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DOES THE TIMING OF DIVORCE MATTER?
PARENTAL DIVORCE, INTERPARENTAL CONFLICT, AND YOUNG ADULT
WELL-BEING

by

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A thesis

Presented to the faculty of

Towson University

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Art

Department of Psychology

Towson University


Towson, Maryland 21252

August, 2014

TOWSON UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

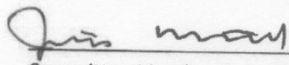
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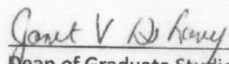
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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my thesis advisor and committee chair, Kim Shifren, Ph.D. for all of her help and support throughout this process. I truly could not have asked for a better person to guide me through this experience. I would also like to thank my committee members, Justin Buckingham, Ph.D., and Jonathan Mattanah, Ph.D., for all of the helpful suggestions they gave me as I made my way through this process. I would like to acknowledge the important role my family, friends, and particularly my fiancé, have played in keeping me sane these past couple of years. They listened to my complaints and worries and, though they did not always understand what I was talking about, were supportive and loving. I am grateful that I have been surrounded by so many amazing and helpful people throughout this graduate program and will never forget how many people helped me through this process.

Abstract

The present study compared participants from intact families to those from families where parental divorce occurred before the participant was 18 years old and families where the divorce occurred after the participant was 18 years old. The groups were compared on levels of interparental conflict, mother and father attachment, relationship anxiety, and relationship satisfaction. The intact group reported having less interparental conflict while growing up, a more secure attachment to their mothers and fathers, less relationship anxiety, and more relationship satisfaction than participants from the two divorce groups. There were no differences between the two divorce groups on any of the study variables.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Divorce is a common occurrence in American society, with roughly half of all marriages ending in divorce. Currently roughly 24% of children are living in a single parent household (Payne, 2013). Researchers have examined both the positive and negative effects of divorce on children from these families (Gustavson, Health, Nilson, Ørstavik, & Røysamb, 2014; Kim & Woo, 2011; Lansford, 2009; Riggio 2004). Despite the large literature on children from divorce and their experiences, there is much less information available on those who experience their parents' divorce after they turn 18. Emerging adults (18 to 25 year olds) and those in young adulthood go through many important experiences (Arnett, 2000, 2006), including going to college (Bianchi & Spain, 1996), serious dating (Roscoe, Dian, & Brooks, 1987), exploring unusual work or volunteer experiences, such as the Peace Corps (Arnett, 2000), and examining their worldviews (Arnett, 2000). The effects of parental divorce at this time period are important to study. Researchers currently do not know if there are any differences between individuals whose parents divorced before they were 18 and those whose parents divorced after they turned 18.

In the present study several key variables are assessed that may help in our understanding of possible similarities and differences between those whose parents divorced before they turned 18 and individuals whose parents divorced after they turned 18 years old. Though there may be many variables that can affect adult children of divorce, several variables that may play a key role in individuals' adult adjustment include interparental conflict, attachment, relationship anxiety, and relationship satisfaction. In this paper these variables will be described in detail followed by the hypotheses of the present study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Children and Divorce

Many researchers who have examined the relationship between parental divorce and offspring well-being have found that divorce can be correlated with negative experiences. Children with divorced parents can be more likely to grow up in poverty (Elliott & Simmons, 2011), display antisocial behaviors (Strohschein, 2005), become unemployed (Huurre, Junkkari, & Aro, 2006), suffer economic hardships (Wauterickx, Gouwy, & Bracke, 2006), experience depression (Amato, 2001), have lower levels of education (Amato & Cheadle, 2005), and lower levels of retrospective self-esteem (Goodman & Pickens, 2001).

Despite all of these negative experiences, other researchers have found that divorce can be correlated with positive experiences as well. Riggio (2004) found that American young adults who come from divorced families can experience closer and more satisfying relationships with their mothers. Riggio (2004) also found that young adults who come from divorced families have increased independence and decreased anxiety about participating in personal relationships compared to those who came from intact families. Arditti and Madden-Derdich (1995) found that divorced mothers are more likely to depend on their children for emotional support. Though this might lead researchers to expect a less satisfying relationship between a parent and child, Riggio's research shows that the relationship may not be harmed.

Bernstein, Keltner, and Laurent (2012) found that children of divorce showed more compassion, enthusiasm, and perspective taking as adults than their intact family counterparts. These children also have more mature attitudes toward financial matters,

increased self-reliance, a better understanding of their parents' strengths and weaknesses, more realistic views of marriage, a more willing attitude toward assuming personal or family responsibilities, increased expectation of performing household chores or caretaking tasks for younger siblings, and their own moral and ethical standards (Arditti, 1999; Springer & Wallerstein, 1983). Sever, Guttman and Lazar (2007) conducted a study that involved interviews and questionnaires completed by the participants. The questionnaires focused on family environment, the divorce process, how the participants are coping with the divorce, the long-term effects of the divorce, and an overall evaluation of the participants' experience with their parents' divorce. Sever, Guttman, and Lazar (2007) found that 50% of the participants in their study reported having more positive experiences, whereas less than 25% felt the negative experiences outweighed the positive. Specifically, the researchers reported that divorce was correlated with increased empowerment, empathy, and relationship savvy (Sever et al., 2007). While it is evident that divorce can negatively influence children, there is also evidence that some children flourish post-divorce.

Children Experiencing Divorce as Adults

Though children of divorce have been well-studied, children who experienced divorce as adults (CEDA) have received less attention from researchers. Statistics have shown that approximately 40% of marriages end in divorce by the couple's 50th anniversary. Specifically, 30% of marriages fail by the 18th anniversary, which implies that the remaining 10% of marriages fail between the 18th and 50th anniversaries (Kreider & Fields, 2001). It is likely that marriages that have lasted at least 18 years have produced children. The divorce rate for middle-aged and older adults has doubled over the past two

decades and in 2010 one out of four people who got divorced was over 50 years old (Brown & Lin, 2012). When these marriages fail, it is likely that adult children are the ones being affected, rather than minor children.

