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The effects of parental divorce on the views of romantic relationships and marriages of the children involved

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THE EFFECTS OF PARENTAL DIVORCE ON THE VIEWS OF ROMANTIC
RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGES OF THE CHILDREN INVOLVED

by
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A Thesis

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Thesis Chair: Roberta Dihoff, Ph.D.

Dedicated to:
Edwin J. Maher

ABSTRACT

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THE EFFECTS OF PARENTAL DIVORCE ON THE VIEWS OF ROMANTIC
RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGES OF THE CHILDREN INVOLVED
2009/10
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The purpose of this study was to determine if the occurrence of parental divorce resulted

in negative views and experiences regarding the romantic relationships of the offspring.

Four surveys were administered to undergraduate students enrolled in psychology courses

at Rowan University. The first survey was used for informational purposes to group

participants into two group (those from intact families and those from non-intact families)

and to determine the current relationship status of all participants. The following three

surveys addressed avoidant behaviors, anxiety level, the presence of conflict, and

satisfaction regarding past or present romantic relationships. The data was analyzed for

correlations. No significant differences were found between the two groups.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Need

The dynamics of personal relationships have always been of interest to the researcher, particularly the factors that impact relationships. The researcher observed that many individuals whose parents were divorced held negative opinions of marriages. The majority of these people were convinced that marriages do not work. "Til death do us part" is not a sentiment that these individuals bought into when it came to their marriages. It was also observed that those who experienced the divorce of their parents did not believe that they would marry in the future and had no desire to do so. These beliefs were based on the following thought process: marital conflict is inevitable and conflict results in the dissolution of marriages. The strong convictions of children of divorce caused great curiosity in the researcher. Are these strong negative opinions regarding the institution of marriage something that is shared with all people that have experienced the divorce of their parents?

Purpose

The purpose of the current study is to look into the ideals that college students have on marriage. The researcher seeks to investigate whether there is a significant correlation between children of parental divorce and negative views on current or future romantic relationships.

Hypothesis

Do children from non-intact families have a more negative outlook on the success

of their future marriages than children from intact families? Are children of parental

divorce more likely than children whose parents remain married to report that they have

no desire to marry in the future? The researcher of this study is out to examine if parental

divorce has a significant impact on the future romantic relationships of the children

involved. Therefore, the hypothesis of the current study is that parental divorce has a

negative impact on the future relationships of the children involved.

Theory

Observational learning plays a large role in the negative views regarding the

possibility of marital bliss for children of divorce. Psychologist Albert Bandura's social

learning theory emphasizes observational learning. "Social cognitive theorists stress that

people acquire a wide range of behaviors, thoughts, and feelings through observing

others' behavior" (Santrock, 2008, p. 46). With regards to parental divorce "...the

observational learning perspective assumes that children observe parents' interpersonal

behavior, process and store this information, and later replicate the same behavior in their

own marriages" (Amato & Booth, 2001, p. 630).

Adding support to the social learning theory are studies that have been conducted

by Dr. Judith Wallerstein. Her views correspond with the observational learning view of

the intergenerational transmission of divorce. "Her findings show that children of

divorce typically end up ill-prepared to form their own intimate relationships" (Levine &

Kline, 2007, p. 208). She believes that recovery is possible but initially offspring are

afraid of their own marital failure as they enter into their first adult relationships. She conducted a longitudinal study taking place over a period of twenty five years in which she wished to discover the long term effects that parental divorce has on offspring. She believes that the main roadblock to successful relationships that the offspring encounter is the fact that they do not have a good image or model of how two people act in a healthy marriage (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004).

Children from non-intact families have a disadvantage when it comes to learning how to deal with conflicts and how to handle tough situations as couples. In successful parental marriages, the children are forming positive models for dealing with conflicts. Unfortunately, for children of parental divorce, they are learning the unhealthy ways of dealing with marital stress due to the poor examples that are set by their parents. Children of divorce have developed poor models of conflict resolution through observing their parents (Reese-Weber & Kahn, 2005). While a marriage is not necessarily rosy for the parents in intact families, the children are learning to expect that there will be ups and downs even in the most successful marriages, but that the bad times can be handled and overcome. "For children of divorce, the parents' interactions – including the courtship, the marriage, and the divorce – collapsed into a black hole, as if the parents as a unified couple had vanished from the world and from the child's inner life" (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004, p. 368).

<center>Definitions</center>

Interpersonal refers to characteristics of an individual in and of themselves.

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Non-intact families refer to families in which the mother and father are divorced. It does not refer to families in which one of the parents has passed away.

Intact families refer to families in which a child's parents are married.

Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce: refers to a pattern of divorce which continues to occur in each generation (i.e. children divorcing whom experienced the divorce of their parents).

Correlational Analysis refers to a way of looking at data which will point out if there is a significant difference in data collected from different groups. A significant correlation does not imply a causal relationship between the variables being examined.

Assumptions

This research study assumes that all children of divorce will develop negative views regarding marriage. In reality, some divorces are more difficult for children than others. A child of a divorce that was surrounded in turmoil would likely have more negative views than a child that experienced a more peaceful separation. Another assumption is that the age of the children at the time of parental divorce does not have an impact on their views of marriage. When the divorce occurs when children are too young to grasp the situation, it is quite possible that their future views on marriage are unrelated to the divorce of their parents. However, older children that recognize the unhealthy behaviors surrounding the divorce will be more likely to develop negative martial views.

One large assumption of the study is that divorce itself is responsible for the negative views that children possess regarding marriages. What about the instances in

which parents remain in unhealthy marriages for the sake of staying together for the children? It is possible that children in such situations are forming equally negative views on marriage as the children of parental divorce, due to the unhealthy behaviors that they are witnessing from an unhealthy marriage.

Limitations

One major limitation of this study involves the generalization of results to other populations. Due to the fact that participants of this study were taken from one university the results may not hold true among more diverse populations. Also, there are several limitations regarding the measures used which will be discussed in the final chapter.

Summary

The following chapters will provide in depth information on the impact of the occurrence of parental divorce on the future relationships of children from non-intact families. First, in Chapter II the results of prior related research will be explored. Next, the focus will switch to the current study. In Chapter III the methodology and procedures will be explained. Then, Chapter IV will outline the results. Finally, Chapter V will address the strengths and weaknesses of the current study as well as implications for future research on the topic of parental divorce and how it affects the later romantic relationships of the children. The hypothesis will be revisited several times throughout this study.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Divorce is a traumatic experience for all parties involved, especially the children. "Over the past several decades, a rising number of American marriages have ended in divorce, and correspondingly, an increasing number of children have experienced their parents' breakup" (Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, & Roberts, 1990). Statistics show that half of new married couples will end up divorced (Wolfinger, 2003). "This trend subsequently impacts approximately 1.5 million American children each year" (Summers, Forehand, & Armistead, 1998). There are many different opinions on the extent of the damage that divorce has on children. The one issue of interest is the effect of parental divorce on the future relationships of children. Though there is much focus on the impact on the children during the first few years, there is less research on adult relationships of children of divorce. Due to the unfortunate fact that divorce is becoming increasingly common, it is important to look into the long-term effects on the children of divorce. Do they recover or do their experiences of parental divorce haunt their future relationships? Many psychologists and researchers believe that while some do recover, others do in fact struggle with their own adult relationships. However, there are many different perspectives as to why parental divorce has an effect on the future relationships of the children.

Observational Learning and Divorce

Kenny Loggins sings about his daughter learning about relationships in his song called "The Real Thing". The premise of the song is Loggins' fear of his daughter having a negative view of relationships due to his divorce. He does not want her to mistakenly view the marital discord and divorce that she witnessed for a healthy marriage and the reality of relationships. Parental divorce provides poor models for relationships, whereas a healthy parental marriage would provide offspring with a good model of a healthy relationship. "Worse still, it is presumed that they [offspring of parental divorce] will repeat the pattern when they get married, being almost hypnotically attracted to what feels, sounds, and looks 'familiar'" (Levine & Kline, 2007).

