is something that I value,”  $t(125)=1.210, p=.23$ . Participants who experienced divorce ( $M=1.87, SD=1.3$ ) and those who did not ( $M=1.74, SD=1.74$ ) were also equally likely to agree with the statement, “I can see myself being married in the future,”  $t(124)=0.564, p=.574$ . In response to the item, “Marriage is important to me,” there were no differences between those who experienced divorce ( $M=2.03, SD=1.35$ ) and those who did not ( $M=2.01, SD=1.32$ ),  $t(124)=0.08, p=.937$ . Lastly, there was no difference between participants who experienced divorce ( $M=5.83, SD=1.49$ ) and those who did not ( $M=5.8, SD=1.52$ ) in their responses to the statement, “I do not plan to get married in the future,”  $t(123)=0.11, p=.916$ .

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

The present study predicted that adult participants who experienced divorce would have more negative expectations about marriage as compared to those who did not experience parental divorce. It was also hypothesized that those participants who were from divorced families would be more likely to have an insecure attachment style as adults (i.e. anxious or avoidant styles of attachment), as compared to those participants who did not experience divorce in either childhood or adolescence. These hypotheses were not supported by the data. Participants who had experienced parental divorce had similar expectations of marriage as those from married parents and did not have higher levels of anxiety or avoidance in relationships as adults.

It was also hypothesized that participants who had experienced parental divorce in childhood or adolescence would have lower levels of relationship satisfaction, though this researcher did not ask participants if they were currently in a relationship and, therefore, was unable to assess this hypothesis.

It was also found that participants who experienced divorce reported similar attitudes toward marriage as those who came from married family structure. There were no statistically significant differences found in participants answers (from married family structure and divorced family structure) on the demographic questions relating to attitudes about marriage (e.g. “I can see myself being married in the future”, “Marriage is something that I value,” “I have never thought about or pictured myself being married,” “Marriage is important to me,” and “I do not plan on getting married in the future.” Therefore, the attitudes about marriage by those who

experienced parental divorce were not negatively affected by the experience. Those who experienced parental divorce had similar attitudes as those who did not experience divorce. These findings were consistent with those of Amato (1988), which found that those participants who came from “intact” (traditional) families as compared to divorced families did not differ in attitudes toward marriage. The study further concluded that while participants from divorced families had similar attitudes about divorce as those from “intact” families, those from divorced families “value marriage but at the same time are aware of its limitations and alternatives” (Amato, 1988). The attitudes about marriage of those who experienced parental divorce may not be affected due to having increased awareness and more realistic expectations of marriage.

### **Limitations**

A limitation of this study is the skewed data due to the limited subject pool; more participants identified as coming from a family with married parents. This is possibly due to level of education as a negative outcome of parental divorce; those children from divorced parents are more likely to experience higher levels of drop-out from high school and poorer grades, thus being less likely to enter college (Blackwell, 2010). The pool of participants might have been more likely to report coming from married parents (family structure) than from divorced due to this factor.

Also, one further limitation of this study is that it is a retrospective study. Some older participants may not have been able to recall what their family structure was like for the majority of their adolescence, especially if it was a traumatic experience. In addition to this, some younger participants may still be in the

adolescent stage of development which could also possibly affect the results of the study, as they might have different attitudes than those completing the study in retrospect.

Further review of the data collection also revealed an additional limitation that participants were not asked directly on the demographics questionnaire the age at which their parents divorced (if they had); therefore it is not clear if the divorce occurred during childhood or adolescence, or adulthood for those participants (from divorced family structure).

A final limitation identified in this study is the absence of a question on the demographics form to identify if participants were currently in a relationship when asked to rate their current level of relationship satisfaction (Relationship Satisfaction Scale), thus resulting in my inability to analyze the data for the fourth hypothesis.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

After examining other studies with similar topics as this one, this researcher offers one idea for future studies: Researches could benefit from asking participants directly to indicate age at which divorced or separated to obtain more precise data, and to truly assess the effect divorce can have during the childhood and adolescent stages of development. Collecting this data will allow future researchers to further explore results and effects not only between those from married versus divorced family structures, but also to gain insight into if those who experience divorce is childhood experience more negative outcomes than (or less) than when experienced in the adolescent stage of development.

Although the hypotheses were not supported, it provided clinical insight to therapists and clinicians working with children, adolescents, and adults who may have experienced parental divorce. As a clinician working in the child welfare system, some clients who enter this level of care are coming from homes with diverse family structures and entering varying family structures of residential or foster family care. Another possible area to examine for future researchers is effective clinical practices and interventions for those who experienced divorce in childhood or adolescence and report having more negative attitudes toward marriage, insecure attachment styles, and related issues in romantic relationships (low satisfaction) as adults. Further research in this area would be most beneficial to those working with this population to reduce the possible negative outcomes (e.g. health, psychological, medical, and education) as indicated in Blackwell's (2010) study.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
INFORMED CONSENT