This group has not been well-researched, but there is a small group of researchers who have looked at this group including Cooney, Hutchinson, and Leather (1995); Fintushel and Hillard (1991); Greenwood (2012); and Pryor (1999). Cooney, Hutchinson, and Leather (1995) found that individuals who were involved in the divorce process typically had lower levels of parent-child intimacy. This trend does not occur, however, when parents are able to maintain positive post-divorce relationships. Cooney, Hutchinson, and Leather (1995) also found that when participants perceived that their parents were more able to financially assist them, they were more likely to have positive parent-child intimacy.

Greenwood (2012) interviewed 40 adult children of divorce and found that about half of them reported negative impacts of divorce on their relationship with one or both parents. There were a few participants, however, who cited positive changes to their parent-child relationship, such as developing a friendship with their parents.

In a study done by Fintushel and Hillard (1991), the CEDA reported feelings of abandonment, guilt, hopelessness, loss of trust, increase in spirituality, and stress over financial situations after their parents' divorce. Many participants also reported that their parents looked to them as a source of emotional support and as a confidant. Fintushel and Hillard point out that though parents may emotionally unload on their young children while they are going through their divorce, most parents seem to understand that there are some things you should not tell children. For example, many parents will not tell their young

children about ongoing affairs or secret drug usage. However, many CEDAs in Fintushel and Hillard's study reported that their parents often told them everything, sparing no details. This changes the parent-child dynamic into a peer-peer dynamic for many adult children and that can be a difficult change to accommodate.

Because of the limited research on CEDAs, it is difficult to definitively know how CEDAs and younger children differ in their experiences and reactions to parental divorce. More research is needed on this important group. Several variables that may play a key role in adult adjustment to divorce include interparental conflict, attachment, relationship anxiety, and relationship satisfaction. These variables are described in detail below followed by the hypotheses of the present study.

Interparental Conflict

Interparental conflict is defined as "disagreements between parents about various issues in family life" (Buehler, Krishnakumar, Anthony, Tittsworth, & Stone, 1994, p. 409). The level of conflict within a marriage prior to the divorce can affect how children of parental divorce respond to the dissolution of their parents' marriage (Amato & Booth, 1991; Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995; Booth & Edwards, 1990; Cui & Fincham, 2010; Kinsfogel & Grych, 2004; Riggio, 2004). Much research has been done on how marital conflict influences a child's adjustment to divorce. Some of the observed consequences of experiencing high interparental conflict are children experiencing poorer academic, social, and psychological outcomes (Amato & Booth, 1991; Amato & Keith, 1991); flawed conflict resolution skills (Booth & Edwards, 1990); lower romantic relationship quality (Cui & Fincham, 2010; Cui, Fincham, & Pasley, 2008); fear of conflict (Ahrons, 2004); lower

parent-child relationship quality (Amato & Afifi, 2006); difficulty relating to peers (Grych & Fincham, 1990); conduct disorders (Grych & Fincham, 1990); difficulty with authority figures (Grych & Fincham, 1990); and anxiety (Riggio, 2004).

In a study done by Noller and colleagues (2008), it was reported that there were higher levels of conflict in divorcing families when compared to married families. This was true for parent-parent, parent-child, and sibling conflict. Couples tended to fight about money primarily, but once separated or divorced, fights centered around the children. With this in mind, it is hypothesized that participants who have divorced parents will report having higher levels of interparental conflict than those from intact families.

The family conflict perspective states that a negative home environment is created when parents exhibit hostility toward one another. This negative environment leads children to experience stress, unhappiness, and possibly feelings that they are unsafe (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). This is true for both intact and divorced families that are high in conflict. However, research shows that as time passes after a divorce, children should begin to adjust quickly, unless there is continued conflict in their environment (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

It is important to note that researchers do not support the notion of “staying together for the kids” if the marriage is high in conflict. Amato and Booth (1991) found that chronic conflict between parents who decide to stay together can result in psychological difficulties for offspring. Other researchers have supported this idea. It is frequently better for the child to have his or her parents’ divorce than to have them remain in a marriage filled with conflict (Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995; Jekielek, 1998; Yu, Petit, Lansford, Dodge, & Bates 2010).

Cui, Fincham, and Pasley (2008) found that if individuals do not believe they can resolve a conflict with their partner, it is unlikely they will expend much effort discussing the issue. Researchers have also shown that parents' marital conflict is positively related to offspring relationship conflict behavior, which is related to relationship quality (Cui & Fincham, 2010). If a relationship is high in conflict, it is typically low in quality, which is likely to be considered less satisfying.

A study done by Hatch and Bulcroft (2004) showed that couples who have been married for over ten years tend to have less conflict than couples who have been married for a shorter period of time. It is possible that these individuals fought more when their marriage was newer, but as time has gone on they have learned better conflict resolution skills. Therefore, CEDA might have experienced higher levels of interparental conflict when they were younger, and as their parents' marriage went on they experienced less and less conflict. With this research in mind, it is hypothesized that CEDA will report lower levels of interparental conflict than offspring who experienced parental divorce as children.

Attachment

In addition to interparental conflict, attachment may play an important role in CEDA adjustment to parental divorce. Attachment has been defined as the "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (Bowlby, 1969, p. 194). Researchers suggests that the way our parents interact with us early on can influence both our parent-child and non-familial relationships (Sperling, Berman, & Fagen, 1992). Bowlby (1969) believed the attachment system motivated individuals to initiate close contact with trusted attachment figures when they are feeling threatened. Ainsworth's Strange Situation study (1978)

revealed there are three types of attachment styles that children can develop, depending on how responsive their caregivers are: secure, insecure-anxious, and insecure-avoidant.

Securely attached individuals had sensitive and responsive caregivers (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Individuals with a secure attachment tend to be more trusting and supportive in relationships (Simpson, 1990), have increased self-esteem compared to insecurely attached individuals (Feeney & Noller, 1990), have increased autonomy (Bowlby, 1973), and have better parent-child communication (Bowlby, 1973). Individuals who are anxiously attached were inconsistently responded to by their caregivers (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). These individuals have fewer enduring relationships (Simpson, 1990) and show higher levels of dependence in their romantic adult relationships (Feeney & Noller, 1990). Those individuals with an avoidant attachment style were typically rejected by their caregivers (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). They tend to be untrusting and find it difficult to be closer to others (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Simpson, 1990). Insecure individuals (including both anxious and avoidant types) are more likely to divorce in the first few years of marriages compared to securely attached individuals (Crowell, Treboux, & Brockmeyer, 2009).