In his song, Kenny Loggins is referring to a form of learning in which an individual first observes a behavior and then repeats it, called observational or social learning. With regards to parental divorce "...the observational learning perspective assumes that children observe the interpersonal behavior of their parents, process and store this information, and later replicate the same behavior in their own marriages" (Amato & Booth, 2001). It is important to take into account the things that children observed surrounding their parents' divorces when looking at future outcomes. Children are especially impressionable; therefore, any negative views that were picked up will most likely remain into adulthood.

Parenthood is a play in which parents are the lead actors and children are the attentive audience. During times of marital conflict, children often have front row seats. The result is that children are creating dysfunctional models when it comes to conflict

resolution in relationships. Children from non-intact families have a disadvantage when it comes to learning how to deal with conflicts and how to handle tough situations as a couple. In successful parental marriages, the children are forming positive models for dealing with conflicts. Unfortunately, for children of parental divorce, they are learning the unhealthy ways of dealing with marital stress due to the poor examples that were set by their parents.

Children of divorce have developed poor models of conflict resolution through observing their parents (Reese-Weber & Kahn, 2005). "As children observe extensive conflict between parents, they may develop conflict – prone and dysfunctional relationship behaviors through modeling" (Riggio, 2004). While a marriage is not necessarily rosy for the parents of intact families, the children are learning to expect that there will be ups and downs even in the most successful marriages, but that the bad times can be handled and overcome. "For children of divorce, the parents' interactions – including the courtship, the marriage, and the divorce – collapsed into a black hole, as if the parents as a unified couple had vanished from the world and from the child's inner life" (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004).

Saunders, Behrens, and Halford (1999) conducted a study involving parental divorce and communication quality in children's romantic relationships. Communication is the key to a healthy relationship; therefore, it is not surprising that those children of parental divorce that witnessed unhealthy communication would develop their own unhealthy relationships. Both verbal and non verbal communication was negative in couples in which the woman experienced the divorce of her parents. Also found with these couples were "…lower rates of positive problem-focused behavior and reported

higher rates of negative self-referent and lower rates of positive partner-referent, cognitive self-statements" (Saunders, Behrens, & Halford, 1999). According to the study, those relationships that experienced the most difficulty were ones in which the woman had experienced the divorce of her parents (Saunders et al, 1999).

Other researchers set out to show that parental divorce has relational and attitudinal effects on adult children through social learning. "Results replicated the intergeneration transmission of divorce as well as higher family conflict, more negative attitudes toward marriage, greater likelihood of marriage to a previously divorced person, and a decreased likelihood of currently being in a close relationship as a function of parental divorce" (Segrin, Taylor, & Altman, 2005). The results were viewed in a social learning framework; all of these negative experiences of children of divorce are due to the behaviors they witnessed in their parents.

Social/Observational Learning and Behaviors

Is social learning the vehicle by which violence infiltrated families? There are several studies that offer strong support for observational learning. One study in particular clearly supports the idea of observational learning. The researchers of this study found that "children reported to witness more aggression also were reported to behave more aggressively" (Onskiw and Hayduk, 2001). Turner (2008) explored a potential connection between conflict resolution in parents' marriages compared to techniques employed by their children in conflicts between siblings. The results showed connections between the two situations. In resolving their disputes, siblings were found to be using the same conflict resolution styles as their parents which lends support to

social learning theory (Turner, 2008). Similarly, another study of interest looked into the effects of witnessing parental violence on future behaviors of children in their relationships. "Men who reported witnessing threat or use of a weapon in parental violence were more likely than not to have threatened to use or have actually used a weapon against an intimate partner" (Murrell, Merwin, Christoff, & Henning, 2005).

Skuja and Halford (2004) delved into a similar topic in their study. The conflict resolution of men that come from families with a background of violence was studied in a social learning framework. Results showed that "...conflict management deficits and aggression evident in the exposed [to violence] group suggest that these partners are at high risk for future relationship aggression and distress (Skuja & Halford, 2004).

Kocur (2008) also wished to look into how behavior is learned through observation. His findings were that "...anger and anger expression children observe in both their parents' intimate relationships and in the parent-child relationship is related to their later experience and expression of anger in their adult partnered relationships" (Kocur, 2008). Supporting this study, Hall (1995), found that children used the same form of conflict resolution as their parents. In particular, the study found that "...children whose parents use physically aggressive means of conflict resolution were more aggressive and negative in their own problem solving" (Hall, 1995). Another study looked at observational learning outside of family structure. Results linked viewing violence on television to delinquent behavior in children (Lukesch, 1988).

Theories on parental training also offer support to the observational learning theory. In looking into effective techniques in dealing with correcting behavior, training

parents in social learning theory proved to be effective (White, McNally, & Cartwright-Hatton, 2003). Another study found that "mothers who reported being less warm and responsive in parenting reported that their children were more aggressive, had more internalizing behaviors, and had fewer prosocial behaviors" (Onskiw & Hayduk, 2001). This could also be applied to maternal stress during parental divorce. Many times mothers exhibit these characteristics during stressful adjustment periods surrounding parental divorce, which could contribute to the difficulties that children have throughout their lifetimes.

<div align="center">Nature vs. Nurture</div>

Other studies suggest that the intergenerational transmission of divorce has more to do with genetics than social learning. The idea of a genetic factor is supported by the fact that divorce is more common among monozygotic twins than among dizygotic twins (Amato & Booth, 2001). This gives "credence to the notion that genes predispose people to engage in behaviors that increase the risk of marital disruption" (Jockin, McGue, & Lykken, 1996; McGue & Lykken, 1992). Witnessing the behaviors of the parents and having a poor working model of a healthy relationship may not be the problem as much as having the same propensity towards certain behaviors. "For example, parents may bring personal characteristics to their marriages that increase the risk of marital discord, and these characteristics may be passed on to children through genetic inheritance" (Amato & Booth, 2001). According to this theory, the behaviors are genetically a part of the individuals rather than picked up through observational learning. Research has found that there are particular character traits that increase the likelihood of marriages ending in divorce. In their study, Amato and Booth (2001) discovered a positive correlation

between certain aspects of the parent's marriage and the offspring's marriage such as, instability problems, lack of happiness, and high levels of conflict (Amato & Booth, 2001). Is it possible that due to nature, genes predispose individuals to divorce or are their traits being shaped through observation? Amato and Booth (2001) stated before conducting their study that if behaviors that increase the likelihood of divorce are not genetic, then they must be learned. "Parental traits also may be passed on to children indirectly through parental socialization practices" (Amato & Booth, 2001). This is easily evident when a small child is witnessed yelling at a playmate in a way that an adult would yell at another during an argument. The child most likely picked up this behavior by observing the same behavior in his or her parents during an argument.

Offspring of Divorce and Marital Beliefs

There are a wide range of studies that have been conducted which support the connection between parental divorce and the later dissolution of the marriages of children. It is not merely a coincidence that the marriages of both parents and children end in divorce. One particular study found that both men and women from non-intact families are more likely to experience divorce in their own marriages than are children from intact families (Tucker, Friedman, Schwartz, Criqui, Tomlinson-Keasey, Wingard, & Martin, 1997).

The results of a study conducted by Dr. Judith Wallerstein showed that children whose parents divorced have a great amount of fear going into their own adult relationships. "At young adulthood, when love, sexual intimacy, commitment, and marriage take center stage, children of divorce are haunted by the ghosts of their parents'

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divorce and are frightened that the same fate awaits them" (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). While it is possible for these fears to be overcome, it is a very difficult and painful process to do so. Even when fear is gone, children then need to learn how to act in a relationship. Because they only witnessed the incorrect way, they have to focus on not falling back into old patterns. Instead, they need to learn the give and take that is involved in having a successful relationship with another individual.