1. This study will examine attitudes toward marriage and long-term relationships. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer survey questions related to this topic as well as demographic questions.
2. You are free to discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. You may also skip any survey questions that make you feel uncomfortable. Even if you withdraw from the study, you will receive any entitlements that have been promised to you in exchange for your participation, such as extra credit.
3. 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 effects of divorce on attitudes about relationships.
4. You will be given additional information about the study after your participation is complete.
5. If you agree to participate in the study, it will take approximately 20 minutes to complete all of the survey questions.
6. All data from this study will be kept from inappropriate disclosure and will be accessible only to the researcher and the faculty advisors. The researcher is not interested in anyone's individual responses, only the average responses of everyone in the study.
7. The present research is designed to reduce the possibility of any negative experiences as a result of participation. The questions do not require detailed answers, but the recollection

of details of this topic could potentially be distressing to you. If participation in this study causes you any concerns, anxiety, or distress, please contact the Student Counseling Center at (209) 667-3381 to make an appointment to discuss your concerns.

8. This research study is being conducted by Michelle Johnson, a graduate student at CSU Stanislaus. The faculty supervisor is Dr. AnaMarie Guichard, 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 researcher through Dr. Guichard at (209) 667-3382 or [aguichard@csustan.edu](mailto:aguichard@csustan.edu).
9. You may obtain information about the outcome of the study at the end of the Fall 2015 academic semester by contacting Dr. Guichard.
10. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Campus Compliance Officer of California State University, Stanislaus, at [IRBadmin@csustan.edu](mailto:IRBadmin@csustan.edu).
11. You will be given a copy of this consent form after you finish the survey.
12. By signing below, you attest that you are 18 years of age or older.
13. By signing below, you are indicating that you have freely consented to participate in this research study.

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B  
DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographics

1. Age:

2. Gender (circle one):    Male                      Female

3. Ethnicity (Choose One): African American                      Asian                      Hispanic/Latino  
Middle Eastern              Native American              White              Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements using the 7-point scale below:

Strongly Agree			Undecided			Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. Marriage is something that I value.

5. Marriage is important to me.

6. I do plan on getting married in the future.

7. Were your parents separated/divorced?

Yes              No

a. If so, how old were you when your parents separated/divorced?

\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

## THE EXPERIENCES IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS-REVISED (ECR-R) QUESTIONNAIRE

Adapted from Fraley, R.C., Waller, N.G., & Brennan, K.A. (2000).

The statements below concern how you feel in emotionally intimate relationship. I am interested in how you generally experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Respond to each statement by writing the number that indicates how much you agree or disagree next to each statement.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5
				6
				7

1. I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love.
2. I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.
3. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me.
4. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.
5. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her.
6. I worry a lot about my relationships.
7. When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else.
8. When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me.
9. I rarely worry about my partners leaving me.
10. My romantic partner makes me doubt myself.

11. I do not often worry about being abandoned.
12. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.
13. Sometimes romantic partners change their feelings about me for no apparent reason.
14. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.
15. I'm afraid that once a romantic partner gets to know me, he or she won't like who I really am.
16. It makes me mad that I don't get the affection and support I need from my partner.
17. I worry that I won't measure up to other people.
18. My partner only seems to notice me when I'm angry.
19. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.
20. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings.
21. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.
22. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.
23. I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.
24. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.
25. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.
26. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.
27. It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner.
28. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.
29. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.
30. I tell my partner just about everything.
31. I talk things over with my partner.
32. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.

33. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.
34. I find it easy to depend on romantic partners.
35. It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner.
36. My partner really understands me and my needs.

## APPENDIX D

## THE MARRIAGE EXPECTATION SCALE

(Adapted from Gabriele D. Jones, University of Southern Mississippi)

A. Are you currently married?

Yes      No

B. If you are not currently married, do you plan on getting married in the future?

Yes      No      Maybe

Strongly

Disagree

1

2

Disagree

3

Neutral

4

5

Agree

6

Strongly

Agree

7

Please respond to the following statements using the above scale. Simply mark the response that first comes to your mind. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers, and the statements may be interpreted differently according to the individual. Place mark your answers imagining what your current marriage is like or what your future marriage might be like. If you do not plan on getting married, please respond with answers that best describe your feelings about these areas in intimate relationships. Mark the response that first comes to mind.

1. My marriage is/will be more intense than any of my other close relationships.
2. We do/will both place the same amount of emphasis on sex.
3. My partner and I are/will be similar in our habits of cleanliness.
4. Keeping the finances straight is/will be difficult.
5. Asking each other for help is not/will not be a problem.
6. My partner is/will be quite attractive.
7. We have/will have certain household chores that each of us will do.
8. Time alone is not/will not be as important as time together.
9. Maintaining romantic love is/will be a key factor to our marital happiness.
10. My spouse does want/will want to have children at the same time I do.
11. My partner is/will absolutely be willing to “follow me” to another city if I’m promoted.
12. Our marital satisfaction is/will be reflected by our sex life.
13. My partner does/will have a great sense of humor.
14. We are/will both be willing to see a marriage counselor if necessary.
15. My spouse and I are/will be quite affectionate with each other.
16. Having children has improved/will improve marital satisfaction for both of us.