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) developed a model of four different attachment styles. The first is a secure attachment, which is characterized by people being accepting and loving to those around them. These individuals are usually warm, enjoy intimacy, and have high self-confidence (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The second is preoccupied attachment. Individuals with this attachment style see others positively, while viewing themselves negatively. These individuals overshare personal information, depend on others'

opinions for self-acceptance, and have low self-confidence (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The third attachment style is fearful, which is characterized by feeling unworthy but also being skeptical of others. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) compared this style to the previously mentioned avoidant style. Individuals with this style have low self-confidence, tend not to trust others, and avoid intimacy (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The final style is dismissive-avoidant. These individuals are typically uncomfortable with intimacy and avoid close relationships. They usually display high levels of self-confidence but struggle to emotionally express themselves (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Parents who are consistently responsive to their children foster a sense of trust and competence, which is indicative of a secure attachment. However, children with inconsistent parenting can either use false distress to gain others' comfort, or repress their emotions and avoid intimate relationships altogether (Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2003). Research has shown that children from divorced families frequently have insecure attachments with their parents, regardless of the attachment level they had prior to the divorce (Beckwith, Cohen, & Hamilton, 1999; Crowell, Treboux, & Brockmeyer, 2009; Lewis, Feiring, & Rosenthal, 2000). Children's attachment to their parents can be altered by divorce due to the changes in the caregiving environment, and if there are new close relationships formed (Crowell, Treboux, & Waters, 2002). Individuals are also more likely to report having an insecure attachment if their parents had low marital satisfaction (Jarnecke & South, 2013).

Parental divorce and high levels of interparental conflict can indicate to children that people are unreliable and, thus, cannot be trusted (Fraley et al., 2013). If there are stepparents or an unrelated new adult role model introduced into the child's life, then they

may become more securely attached to that adult than to their biological parents. Parenting frequently changes post-divorce, with parents becoming less emotionally available, less involved, less affectionate, and less consistent. The attachment style a child had with his or her parent prior to the divorce can radically change in light of these parental alterations (Crowell, Treboux, & Brockmeyer, 2009; Kim, Hetherington, & Reiss, 1999; Lewis, Feiring, & Rosenthal, 2000). Therefore, it is hypothesized that individuals with divorced parents will have a less secure attachment to their parents than those from an intact family.

It is possible that CEDAs go through attachment changes with their parents after parental divorce. Bowlby (1969) claimed that adults often become more demanding of trusted adults in their lives if they experience troubled times, possibly including parental divorce. Adult children usually live more independent lives with regular contact with parents (Arnett, 2000, 2006). However, when they experience insecurity and need their attachment reaffirmed, they seek proximity to those they know they can trust (Bowlby, 1969). Despite this increased need for reassurance, adults are usually able to be comforted using less intense measures than children require. For example, adults' attachment needs can be met through phone conversations or an exchange of letters between the parent and the offspring (Bowlby, 1969). In general, adults' individual differences regarding attachment styles are influenced by their experiences in their current relationships (Fraley et al., 2013).

However, research has shown that the earlier a divorce occurs in a child's life, the more detrimental it typically is to long-term parent-child relationships (Aquilino, 1994). Perhaps because children are much more dependent on their parents than are adult children, their relationship with their parents are more likely to be negatively impacted. If an adult

child's parent becomes distant and uninvolved, changes in attachment may not have as much of an effect. Because of this reasoning, it is hypothesized that offspring who experienced parental divorce when they were under 18 years old will have a less secure attachment to their parents than individuals who were over 18 at the time of the divorce.

Relationship Anxiety

For the present study, relationship anxiety will be defined as feelings of nervousness or unease at the thought or actuality of being in an intimate relationship. Relationship anxiety in response to parental divorce has not been widely studied. Parental divorce shows children that marriages can be voluntarily ended and that unsatisfying relationships should be terminated (Amato & DeBoer, 2001). Unsurprisingly, offspring of divorce tend to have more pessimistic views of marriage and evaluate divorce more positively than do individuals from intact families (Amato & Booth, 1991; Cui, Fincham, & Durtschi, 2011). These feelings are indicative of low relationship commitment, which implies that individuals who have experienced parental divorce are less committed to their personal relationships than those from intact families (Amato & Booth, 1991; Cui & Fincham, 2010; Cui, Fincham, & Durtschi, 2011; Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2008). Riggio (2004) found that young adults from divorced families feel less anxiety about personal relationships, possibly because they have lower commitment to their personal relationships, compared to young adults from intact families. Less anxiety may also stem from observing their parents become happier after the dissolution of their marriage. These individuals may have a different perspective about adult relationships once their parents' divorce.

Though it is not currently known how the relational anxiety levels of CEDA are affected by parental divorce, it is possible that they may have increased levels of relationship anxiety compared to those who were under 18 when their parents divorced. Children who experienced divorce as adults are now aware that the happy marriage they may have assumed their parents had was only an illusion and, thus, are more aware of the hidden aspects of relationships. These hidden aspects could lead adult children to be more anxious in personal relationships. For the present study, it is hypothesized that individuals who come from divorced families will experience more anxiety about personal relationships than individuals from intact families. More specifically, it is hypothesized that CEDA will experience higher levels of anxiety than those who experienced parental divorce as children.

Relationship Satisfaction

For the present study, relationship satisfaction will be defined as how happy the participant is, in general, in their relationship. This includes happiness with both their partner and the qualities of their relationship. Sassler, Cunningham, and Lichter (2009) showed that individuals who experienced parental divorce tend to have lower relationship satisfaction than those individuals who come from an intact family. Experiencing parental divorce can lead offspring to feel less commitment to their relationships and, in turn, rate their relationships as being lower quality (Cui & Fincham, 2010). Therefore, it is hypothesized that individuals who experienced parental divorce will rate their relationships as less satisfying than individuals who come from an intact family.