Franklin et al. (1990) found that their results supported Wallerstein's findings. The participants of the study were college students, some of which hailed from intact families that served as a basis for comparison to the students that hailed from non-intact families. "Results indicated that the life event of parental divorce is related to the college-aged students' beliefs that they will have less successful future marriages" (Franklin et al, 1990). Children of divorce feel vulnerable in relationships and they are afraid of ultimately being hurt. Although these individuals do plan on being married, they are still "...apprehensive about the possible breakup of their own future marriages" (Franklin et al, 1990).

The participants in Wallerstein's study felt that any relationship that they entered into would be jinxed and that it would ultimately end. Many were stuck in the mindset that without marriage there will be no divorce, so they avoid it altogether in order to avoid their horrible fate of marital dissolution (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). Even individuals that have been involved in successful relationships that have lasted a significant amount of time still cannot shake the feelings that their marriage will ultimately fail. One man in Wallerstein's study reported such an experience. He has been in a loving relationship for years and has nothing but positive things to say about his

partner and the good things that she has brought to his life. While he cannot perceive himself with anyone other than her, he still has negative feelings whenever he thinks about marriage. All of the sadness and negative feelings that he experienced as a child involving the divorce of his parents comes back to haunt him when his own possible marriage is discussed (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). According to a study conducted by Keith and Finlay (1998), this individual is not alone. The results of the study showed that the likelihood of male offspring of parental divorce to marry at all was very small (Keith & Finlay, 1998).

It is possible that these negative views of marriage become a self fulfilling prophecy. If children of divorce so strongly believe that their marriages will fail, they will be almost waiting for it to happen. At the first signs of conflict, these individuals may simply throw their hands in the air in defeat without a fight, under the belief that divorce was bound to happen to them. "Even those in apparently stable, satisfactory marriages and relationships had a sense of unease, a strong foreboding that their happiness might be short lived, they somehow did not deserve to be in a happy, long-lasting union" (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). These individuals reported feeling helpless in the face of conflict within their relationships.

Some children of divorce have a slippery slope view of their relationships in that a small conflict is just the beginning of a chain of events that will lead to the demise of their relationships. At the first sign of relationship trouble, the "…first response [of children of divorce] was panic, followed by the wish to flee" (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004). To children from non-intact families, divorce is more a part of their reality than it is for children from intact families. "Given their experience with their parents' marital

breakup, it is not unreasonable for such individuals to regard their own marriages with greater caution and pessimism" (Franklin et al, 1990).

Franklin et al. (1990) concluded that this is due to the fact that "...divorce is more available as an event...and therefore more likely to be regarded as a common or frequent occurrence" (Franklin et al, 1990). Barber and Eccles (1992) also found this to be true with the discovery that "...women perceive the option to leave a bad marriage as viable, and choosing to leave a marriage may be positive for these women and reflect their personal courage" (Barber & Eccles, 1992). These individuals justify divorce by stating that "...it is better to terminate an unhappy marriage than to stay in it" (Barber & Eccles, 1992). However, children of divorce lack the tools to work out marital problems. In reality, it may not be a bad marriage, but the offspring of parental divorce do not perceive it in this way. Instead, they see problems and then they see divorce as the answer. This is supported by the results of a study conducted by Riggio (2004), which concluded that children of divorce may be prone to ending marriages more quickly because they view it as the resolution of conflict (Riggio, 2004). All these individuals know is the dissolution of marriage as a result of conflict. Their lack of a model of healthy relationships prevents them from knowing first hand that conflict does not cause a relationship to end.

Riggio and Weiser (2008) discovered that "recollections of high parental conflict are associated with greater relationship conflict, and individuals with divorced parents report more negative marriage attitudes" (Riggio & Weiser, 2008). High conflict parental divorce causes children to "...develop expectations of low support, high conflict, and poor outcomes in their personal relationships" (Riggio, 2004). On the other hand, is conflict actually the main causal factor in the intergeneration transmission of divorce?

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One particular study found that negative relationship qualities exist for children of parental divorce regardless of the amount of conflict that was witnessed. Results showed that parental divorce results in "…lower quality and higher insecurity in children's romantic relationships, even beyond the effects of marital conflict" (Yu, 2007).

When it comes to relationship confidence, children of parental divorce are severely lacking. Women from non-intact families reported less commitment and confidence in their romantic relationships. "Further, they reported less perceived confidence in being able to make their own upcoming marriages last" (Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2008). Another study found significant results solely among a population of women. "Compared with women from intact families, women from divorced families reported less trust and satisfaction, but more ambivalence and conflict" (Jacquet & Surra, 2001). When reviewing negative marital beliefs among students, it was determined that those from non-intact families had significantly lower expectations of experiencing high marital quality than did students from intact families (Boyer-Pennington, Pennington, & Spink, 2001). Lastly, Amato (1996) found that children of parental divorce are more at risk for their marriages ending in divorce due to the fact that they exhibit the behaviors that "…interfere with the maintenance of mutually rewarding intimate relationships" (Amato, 1996).

Attachment Styles and Divorce

Psychologist John Bowlby stressed the importance of forming attachments early in life. According to Bowlby and other psychologists interested in attachment, there are three different types of attachment. A secure attachment is the most positive type which

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results from the needs of the infant being consistently met by caregivers. On the other hand, an avoidant attachment is formed when the infant's needs are not consistently met. For circumstances in which the infant's needs are inconsistently met, an anxious/ambivalent attachment style is formed.

Later, Hazan and Shaver took attachment styles out of the infant/caregiver framework and applied these same three attachment styles to adult relationships. However, this was taken a step further by Bartholomew and Horowitz who expanded on the attachment styles. Their model included four attachment styles: secure, preoccupied, fearful avoidant, and dismissive avoidant (Kilmann, Carranza, & Vendemia, 2006).

Depending on the type of attachment formed with the caregivers, children will either establish positive or negative relationships later in life. It is important to look at attachment styles when dealing with divorce because this life event can make it difficult to form positive attachments to parents, which will haunt the children later in life when attempting to form adult romantic relationships. Researchers Hayashi and Stickland (1998) concluded that children's future romantic relationships suffer not because parental divorce occurred by because of potentially negative attachment styles that form due to parental divorce (Hayashi & Stickland, 1998).

"Attachment theory would predict that particular parent characteristics, such as psychological control, coercion, autonomy granting, warmth, distance, absence, and expressions of affection should have differential effects on offspring's orientation to close relationships" (Kilmann et al, 2006). The occurrence of divorce can make an impact on these characteristics. For example, parental warmth and expressions of

affection may decrease due to the frustration and many other negative feelings surrounding the divorce. Also, the child may encounter the absence of a parent due to divorce. When this is the case, the children's attachment suffers causing them to become wary of their partners when committing to adult relationships. Lopez, Melendez, and Rice (2000) found that parental marital status does in fact have an effect on the attachment styles that are formed.

Children of divorce are most likely to fear being abandoned by a romantic partner due to a preoccupied attachment style. Parental conflict was associated with children's fears of their own romantic relationships dissolving and being left alone and hurt (Hayashi & Stickland, 1998). "Those with a fearful-avoidant attachment pattern fear rejection, have difficulty trusting others, and avoid intimacy" (Kilman et al, 2006).

In a study conducted by Crowell, Trebox, and Brockmeyer (2009) the purpose was to determine the role that attachment styles play in the intergenerational transmission of divorce. The results found that the formation of an insecure attachment to primary caregivers was related to the increased odds of divorce. Those individuals that were able to maintain healthy attachment styles despite parental divorce were less likely to have their own future marriages end in divorce (Crowell, Trebox, and Brockmeyer, 2009).

Previous research exploring the occurrence of parental divorce and attachment styles found that "…compared to children from intact families, children of divorced parents are less securely attached, are less adjusted, and report greater relationship problems" (Kilmann et al, 2006). The hypotheses of the current study by Kilmann et al. (2006) were based off of prior results.

First, it was predicted that due to divorce decreased parental involvement, including a decrease in emotional availability, will cause insecure attachment styles. Second, divorce makes an impact on the relationships between children and parents by decreasing the quality of the relationships. The third goal was to explore the fact that the results of previous research studies have shown that as children from non-intact families struggle with trusting a romantic partner as well as committing emotionally to an adult relationship (Kilmann et al, 2006).