17. My spouse does/will instinctively know what I want and need to be happy.
18. My partner has/will have trouble understanding me.
19. It does not/will not bother me if my spouse loses his or her “shape.”
20. My partner does/will cherish me.
21. My partner does/will always listen to me.
22. I am/will be able to change my partner by pointing out his/her shortcomings.
23. We do/will get angry with each other.
24. Sex is/will always be exciting.
25. We do/will always express feelings openly.
26. We do/will always agree about whose side of the family we will spend holidays with.
27. Decisions are/will be made together at all times.
28. I am/will be suspicious of my partner’s fidelity.
29. All our fights are/will be resolved quickly.
30. My partner does/will forget important dates such as our anniversary.
31. My spouse does/will automatically like my side of the family.
32. We do/will share equally the household chores.
33. My spouse does/will always consult with me when making decisions.
34. We do/will always have extreme emotional closeness.
35. My spouse and I do/will argue a lot.
36. My partner and I do/will eat meals together all the time.
37. We do/will share all of the same interests.
38. I do/will have trouble getting along with the in-laws.
39. My partner does/will agree with me if I tell him or her to change something about him/herself.
40. My spouse is not/will never be attracted to people of the opposite sex.

## APPENDIX E

## RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION SCALE

Adapted from Burns, David D. (1993). Ten Days to Self-Esteem. New York, NY:

HarperCollins.

Please circle which best indicates your satisfaction with your current relationship.

	Very Dissatisfied		Neutral			Very Satisfied	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Communication and openness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Resolving conflicts and arguments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Degree of affection and caring.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Intimacy and closeness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Satisfaction with your role in the relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Satisfaction with the other person's role in the relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Overall satisfaction with the relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

## APPENDIX F

## CHILDREN'S PERCEPTION OF INTERPARENTAL CONFLICT SCALE

Adapted from Fincham, F.D. (2013)

In every family there are times when the parents don't get along. Below are some things that kids sometimes think or feel when their parents have arguments or disagreements. We would like you to tell us what you think or feel when your parents argue or disagree by answering each of the sentences below.

T = TRUE

ST = SORT OF TRUE

F = FALSE

1. T ST F I never saw 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 When my parents argued it was because one of them just had a bad day.
5. T ST F My parents got really mad when they argued.
6. T ST F When my parents argued I could do something to make myself feel better.
7. T ST F I got scared when my parents argued.
8. T ST F I felt caught in the middle when my parents argued.
9. T ST F I wasn't to blame when my parents had arguments.
10. T ST F They did not think I know it, but my parents argued or disagreed a lot.
11. T ST F Even after my parents stopped arguing they stayed mad at each other.
12. T ST F When my parents argued usually it had to do with their own problems.
13. T ST F My parents had arguments because they were not happy together.
14. T ST F When my parents had a disagreement they discussed it quietly.
15. T ST F I didn't know what to do when my parents had arguments.
16. T ST F My parents were often mean to each other even when I was around.
17. T ST F When my parents argued I worried about what would happen to me.
18. T ST F I didn't feel like I had to take sides when my parents have a disagreement.
19. T ST F It was usually my fault when my parents argued.
20. T ST F I often saw or heard my parents arguing.
21. T ST F When my parents disagreed about something, they usually came up with a solution.
22. T ST F My parents' arguments were usually about me.
23. T ST F The reasons my parents argued never changed.
24. T ST F When my parents had an argument they said mean things to each other.
25. T ST F When my parents argued or disagreed I could usually help make things better.
27. T ST F When my parents argued I was afraid that something bad would happen.
28. T ST F My mom wanted me to be on her side when she and my dad argued.
29. T ST F Even if they didn't say it, I know I was to blame when my parents argued.
30. T ST F My parents hardly ever argued.

APPENDIX G  
DEBRIEFING FORM

**Debriefing**

Thank you for participating in this study! I am examining the relationship between an individual's family structure during adolescence and his or her attitude towards marriage and intimate relationships in adulthood. Based on previous studies, I predict that those individuals from divorced or separated families will have a negative attitude towards marriage and those from traditional nuclear families will have a positive attitude towards marriage.

All of the information I collect in this study will be kept safe from inappropriate disclosure and there will be no way of identifying your responses in the data archive. We are not interested in anyone's individual responses; rather, we want to look at the general patterns that emerge when all of the participants' responses are put together. We 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 our research conclusions.

If you have any question about the study or would like to learn about the results of the study you may contact me (Michelle Johnson) through my research supervisor, AnaMarie Guichard, at (209)667-3382. You may also learn more about the results of the study by attending the thesis defense, TBA. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Campus Compliance Officer of California State University, Stanislaus at [IRBadmin@csustan.edu](mailto:IRBadmin@csustan.edu) or (209) 667-3747. If participation in the study caused you any concern, anxiety, or distress, you may contact the Student Counseling Center at (209) 667-3381.