Researchers have also found that individuals who are securely attached to their parents also tend to be securely attached to their partners. This attachment is positively

correlated with relationship satisfaction, partner trust, and relationship commitment, while individuals who are insecurely attached demonstrate the opposite patterns (Fraley & Davis, 1997). As stated earlier, individuals who are younger at the time of divorce tend to have less secure attachment. Since individuals who are securely attached to their parents are also typically more securely attached to their partners, it is hypothesized that individuals who were under 18 at the time of the divorce will have less relationship satisfaction than individuals who were over 18 years old at the time of the divorce.

Relationship Between Variables

A final aspect of the study is an exploratory look at how the variables are related to relationship satisfaction. Despite, to my knowledge, no studies being done that look at all of these variables together, there are several that look at two or more of them simultaneously. It has been shown that conflict between parents is associated with conflict behavior in young adults. Moreover, it has been shown that higher levels of interparental conflict are linked to lower relationship quality (Cui & Fincham, 2010).

Several researchers have done studies on the relationship between attachment and relationship satisfaction. Fraley and Davis (1997) found that individuals who are securely attached to their parents tend to be more securely attached to partners, which is correlated with relationship satisfaction. Mattanah, Lopez, and Govern (2011) reported that the healthy adjustment to personal relationships with others can be predicted by a secure attachment to parents. Finally, Madey and Rodgers (2009) showed that individuals who are securely attached tend to be more intimate and have more commitment to their relationships, which in turn is correlated with relationship satisfaction.

Regarding relationship anxiety, to my knowledge, there are no studies that link relationship anxiety and relationship satisfaction directly. However, Riggio (2004) found that individuals who have less relationship commitment tend to have less relationship anxiety. Cui and Fincham (2010) found that those who have less relationship commitment also tend to have less relationship satisfaction. Therefore, it can be assumed that individuals who have less relationship anxiety also have less relationship satisfaction.

Present Research

The purpose of the present study was threefold: (1) to assess the level of interparental conflict, attachment styles, relationship anxiety, and relationship satisfaction in children who experienced parental divorce as adults and are currently between 18 and 30 years old, (2) to compare these variables in two divorce groups: CEDA and adults' whose parents divorced before they were 18 years old, and (3) to compare both groups from parental divorce to adult children from intact families.

The decision to study 18 to 30 years olds in particular was made for a few reasons. First of all, as previously mentioned, emerging adults are in a unique place in their lives. Individuals who fall into this age group are experiencing a wide variety of changes occurring all within a relatively short period of time. For example, these adults are going to college (Bianchi & Spain, 1996); seriously dating (Roscoe, Dian, & Brooks, 1987); and exploring their worldviews as they have new experiences (Arnett, 2000). By limiting the study to only this age group, we are able to look at individuals who are presumably at similar points in their lives. Without an upper age limit, there could be participants who have already been married, have had grandchildren, and are retired. They would have a very different view

than individuals who are younger. The second reason that there was an upper age limit placed was to try and control for one of the inevitable limitations of this study. There are individuals who experienced parental divorce as infants and have now had 20 years to adapt. These individuals will likely have different feelings and experiences than someone whose parents divorced a year ago. Despite the inevitability of this occurrence, the upper age limit was an attempt to control how many participants were participating a substantial number of years after their parents' divorce. With that in mind, below is a discussion of each of the seven hypotheses for this study.

There were two hypotheses made regarding interparental conflict. The first, based on research by Noller and colleagues (2008), stated that individuals with divorced parents would report higher levels of interparental conflict than those with married parents. The second was based on research by Hatch and Bulcroft (2004). It was hypothesized that children who experienced divorce as adults will report lower levels of interparental conflict than individuals who were children at the time of their parents' divorce.

Based on the previous literature (Beckwith, Cohen, & Hamilton, 1999; Crowell, Treboux, & Brockmeyer, 2009; Davies & Cummings, 1994; Fraley & Davis, 1997; Fraley et al., 2013; Kim, Hetherington, & Reiss, 1999; Lewis, Feiring, & Rosenthal, 2000; Ross & Fuertes, 2010), there are two attachment-related hypotheses for the present study. Hypothesis three is that those who have experienced parental divorce, regardless of age, will have a less secure attachment (defined as a significantly lower score on the IPPA) to their parents than those who are from an intact family. Hypothesis four is that those individuals who were under 18 years old at the time of their parents' divorce will have a

significantly less secure attachment to their parents than those individuals who were over 18 years old at the time of the divorce.

There are also two hypotheses regarding relationship anxiety based on the previous literature (Amato & Booth, 1991; Cui & Fincham, 2010; Cui, Fincham, & Durtschi, 2011; Cui, Fincham, & Pasley, 2008; Whitton, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2008). Hypothesis five is that those individuals who have experienced parental divorce will experience more relationship anxiety than those individuals who come from intact families based on the research done on attachment by Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) and Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991). Hypothesis six is that CEDA will have higher levels of relational anxiety than individuals who were under 18 at the time of the divorce.

There were also two hypotheses made about relationship satisfaction. Hypothesis seven is individuals who have experienced parental divorce will have less relationship satisfaction than those individuals from intact families. This is based on research done by Sassler, Cunningham, and Lichter (2009) and Cui and Fincham (2010). Hypothesis eight, based on research by Fraley and Davis (1997), is that those who were over 18 at the time of the divorce will rate their relationships as more satisfying than individuals who were under 18 at the time of their parents' divorce.

Last, an exploratory question was “Do attachment, interparental conflict, and relationship anxiety predict relationship satisfaction in divorce and intact families?” As discussed previously, to my knowledge, there has not been a study that has examined all three variables together and compared under 18, over 18 and intact families.

Chapter 3: Method

Participants

Participants were recruited through online social media websites, including Craigslist, social media sights like Facebook and Tumblr, Reddit, the Social Psychology Network, the online newsletter of a large, mid-Atlantic university, and several Adult Children of Divorce forums in order to access a wide range of participants. The study was advertised as looking for participants between the ages of 18 and 30 years old to participate in a study examining the relationship between parental marital status, young adult relationships, and well-being.