The first hypothesis was supported by the results which showed that the participants from the intact group had a more secure attachment than was reported from the participants from the non-intact group. Parent characteristics were rated according to the following six criteria: good, doting, distant, absent, seductive, and demanding. Attachment styles correspond with the characteristics that are reported. The results from this part of the study supported the hypotheses and prior research which showed that the six parental characteristics will affect attachment styles. "Absent, seductive, and demanding father characteristics and demanding mother characteristics were linked to a preoccupied attachment pattern" (Kilmann et al, 2006).

This situation would be common in divorce because many times the father becomes absent. When he is around he becomes seductive by trying to win the love of his children through lavishing them with gifts and special surprises. A demanding mother is also common in parental divorce situations because she finds herself alone faced with raising her children and supporting herself financially. This may lead to an increase in the delegation of house work which ultimately leads to more demands are placed on children. All this causes the preoccupied attachment which leaves the children

with fears of being abandoned by future partners. Also, due to anxiety and the need to be reassured children with a preoccupied attachment styles may place demands on their significant other in an attempt to reassure themselves that the relationship will last, which is not a behavior which would contribute to healthy adult relationships (Kilmann et al, 2006).

Surprisingly, the fourth hypothesis involving interpersonal trust was not supported by the current study. The results showed that equal levels of interpersonal trust were reported by children from intact and non-intact families. However, the bottom line is that attachment styles do have an effect on the future relationships of children and the occurrence of divorce ultimately has a negative impact on the formation of secure attachment styles. Therefore, it is important to not forget how every action of parents during a divorce is affecting the children and their future well being in their own relationships; whether it is through what they are picking up through observational learning or a direct result of how they are treated by the parents.

Effects of Partner Selection

Since divorce is becoming more common, it is important to identify the reasons behind the large number of divorces. Is it possible that many divorces are occurring because at least one of the individuals in the marriage comes from a family where the parents are divorced rather than from an intact family? As the number of divorces climb, the likelihood that two people who hail from divorced parents will enter into holy matrimony increases as well.

The term homogamy is a "marriage based on similarity" (Wolfinger, 2002).

Many people marry because of shared religious beliefs, interests, and ethnic backgrounds, just to name a few. Therefore, it is probable that children of divorce are being attracted to one another because of this shared experience in their lifetimes. "Parental divorce provides a broad common ground of painful and poignant experiences" (Wolfinger, 2002). While homogamy usually corresponds with marital satisfaction, it is likely to correspond with marital dissatisfaction and divorce in this case (Wolfinger, 2002). This is due to the fact that the two individuals are both bringing ill equipped views and ideas of how a successful marriage works. They watched their parents experience conflict within their marriages and the ultimate result was divorce. Therefore, if both partners are children of divorce they are more likely to view divorce as a solution to conflicts rather than exploring other options, such as marriage counseling (Wolfinger, 2003).

Children of divorce have empathy while people that have not experienced parental divorce do not; they understand the painful experiences that many times accompany parental divorce. In other words, they truly know what it is like to experience the divorce of one's parents. Whereas, this is something that is hard to fully comprehend for an individual that was raised by parents that experienced martial satisfaction. Another explanation for homogamy is the fact that children of divorce have similar negative views of marriage. It is also thought that it is easier for individuals from non-intact families to relate to one another, possibly due to negative feelings towards people from intact families, such as jealousy (Wolfinger, 2002). Unfortunately, statistics are not of the side of these individuals. Studies have shown that "marriages between people from divorced

families are even more likely to fail than are unions in which only one spouse experienced parental divorce" (Wolfinger, 2002).

Prior research regarding this topic is limited because it has focused on marriages in which only one individual comes from a family which was not intact. However, there have been a few studies which have looked into the occurrence of parental divorce in both husbands and wives. These studies have supported the hypothesis of Wolfinger's current study. Bumpass, Martin, and Sweet (1991) found that a marriage where only one individual is from a non-intact family would have a better outcome than one in which both individuals were from non-intact families. One huge limitation of this study is that it included non-intact families that resulted from the death of a parent rather than strictly the divorce being the cause of the status (Wolfinger, 2002). This is a flaw because there is "evidence that parental death does not adversely affect offspring marital behavior" (Wolfinger, 2002). Different psychological issues come into play with the death of a parent. As previously mentioned, it is believed that part of the reason why children of divorce struggle in their later relationships is because they lack a working model of a healthy relationship as well as all of the conflict they witnessed before and or after the divorce. In the case of the death of a parent, these factors are not necessarily present. The parents could have had a wonderful relationship leaving the child only to cope with the death of the parent and therefore move on to have success in future romantic relationships.

There were two studies that focused strictly on the children of divorced parents. Amato and Rogers (1997) found that when both spouses are children of divorce, the intergenerational transmission of divorce is significantly higher. One reason behind this

is that both parties are bringing impaired interpersonal skills to the marriage as a result of the dissolution of the marriages of their parents. According to Amato, "a marriage containing only one child of divorce is more likely to survive if the other spouse brings care and patience to the relationship (Wolfinger, 2002). When this is not the case, and both spouses are from non-intact families, the result is increased marital discord (Wolfinger, 2002).

The following two hypotheses from Wolfinger's current study are of interest here: "Parental divorce increases the likelihood of marrying a fellow child of divorce; Marriages between two children of divorce are more likely to fail than unions containing only one spouse from a divorced family" (Wolfinger, 2002). The results of Wolfinger's study proved to be consistent with prior research. In support of the first hypothesis, Wolfinger found that "parental divorce increases the likelihood of choosing a spouse from a divorced family by 58%" (Wolfinger, 2002). The results also presented evidence that marriages in which only one spouse is from an intact family will have better chances of being successful unions than marriages in which both spouses are from non-intact families. In these cases, marriages are more than three times as likely to end in divorce as are marriages in which the spouses are from intact families (Wolfinger, 2002). With evidence of a cycle of divorce continuing with a second generation, are there measures that can prevent children of divorce from becoming divorced themselves? Why are these unions so prone to failure and is there anything that can be done to prevent the cycle of divorce?

Parental Divorce and General Effects on Children

The occurrence of parental divorce is a major life event for children. Life as they knew it has changed significantly with different living arrangements, potentially different schools, and the absence or limited contact with one parent. As with all major life changes, the effects on children due to divorce is likely wide spread and long term. Many studies have found that children of divorce experience adjustment problems and self-esteem issues, just to name a few, which if lasting into adulthood could contribute to the downfall of their own romantic relationships.

Researchers found a positive correlation between experiencing parental conflict and low self-esteem in children. Later in life, the existence of low self-esteem is connected to reportedly low levels of marital satisfaction (Zander, 1995). Compared to children from intact families, those from non-intact families are more likely to have decreased well-being into adulthood. This includes "…psychological well-being, marital quality, and the frequency of contact with both mothers and fathers" (Amato & Booth, 1991). Additional findings of this study show that children exhibit behavioral problems and low self-esteem leading to adult maladjustment (Amato & Booth, 1991).

Bing, Nelson and Wesolowski (2009) also explored the effect that parental divorce and high levels of conflict has on children. It was discovered that high levels of conflict has a negative effect on the ability of children to cope (Bing, Nelson, and Wesolowski, 2009). Another similar study found that, "children of divorce reported significantly more substance-using friends and less use of coping and social skills than children whose parents had not divorced" (Neher and Short, 1998). Morrison and Coiro

(1999) compared levels of parental conflict to the manifestation of behavior problems in children of divorce. Results showed an "...association with increases in behavior problems in children [of divorce], regardless of the level of conflict between parents" (Morrison & Coiro, 1999). Lakin (1995) also investigated the effects of parental conflict. The findings reported that there is a relationship between children's adjustment and interparental conflict. It was also discovered that when children feel as though they are "...'caught in the middle' between two hostile parents..." the result is significantly low reports of self-esteem (Lakin, 1995).