Intact

There were a total of 82 participants who came from intact families. Twelve of these participants were male and 70 were female. All participants agreed they were between 18 and 30 years old, though three participants did not give specific age information. According to the information from the 79 participants who provided specific ages, the average age of intact group participants was 22.15 ($SD=3.08$) years. The overwhelming majority of participants were Caucasian American (74.4%), while the rest included 5 Asian Americans, 4 African Americans, 7 Latin Americans, 2 Native Americans, and 3 identifying as “Other”. There was a wide range of religious beliefs held by the participants. Thirty-one were Catholic, 5 were Jewish, 9 were Protestant, 9 were Agnostic, 10 were Atheist, and 18 identified as “Other.” Seven of the participants were married, while 75 were single.

“Children” of Divorce

These participants were under 18 years old when their parents got divorced or separated. There were 75 participants in this group. The average age at which participants

experienced parental divorce was 8.92 ($SD=4.88$) and participants reported their parents' marriages lasting an average of 12.87 ($SD=6.39$) years. The majority of participants were female (89.3%). One participant did not give specific age-related information, but all participants agreed they were between 18 and 30 years old. Using the data from the 74 participants who did provide age information, the average age was determined to be 22.5 ($SD=3.24$) years. The majority of participants were Caucasian American (72%), with the others identifying as African American (12%), Latin American (10.7%), Asian American (1.33%), and Other (4%). Again, a wide variety of religious backgrounds were represented in this group: 12 were Catholic, 4 were Jewish, 16 were Protestant, 1 was Muslim, 17 were Agnostic, 9 were Atheist, and 16 were "Other". The majority of participants were single at the time of the study. All but one participant experienced parental divorce. The single exception was a participant whose parents were separated. Slightly over half (56%) of the participants reported their parents having joint custody post-divorce. Specifically, 76% reported primarily living at their mother's, 12% reported living primarily at their father's, 1.3% reported living alone, 5.3% reported completely joint custody (50% of the time at their mother's and 50% of the time at their father's), and 5.3% reported another living situation.

Children Experiencing Divorce as Adults

The participants from this group experienced parental divorce or separation when they were over the age of 18. There were 40 participants in this group. The average age at which participants experienced parental divorce was 21.72 ($SD=2.94$) and participants reported their parents' marriages lasting an average of 25.15 ($SD=4.28$) years. Two participants were male, 37 were female, and one identified as Agender. All participants

agreed that they were between 18 and 30 years old, but two did not give specific age information. For the 38 participants who provided age information the average age was determined to be 24.95 ($SD=2.94$) years old. Most of the participants identified as Caucasian American (87.5%), while the rest were Asian American (2.5%), Asian American (2.5%), Latin American (2.5%) and Other (5%). Seven of the participants identified as Catholic, while the rest identified as Jewish (2), Protestant (5), Agnostic (8), Atheist (5), and Other (12), with one participant not including religious information. Again, most participants were single at the time of the study. Three participants are experiencing parental separation, while the remaining 37 have experienced parental divorce. For this group, 60% of the participants reported their parents not having joint custody after the divorce, though five participants did not provide this information. The majority (42.1%) lived by themselves primarily, 13.2% lived with their father, 36.8% lived with their mothers, 7.9% lived in a different situation primarily, and 2 did not provide information about their living situation.

Measures

Demographics. A demographic questionnaire was used that asked questions about the participants' age, religion, ethnicity, gender, and marital status. There were also questions regarding parental marriage, including questions about their current marital status, years married currently/prior to divorce, and how old the participant was at the time of the divorce.

Interparental Conflict. To measure interparental conflict, the participants completed a short form of the Children's Perspective of Interparental Conflict Scale, which asks participants to assess their parents' level of conflict (CPIC; Grych, Seid & Fincham,

1992). Kline, Wood, and Moore (2003) developed a 13-item version of the original CPIC which was found to be valid with adult samples. This version of the CPIC has two subscales: frequency (“*I often saw my parents arguing*”) and intensity (“*My parents broke and threw things during arguments*”) of conflict. The instructions used for the present study differed from the instructions given in the study done by Kline and colleagues. In the present study, the participants were instructed as follows: “This questionnaire is designed to measure your perception of conflict between your biological parents. While you answer the questions, please think about your biological parents' relationship as it was while you were growing up.” The participants responded using a six-point Likert scale (*1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree*). Items relating to low conflict were reverse scored so that a higher score on the measure would indicate high levels of interparental conflict. The participant could score between 13 (no/very little interparental conflict) and 78 (very high levels of interparental conflict). The Cronbach's alpha for the measure was .946, with a Cronbach's alpha of .90 for the Frequency subscale and one of .907 for the Intensity subscale.

Attachment. The participants completed the revised 25-item Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA; Armsden & Greenberg, 1986). This version measures mother and father attachment separately. Only the subscales measuring parent attachment were used. Participants rated statements for their mother and their father individually using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *almost never or never true* to 5 = *almost always or always true*). The parent subscales measure parent trust (“*I feel my mother/father respects my feelings*”), communication (“*my mother/father can tell when I'm upset about something*”), and alienation (“*I don't get much attention from my mother/father*”). Items referencing weak

attachment were reverse coded so that a high score on the IPPA would indicate a secure, strong attachment between participant and parent. Attachment scores were looked at as a total, rather than for each individual subscale, at the suggestion of the scale's developers (Greenberg & Armsden, 2009). Due to an error while constructing the survey, a question was accidentally omitted from the Father Attachment measure, particularly a question from the Trust subscale. To check the influence of this missing item, reliability was checked for the Mother scale using the 25-item measure, as well as the 24-item measure with the same item removed. For the 25-item measure, the alpha was .967, while it was .966 without the question. Therefore, it was decided to remove the question for the Mother Attachment scale as well. Both surveys have 24-items, rather than 25-items for this study. The Cronbach's alpha for the Father Attachment scale was .963. More specifically, for the Mother Attachment scale, the three subscales (trust, communication, and alienation) had alphas of .976, .927, and .849 respectively, while the Father Attachment scale had alphas of .935, .928, and .833 respectively.

Relationship Anxiety. The participants completed the 9-item Anxiety subscale of the Relationship Awareness Scale (RAS-A; Snell, 1998). The subscale measures relational anxiety, which has been defined as experiencing anxiety and discomfort in close relationships. The participants used a 5-point Likert scale (0=*not at all* to 4=*very characteristic of me*) to answer questions like "Intimate relationships make me feel anxious and nervous". A higher score on this measure indicates a higher level of relational anxiety. The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .938.

Relationship Satisfaction. The scale used to measure relationship satisfaction was the 16-item shortened version of the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI; Funk & Rogge, 2007). Participants were directed to think of a close friendship while answering the questions on the survey. The participants first rated their degree of happiness with their relationship by using a 7-point Likert scale (0= *Extremely Unhappy* to 6= *Perfect*). Then the participants answered a series of questions asking about their feelings about their relationship/friend using a 6-point Likert scale (0= *Always Disagree/Never/Not True* to 5= *Always Agree/All the Time/Completely True*). Participants answered questions like “In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well” and “Our relationship is strong”. A high score on this measure indicates higher levels of satisfaction with their relationship. The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was .971.

Procedure

The study design was cross-sectional and correlational. The participants completed the survey online through the website surveymonkey.com. The unique web address was posted in several locations, including online websites such as Facebook, Reddit, and Craigslist. The study was also advertised in the online newsletter of the large mid-Atlantic university where the study was taking place. Participants ranged from 18 to 30 years old, came from a wide range of religious and ethnic backgrounds. The study was advertised as seeking participants between the ages of 18 and 30 years old to participate in a study examining the relationship between parental marital status, young adult relationships, and well-being. Participants were advised that the study would take between 15 and 30 minutes

to complete, that the study was completely confidential, and that they could stop their participation at any time.

Participants followed the link which took them directly to the survey. They read the consent form and were required to answer two questions: (1) did they give their consent and (2) were they between the ages of 18 and 30 years old. All other questions were optional. The survey was done anonymously with no identifying information, such as current location or name, required. There was no monetary compensation for participation in the study and participants were encouraged to contact the researcher with any questions or concerns they had about the study. After the initial consent form, the participants completed the aforementioned measures, which were presented randomly in a counterbalanced order.

There were 365 participants who participated in the study, but several had to be removed for a variety of reasons. Three participants did not consent to participate, 33 were too old, six had widowed parents (the study was specifically looking at the effects of parental divorce), 38 provided no parental marital status information, four were incorrectly completed, and 76 had large amounts of missing data. In total, there were 168 participants removed, leaving 197 participants total.

Chapter 4: Results

Before testing hypotheses, descriptive statistics for each variable were calculated. The means, standard deviations, medians, and normality test results are presented in Table 1. The normality tests showed that all of the variables violated the normality assumption for parametric tests. Logarithmic and Box-Cox power transformations were attempted to normalize the data, but these transformations were unsuccessful. Because of this, nonparametric tests were used to analyze the data. A Spearman correlation was run to see how the variables were correlated. This information is presented in Table 2. Current age, religion, participant marital status, joint custody, and primary residence were all significantly correlated with at least one of the study variables. One variable that was expected to be correlated was time since the divorce, but this was not found to be significantly correlated with any of the study variables.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

	Intact Group n=82 Mean (SD)	Under 18 Group n=75 Mean (SD)	Over 18 Group n=40 Mean (SD)	Shapiro- Wilks
Conflict Frequency	18.95 (7.36)	25.41 (7.64)	27.20 (7.13)	.962**
Conflict Intensity	19.52 (7.68)	26.13 (9.12)	26.20 (9.06)	.973**
Mother Attachment	97.72 (16.87)	84.80 (23.84)	81.18 (22.98)	.936**
Father Attachment	91.23 (19.01)	72.45 (23.58)	68.65 (22.14)	.962**
Relationship Anxiety	20.50 (9.52)	24.03 (10.46)	24.78 (8.93)	.936**
Relationship Satisfaction	59.69 (16.54)	51.77 (19.99)	54.18 (16.91)	.945**

** p < .001

Table 2

Spearman Correlations for the Relationship between Demographics and Study Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i>
1. Age	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Gender	-.090	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. Ethnicity	.056	.048	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Religion	.000	.024	-.085	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5. Marital Status	-.273**	-.061	-.071	-.077	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6. Time Since Divorce	.135	-.125	-.025	.022	-.100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7. Primary Residence	-.062	-.063	-.007	-.131	.031	-.314**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8. Joint Custody	-.105	-.131	-.011	-.140	.120	-.125	.843**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9. CPIC-F	.070	.000	.036	.042	-.015	-.149	-.408**	-.369**	-	-	-	-	-	-
10. CPIC-I	-.007	.007	-.013	.066	.012	-.046	-.349**	-.302**	.863**	-	-	-	-	-
11. IPPA-M	-.160*	-.056	-.055	-.204**	.015	.154	.199**	.270**	-.349**	-.281**	-	-	-	-
12. IPPA-F	-.120	.034	-.090	-.165*	.038	-.017	.435**	.300**	-.359**	-.351**	.218**	-	-	-
13. RAS-A	.139	-.047	.047	-.037	-.005	-.059	-.178*	-.201**	.243**	.173*	-.298**	-.314**	-	-
14. CSI	-.041	.064	.065	-.042	-.183*	-.060	.145*	.134	-.210**	-.242**	.272**	.224*	-.318**	-

Note. Higher scores on the variables mean that more of the construct is present. The criterion of significance is based on a two-tailed test. * $p=.05$,

** $p=.001$.

To test the first hypothesis, which was that individuals from divorced families would report higher levels of interparental conflict than individuals with married parents, two Kruskal-Wallis test were performed. This test was chosen because it examines the differences between multiple groups on a variable and can be used in place of an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The ANOVA would have been the test chosen if the data was normal and could be analyzed with parametric analyses. The first test compared the groups on conflict frequency, $\chi^2(2) = 37.849, p < .001$, with a mean rank of 69.96 for the intact group, 115.24 for the under 18 group, and 128.09 for the over 18 group. Follow-up Mann-Whitney *U* tests were performed to further examine the differences. The first compared the intact and under 18 groups, $U = 1648.5, p < .001$, with mean ranks of 61.60 and 98.02 respectively. The second test compared the intact and over 18 groups, $U = 685, p < .001$, with mean ranks of 49.85 and 85.38 respectively.