A few good indicators that children are struggling to deal with circumstances encountered in their lives are drops in school performance, shifts in personal relationships, and changes in mood. There is a large amount of research on parental divorce and its impact on children which found children of divorce exhibiting such behaviors. The researchers of one such study found that "...parental divorce or separation would create psychological stresses that would place children at risk emotionally, socially, and scholastically at least for a number of years" (Watt, Moore-head-Slaughter, Japzon, & Keller, 1990). Sun (2001) discusses that disruption in the well-being of adolescence begins before parental divorce occurs. During the dissolution of parental marriage, it was discovered that children begin to suffer psychologically, academically, and behaviorally (Sun, 2001).

Another study focusing on children's maladjustment following parental divorce found several areas in which children suffer. Children of divorce were found to have "...lower school performance, less education, more risky health behavior, earlier transition to parenthood and working life, and more abundant negative life events..."

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(Aro & Palosaari, 1992). Similarly, a study on adjustment to parental divorce found that "…children who experienced their parents' separation by the age of twelve years exhibited higher rates of behavioral problems and substance use, and lower levels of academic achievement and social adjustment, compared with children whose parents' marriages remained intact" (O'Connor, Caspi, DeFries, & Plomin, 2000). In a study conducted by Zudiker (2001), it was found that children of divorce exhibited "…loss of self-esteem, low capacities for emotional involvement and relationships, and negative changes in primary relationships since the divorce" (Zudiker, 2001). The researchers of another study regarding the effects of divorce on children found that a connection existed between the occurrence of parental divorce and antisocial personality disorder in children (Lahey, Hartdagen, Frick, McBurnett, Connor, & Hynd, 1988).

Keith and Finlay (1988) took the effects of parental divorce on children one step further into adulthood. They discovered that "…parental divorce is associated with lower educational attainment and earlier age at marriage for both sexes" (Keith & Finlay, 1988). Related research concluded that a causal relationship exists between parental divorce and the occurrence of the following in children: "…earlier initiation of sexual intercourse and emotional difficulties… [and] a greater probability of educational problems, depressed mood, and suicidal ideation" (D'Onofrio, Turkheimer, Emery, Heath, Madden, Slutske, & Martin, 2006). The following studies mainly focused on children of divorce and depression. Wauterickx, Gouwy, and Bracke (2006) "…found not only a direct influence of parental divorce on depression, but also an indirect effect through specific relationship characteristic in adulthood" (Wauterickx, Gouwy, & Bracke, 2006). Children of divorce in the final study reviewed showed significant

psychological difficulties. In comparison to children from intact families, those from non-intact families reported more depression and somatic complaints. Male children of divorce also reported higher rates of insomnia and anxiety (Christopoulos, 2001).

Summary

There is a large body of evidence that supports the notion that parental divorce does in fact have a negative impact on the future relationships of offspring. Some researchers feel that the conflict which comes along with parental divorce is more damaging than the divorce itself. Others feel that the poor outcomes of children are due to a lack of adjustment to parental divorce regardless of the amount of conflict that was witnessed. In either case, there is little doubt that parental divorce contributes to difficulties psychologically, academically, socially, behaviorally, and later leads to problems in romantic relationships.

One of the most consistent findings was that observational learning plays a large part in the intergenerational transmission of divorce. Even outside of the effects that social learning has on relationships, it has been proven that observation is a very effective learning tool. Therefore, it is not surprising that children are internalizing the unhealthy behaviors that are witnessed in their parents' marriages and later replicating the same behaviors, leading to the demise of their own romantic relationships.

Divorce is an extremely complicated subject. Each situation is so unique that it is difficult to generalize any research findings to all children that experience parental divorce. The key is to determine ways to improve the outcomes of these children. With the increase in the number of marriages that end in divorce, it is important for parents to

not get lost in their own struggles and to focus on their children's needs instead. More

emphasis on the psychological well-being of children of divorce can improve how

children deal with this life-altering experience and hopefully prevent them from having

marriages that are destined to fail.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The current study aimed to determine whether or not the occurrence of parental divorce has an effect on the attitudes of children towards their own romantic relationships. It has been discovered that numerous prior studies have found data supporting the current hypothesis.

Participants

A total of thirty six Rowan University students participated in the study. The surveys from four students were discarded due to the fact that they reported parental death. It has been proven that parental death does not have the same effect on the future relationships of the offspring. For this reason, the data was eliminated so as to paint the most accurate picture of the effects of parental divorce. Two participants reported that their parents were separated. For the purpose of the study, those two surveys were included in the non-intact family group.

The data analyzed was gathered from thirty two surveys; twenty participants made up the intact group while the non-intact group consisted of twelve participants. All participants were currently enrolled in undergraduate level psychology courses at Rowan

University. Anyone under the age of eighteen was asked to not participate in the current study.

Design

Several measures were used in order to attain a full picture of the ideas of children of divorce regarding their own romantic relationships. The first survey used was developed by the researcher. The Marital Belief Survey was mainly used for informational purposes. This is where participants were asked to report on their parents' marital status, their current relationship status, and their desire for marriage. Other questions were thought by the researcher to provide insight into the ideas and beliefs of children of divorce regarding their romantic relationships. The validity of this survey is questionable due to the fact that this is the first time in which it was used.

The other three measures in the study were used in prior research studies. The Multiple-Item Measure of Adult Romantic Attachment (MIMARA) was used to assess the presence of anxiety and avoidant behaviors regarding romantic relationships. It is a thirty six item self report questionnaire. MIMARA has been found to be a consistent measure of avoidance and anxiety in the prior studies in which it was used (Brennan, Clark, and Shaver, 1998). The second survey looked into the participants' experiences of conflict in their romantic relationships. Thirdly, the Romantic Assessment Scale (RAS) measured the degree to which participants reported being satisfied in their personal relationships. Participants responded to seven items such as how much they love their romantic partners and how satisfied they are or have been in their current or past romantic relationships meeting their original expectations. Low scores are associated

with low relationship satisfaction, while high scores are associated with high relationship satisfaction. In prior studies, this measure has been found to be a consistent measure and to have adequate validity (Hendrick, Dicke, and Hendrick, 1998).

Procedures

The surveys were posted online by the researcher. Undergraduate students in the Rowan University subject pool were able to review the overview and objectives of the study. If interested, subjects over the age of eighteen were able to choose to complete the survey. In saving the data, there was no identifying information kept with the responses.

Analysis

The hypothesis stated that the children that experienced the divorce of their parents would develop negative attitudes toward their own future romantic relationships as a result. The survey asked many questions that gave opportunities for participants to express their views on relationships. The responses were assessed for negative and positive attitudes. The kinds of responses were then compared to the reported marital status of the participants' parents. In three of the four measures used, the results were examined for correlations.

Summary

Surveys were developed and compiled from previous relevant studies. Once approved to be placed online for access by the Rowan University subject pool, the surveys were created in the online database. After completion, the responses were saved

and analyzed in order to gain insight into the attitudes regarding the romantic

relationships of children of divorce.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Based on prior research and observations, it was believed that the offspring of parental divorce would report much more negative views regarding the institution of marriage. The hypothesis of the current study was not supported by the research data. Only one participant exhibited the negative impact that parental divorce was anticipated to have on the romantic relationships of offspring. This individual has not been involved in a romantic relationship and reported to have no desire to enter into a relationship. The participant goes so far as to say that a happy relationship has never been witnessed. After seeing the heartbreak surrounding parental divorce, the idea that relationships end in heartbreak has been generalized to apply to all relationships in the mind of this participant.

In looking at the research question regarding whether or not children of divorce would wish to marry in the future, only one out of thirty two participants stated that they did not see themselves being married in the future. The individual was from the non-intact group. When asked to choose between two sentiments that best describe views held on marriages thirty participants selected that they believe in "til death to you part" while only two stated that they felt it should be revised to say "til divorce do you part". However, one of these individuals still reported a desire to be married someday.