The second Kruskal-Wallis test compared the groups on conflict intensity, $\chi^2(2) = 25.551, p < .001$, with a mean rank of 74.72 for the intact group, 115.51 for the under 18 group, and 117.83 for the over 18 group. Again, follow-up Mann-Whitney *U* tests were performed. The first compared the intact and under 18 groups, $U = 1790.5, p < .001$, with mean ranks of 63.34 for the intact group and 96.13 for the under 18 group. The second test examined differences between the intact and over 18 groups, $U = 933.5, p < .001$, with mean ranks of 52.88 for the intact group and 79.16 for the over 18 group. Hypothesis one was clearly supported, as both divorce groups scored higher on both conflict subscales, indicating that they recall higher levels of interparental conflict than those from the intact group.

To test the second hypothesis, which was that individuals who were adults at the time of their parents' divorce would report lower levels of interparental conflict than those who were children at the time of the divorce, two Mann-Whitney U tests were performed on the two divorce groups. This test was chosen because it compares two groups on a specified variable and can be used in place of the parametric t-test. The first test measured the group differences on the frequency subscale, which showed no main effect. The mean ranks for the Under 18 and Over 18 groups were 55.22 and 63.21 respectively, $U = 1291.5$, $Z = -1.226$, $p = .220$. The second test examined the differences on the intensity subscale, which also showed no main effect. The two group means were 57.38 and 59.16 respectively, $U = 1453.5$, $Z = -.273$, $p = .785$. The graphs showing group differences on the conflict frequency and conflict intensity subscales are shown in figures 1 and 2, respectively. Therefore, the second hypothesis was unsupported.

Figure 1

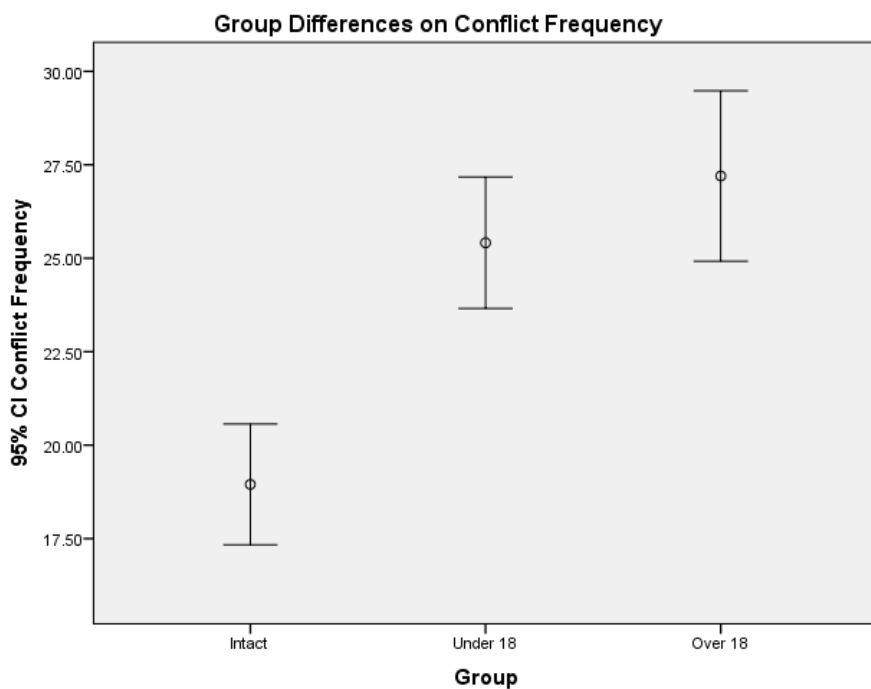
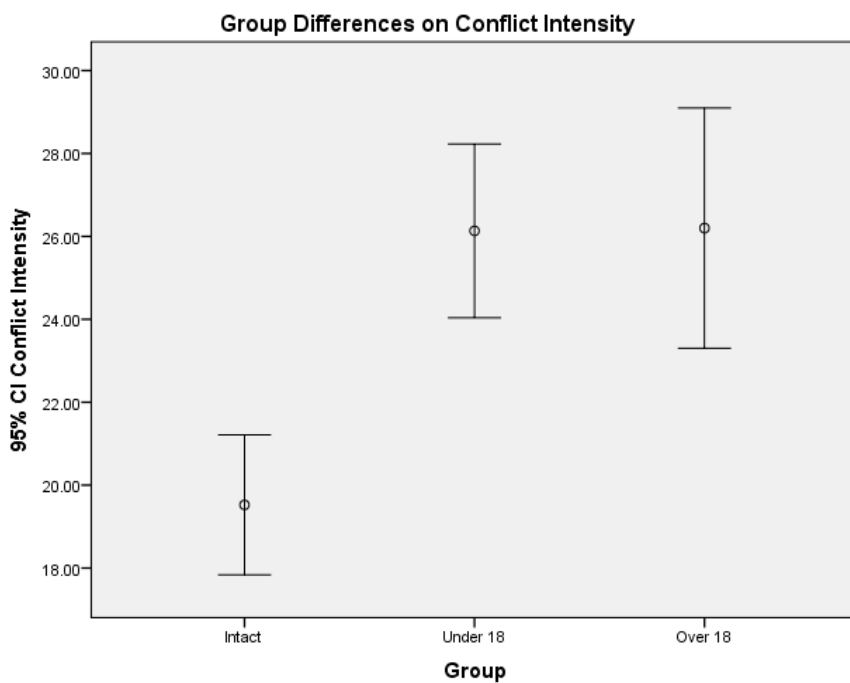