As far as current relationship status, five in the divorce group were single, seven were dating, and none were married or engaged. In the married group, seven reported being single, twelve were dating, one was engaged, and none were married. Data from the fourth survey administered which assessed relationship satisfaction was insufficient. Not all participants responded to all questions so the data was not analyzed. However, in reviewing the scores it appeared that the participants from non-intact families only reported slightly less relationship satisfaction as compared to the reports of the participants from intact families.

When asked to report on feelings regarding disagreements, the majority in both groups felt that disagreements are normal and expected but do not predict or result in divorce. There were four out of twelve in the divorce group that responded that they believe disagreements are characterized by fighting and heated arguments. Only one participant selected that disagreements cause divorce. In the intact family group, three out of twenty felt that disagreements were represented by fighting and heated arguments. Again, in the non-intact group only one participant reported that disagreements represent the conflicts that end marriages and reported that disagreements can only be resolved in divorce.

It stood out that the most common response combination were the following three choices: disagreements are expected among married couples and are not predictors of divorce, disagreements are normal in marriages and they do not result in divorce, and disagreements are most likely in the form of calm discussion to work things out. Some of the individuals that reported the previous three statements also expressed that they perceive disagreements as fighting and heated arguments. Also, noted was the fact that

three out of twelve in the non-intact group reported the both of the following responses: disagreements are most likely in the form of fighting/heated arguments and disagreements are most likely in the form of calm discussions to work things out. Such individuals seem to be torn between two extremes.

The third survey that was administered assessed the level of conflict in romantic relationships. In Table 4.1 conflict score I represents the scores from the intact group while conflict score N represents the scores from the non-intact group. After analyzing the data for a potential correlation between the groups, it was determined that there was no significant difference in the scores. It had been anticipated that the group from non-intact families would have reported to have experienced more conflict in their current relationships. However, Table 4.1 clearly shows that this was not the case. Illustration 4.1 shows that group two, which represents the non-intact group, only showed a slightly higher level of reported conflict than group one from the intact group.

Table 4.1 Conflict Scores

Correlations

		ConflictScoreI	ConflictScoreN
ConflictScoreI	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.229
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.474
	N	20.000	12
ConflictScoreN	Pearson Correlation	.229	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.474	
	N	12	12.000

Illustration 4.1 Conflict Score Comparison
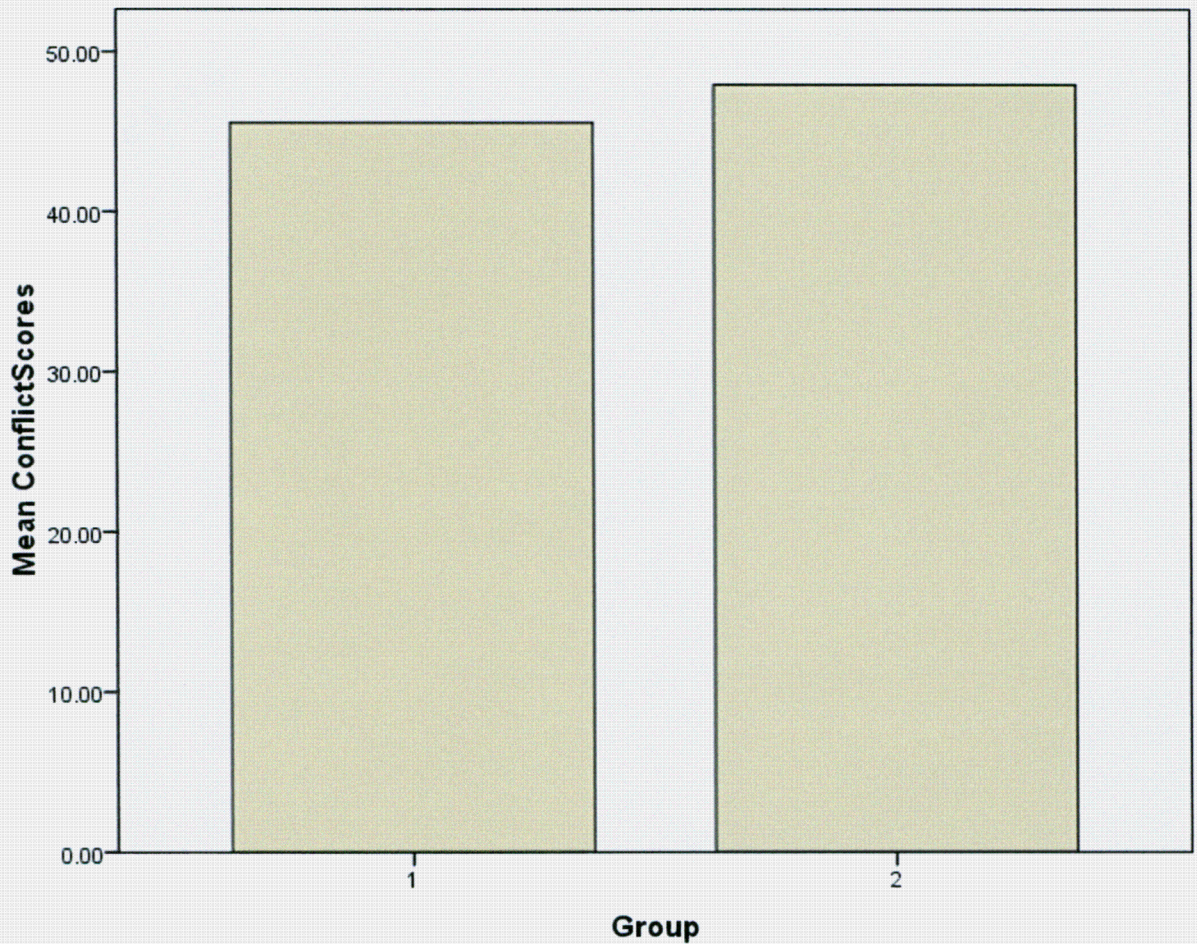
In response to the statement, "I do not often worry about being abandoned" from the MIMARA survey, the majority of the intact family group was in agreement. The non-intact family group had four agreements, five disagreements, and three participants reported neutral. This does not show the fear that had been anticipated from the non-intact group involving relationships dissolving and being alone. Responses from the MIMARA survey regarding avoidant behaviors were looked at using a correlational analysis. Table 4.2 shows that there was no significant difference found between the

groups with avoidant score I representing the intact group and avoidant score N

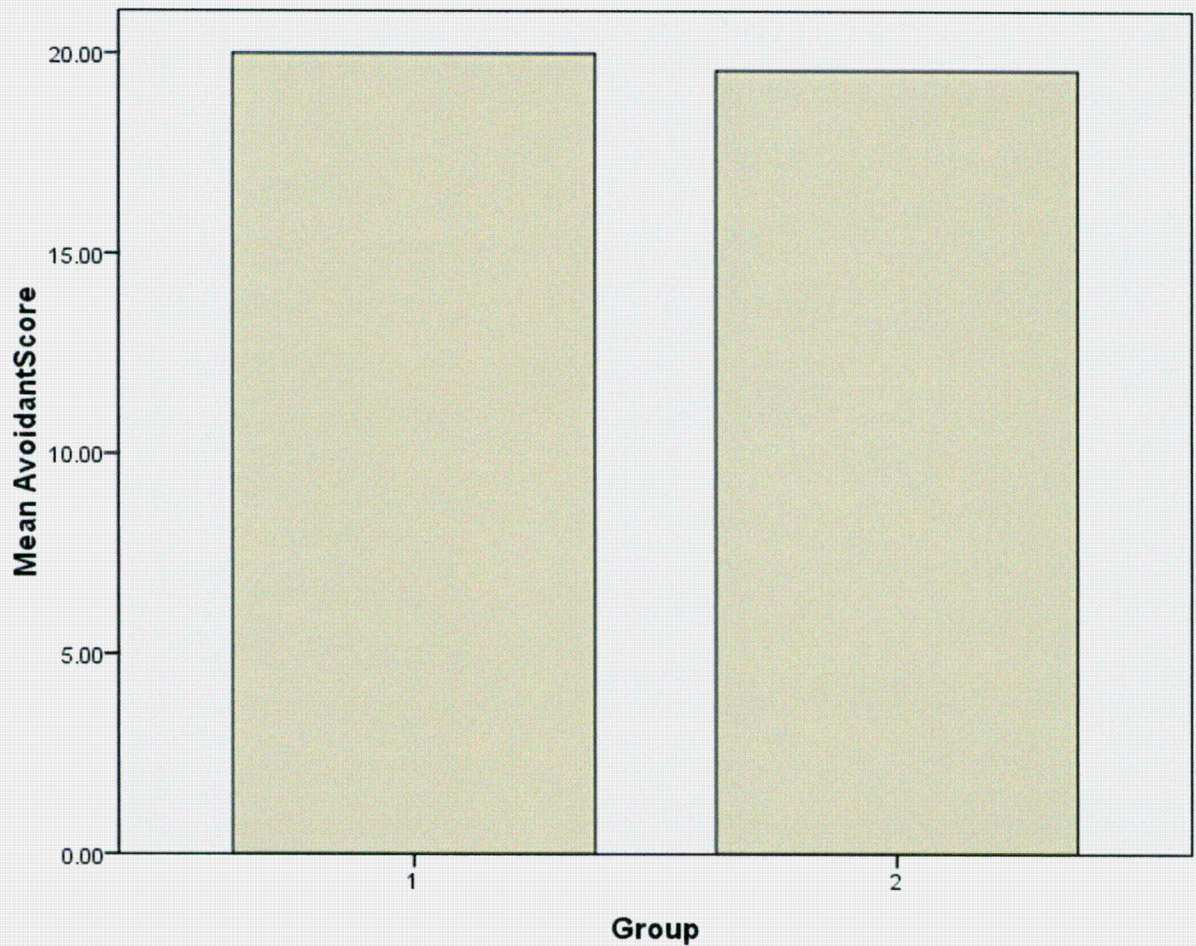representing the non-intact group.

Table 4.2 Avoidant Scores

Correlations

		AvoidantScoreI	AvoidantScoreN
AvoidantScoreI	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.181
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.574
	N	20.000	12
AvoidantScoreN	Pearson Correlation	.181	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.574	
	N	12	12.000

Illustration 4.2 clearly shows that both groups reported very close to the same

amount of avoidant behaviors in romantic relationships. Group one represents

participants from intact families and group two represents participants from non-intact

families. It had been anticipated that there would be many more avoidant behaviors

reported from the non-intact family group than from participants whose parents

remained married.

The MIMARA survey also addressed the presence of anxiety surrounding

romantic relationships. Again, it was assumed that there would be much higher levels of

anxiety reported from the participants from non-intact families regarding their current or

future relationships as compared to the participants from intact families. As with avoidant

behaviors, there was no significant correlation found between the groups. As shown in

Table 4.3 the two-tailed significance was actually less than that of the avoidant scores.

Illustration 4.2 Avoidant Score Comparison

Again, in Table 4.3 anxiety score I represents the intact group while anxiety score N represents the non-intact group. Illustration 4.3 shows how close the two groups were in the amount of anxiety that was reported. In this set of data, group one also represented the intact group and group two represented the non-intact group. Although group one reported slightly lower levels of anxiety, the mean scores in both groups fell in the range of high twenties.

Table 4.3 Anxiety Scores

Correlations

		AnxietyScoreI	AnxietyScoreN
AnxietyScoreI	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.270
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.395
	N	20.000	12
AnxietyScoreN	Pearson Correlation	.270	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.395	
	N	12	12.000

Illustration 4.3 Anxiety Score Comparison
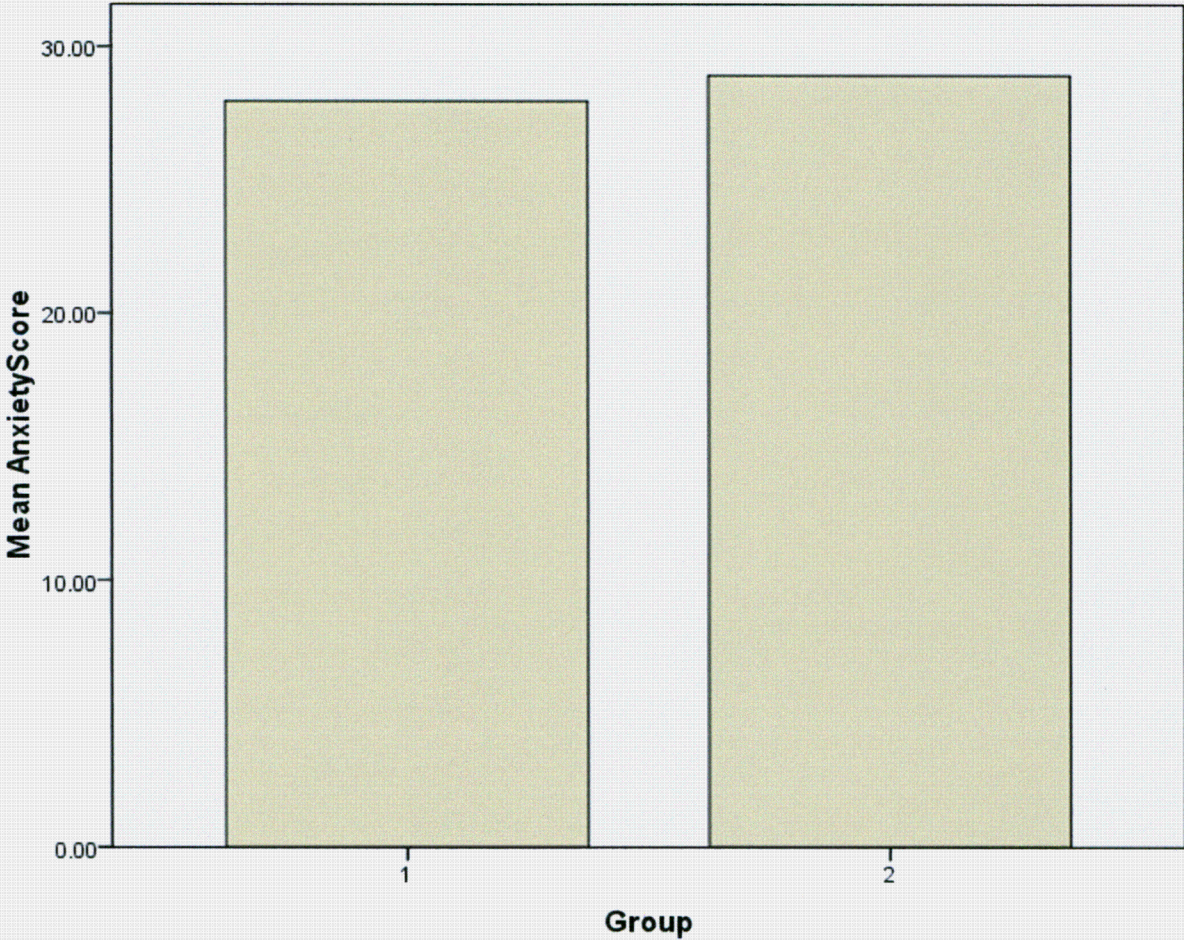
Overall, the research data in the current study did not lend support to the findings of prior research which looked into the effect that parental divorce has on the future romantic relationships of the offspring involved. None of the data showed that the individuals from non-intact families had anymore hesitancy to enter into romantic relationships than those from intact families. Also, the high levels of fear and anxiety regarding relationship failure was not found to be present in the non-intact group.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

While the research data did not offer support for the hypothesis, there are several limitations of the current study. Such limitations include the limited sample size. Also, the validity of the measures used is questionable. This mainly involves the scoring of the surveys since much liberty was taken in doing so.

Participants in this study were all undergraduate students enrolled in psychology courses at Rowan University. In return for participation in the study the students received course credit, as participation in such studies was a course requirement. Therefore, since the students were not exactly freely participating in the study, they may have not put as much time and effort into answering all questions with a high level of accuracy. Also, some of the students may have answered survey questions in a way in which they believed would be socially acceptable rather than being honest. For example, one question asked the participants to report on how satisfied they were in their current relationships meeting their original expectations. Rather than answering truthfully, the participants may have felt inclined to paint a more positive picture of a not so satisfying relationship.

Students of this age are very impressionable. In the majority of cases, they are branching out into the world on their own for the first time. As a society, it is ingrained

in us that we are to go to college, find a career, get married, and start a family. Since all participants were in college, this group of students may feel that it is expected of them to be married some day. Many times people confuse societal expectations with their own desires. Therefore, it is quite possible that participants reported a desire to marry in the future because they feel that is what they should do. Also, since participants were all undergraduate students, it is possible that the results of this study could not be generalized to larger populations. Maybe in ten years from now these students will have answered the survey questions much differently. It could be possible that a large and more diverse sample size would have yielded significantly different results.

The measures used in this survey, with the exception of one which was mainly used for informational purposes only, were used in previous studies and have been reported as highly reliable measures. However, for the purposes of the current study they were modified. First, the MIMARA survey consisted of thirty six self report questions in regard to avoidant behaviors and level of anxiety in romantic relationships. In the current study only nine questions addressing avoidant behaviors and nine questions addressing anxiety levels were looked at.

All surveys originally were designed to have participants respond to questions using a 7 point likert scale. Because the surveys for this study were administered online the scale was modified to accommodate a multiple choice framework. Rather than choosing a numerical value from a scale, the major points were placed into three to four multiple choice responses. This affected the scoring, so new scales for scoring the surveys were developed by the researcher.

In order to gain further insight on this topic, there are several implications for future research. Should this study be replicated, it is important that close attention be paid to group inclusion. For example, the data collected from individuals that experienced a parental divorce with much turmoil should be separated from the data collected from those that experienced a more peaceful parting. This will provide more clarity as to what aspects of divorce impacts the thoughts and feelings of children towards marriage. Also, it is important that both non-intact and intact group have an equal number of participants as not to skew the accuracy of the data. It is possible that the age of the child during the time of parental divorce could have altered the long term effects of the occurrence. Therefore, age should also be considered in future studies. With attention paid to those details, the results may have reported more in favor of the hypothesis.

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APPENDICES

"The Effects of Parental Divorce on the Views of Romantic Relationships and Marriages of the Children Involved": Survey Questions

Please circle the marital status of your parents: Married   Divorced   Other

If other, please explain.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please place a check next to your current relationship status:

_____ Single

_____ Dating

_____ Engaged

_____ Married

If you are currently in a relationship, what is the length of the relationship?
_____   weeks   months   years

Do you see yourself potentially marrying your current partner? Please choose one: YES or NO

If no, why not?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please select the letter of the statement that best fits your point of view:

   a.   I believe fully in the institution of marriage and that "till death do us part" is
        attainable.
   b.   I believe that marriage vows should be revised to say "till divorce do us part".

Please select the letter of the statement that best fits your ideas on marriage counseling:

a. It is a waste of time.
b. It may work for some couples, but I cannot see myself ever going to marriage counseling
c. It saves marriages.

How many serious relationships have you been involved in? _____

What has been the downfall of previous relationships?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Do you see yourself being married someday?   Please choose one: YES   NO   MAYBE

If you did not circle yes, why is it that you do not see yourself being married or are unsure?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Please select the letter(s) of the statement(s) that best fits your thoughts on disagreements in marriages:

a. Disagreements are expected among married couples and are not predictors of divorce.
b. Disagreements represent conflicts that end marriages.
c. Disagreements cannot be resolved, except in divorce.
d. Disagreements are normal in marriages and they do not result in divorce.
e. Disagreements are most likely in the form of fighting/heated arguments.
f. Disagreements are most likely in the form of calm discussions to work things out.

APPENDIX B

MIMARA

Experiences in Close Relationships

Instructions: The following statements concern how you feel in romantic relationships. We are interested in how you generally experienced relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Respond to each statement by indicating how much you agree or disagree with it.
Write the number in the space provided, using the following rating scale:

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

___ 1. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.

___ 2. I worry about being abandoned. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.

___ 3. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.

___ 4. I worry a lot about my relationships.

___ 5. Just when my partner starts to get close to me I find myself pulling away.

___ 6. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.

___ 7. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.

___ 8. I worry a fair amount about losing my partner.

___ 9. I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.

___10. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him/her.

___11. I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.

___12. I often want to merge completely with romantic partners, and this sometimes scares them away.

___13. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.

___14. I worry about being alone.

___15. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.

___16. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.

___17. I try to avoid getting too close to my partner.

___18. I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.

___19. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.

___20. Sometimes I feel that I force my partners to show more feeling, more commitment.

___21. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.

___22. I do not often worry about being abandoned.

___23. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.

___24. If I can't get my partner to show interest in me, I get upset or angry.

___25. I tell my partner just about everything,

___26. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.

___27. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.

___28. When I'm not involved in a relationship, I feel somewhat anxious and insecure.

____29. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.
____30. I get frustrated when my partner is not around as much as I would like.
____31. I don't mind asking romantic partners for comfort, advice or help.
____32. I get frustrated when my partner is not around as much as I would like.
____33. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.
____34. When romantic partners disapprove of me, I feel really bad about myself.
____35. I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.
____36. I resent it when my partner spends time away from me.

Romantic Conflict Style Scale

Below are descriptions of how people in four different types of relationships handle conflict. We would like you to see which type most clearly describes how you and your partner deal with conflict in your relationship. Respond to each statement by writing the number in the space provided, using the following scale:

1= Never 2=Rarely 3= Sometimes   4= Often 5= Very Often

____ In our relationship, conflicts may be fought on a grand scale, and that is okay, since our making up is even grander

____ We think it is better to "agree to disagree" rather than end up in a discussion that will result in a deadlock

____ In our relationship, when we are having conflict, we let each other know the other's opinions are valued and their emotions valid, even if we disagree with each other

____ We argue often and hotly. There are a lot of insults back and forth, name calling, put-downs, and sarcasm

____ We have volcanic arguments, but they are just a small part of a warm and loving relationship

____ Even when discussing a hot topic, we display a lot of self-control and are calm.

____ We don't really listen to what the other is saying, nor do we look at each other very much

____ Although we argue, we are still able to resolve our differences. In fact, our passion and zest for fighting actually lead to a better relationship, with a lot of making up, laughing, and affection

____ Sometimes I enjoy a good argument with my partner

____ In our relationship, conflict is minimized

____ When fighting, we spend a lot of time validating each other as well as trying to persuade our partner, or trying to find a compromise

____ One or the other of us can be quite detached and emotionally uninvolved, even though there may be brief episodes of attack and defensiveness

____ We don't think much is to be gained from getting openly angry with each other.

In fact, a lot of talking about disagreements seems to make matters worse

___ The feeling of togetherness is very central to our relationship

___ We feel that if you just relax about problems, they will have a way of working themselves out

___ There are clearly more negatives than positives in our relationship.

APPENDIX D

Relationship Assessment Scale

1. How well does your partner meet your needs?

A	B	C	D	E
Poorly		Average		Extremely Well

2. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

A	B	C	D	E
Unsatisfied		Average		Extremely Satisfied

3. How good is your relationship compared to most?

A	B	C	D	E
Poor		Average		Excellent

4. How often do you wish you hadn't gotten in this relationship?

A	B	C	D	E
Never		Average		Very often

5. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?

A	B	C	D	E
Hardly at all		Average		Completely

6. How much do you love your partner?

A	B	C	D	E
Not much		Average		Very much

7. How many problems are there in your relationship?

A	B	C	D	E
Very few		Average		Very man