Figure 2



The third hypothesis stated that those who came from divorced families would have less secure attachment to their parents than those who came from intact families. To examine this hypothesis, two Kruskal-Wallis tests were run. First, differences for mother attachment were examined, $\chi^2(2) = 19.465, p < .05$, with a mean rank of 119.79 for the intact group, 87.59 for the under 18 group, and 77.78 for the over 18 group. To follow-up, several Mann-Whitney U tests were performed using a Bonferroni corrected p -value of .0167. The first test showed a significant difference between the intact and under 18 groups, $U = 2080.5, Z = -3.496, p < .01$ with mean ranks of 91.13 and 65.74 respectively. The second test showed significant differences between the intact and over 18 groups, $U = 929.5, Z = -3.876, p < .01$ with mean ranks of 70.16 and 43.74 respectively. Therefore, there were significant differences between the intact group and both divorce groups.

The second Kruskal-Wallis test examined differences for father attachment, $\chi^2(2) = 36.442, p < .05$, with a mean rank of 127.74 for the intact group, 81.81 for the under 18 group, and 72.30 for the over 18 group. Again, several Mann-Whitney U tests were performed to further examine the group differences. First, the intact and under 18 groups were examined, $U = 1645, Z = -5.026, p < .01$ with mean ranks of 96.44 for the intact group and 59.93 for the under 18 group. The second test examined the differences between the intact and over 18 groups, $U = 713, Z = -5.057, p < .01$, with mean ranks of 72.80 and 38.33 respectively. Figures 3 and 4 show the group differences for mother and father attachment, respectively. Both tests show that there are differences between the three groups. Therefore, the third hypothesis is supported. Individuals who come from intact families are more likely to have a secure attachment to their parents.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that CEDA would report stronger attachment to their parents than those who were children at the time of the divorce. This hypothesis was not supported. The Mann-Whitney U test for mother attachment showed no significant difference between the divorce groups, $U = 1361.5$, $Z = -.813$, $p = .416$ with mean ranks of 59.85 for the under 18 group and 54.54 for the over 18 group. There was also no significant difference for father attachment, $U = 1359$, $Z = -.828$, $p = .408$ with mean ranks of 59.88 for the under 18 group and 54.48 for the over 18 group. Therefore, hypothesis number four was unsupported.

Figure 3

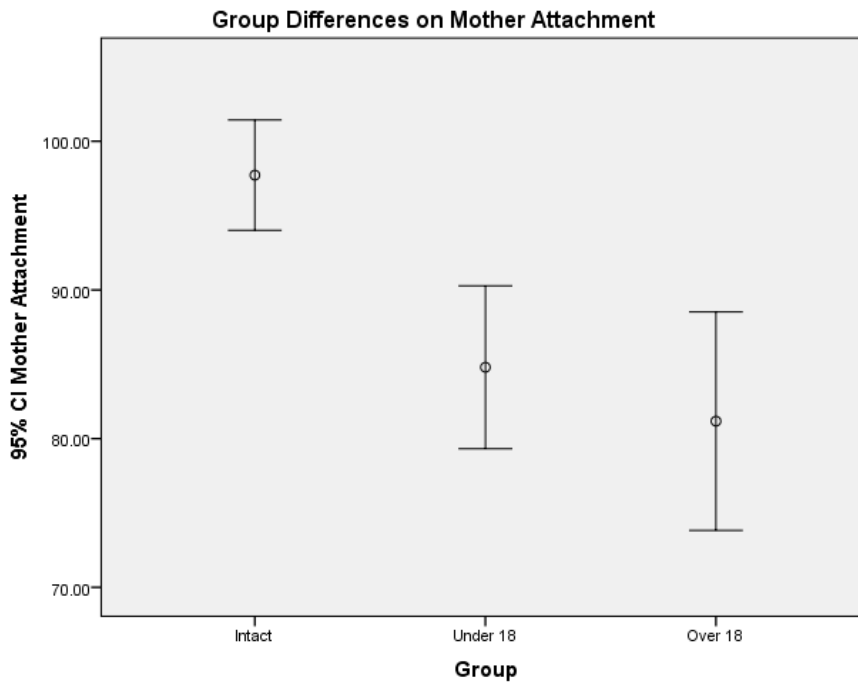
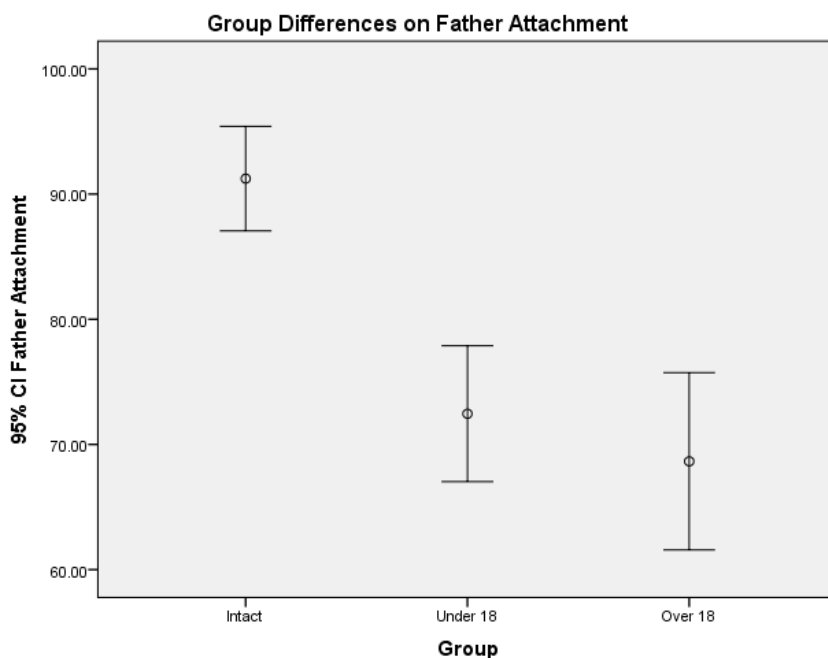


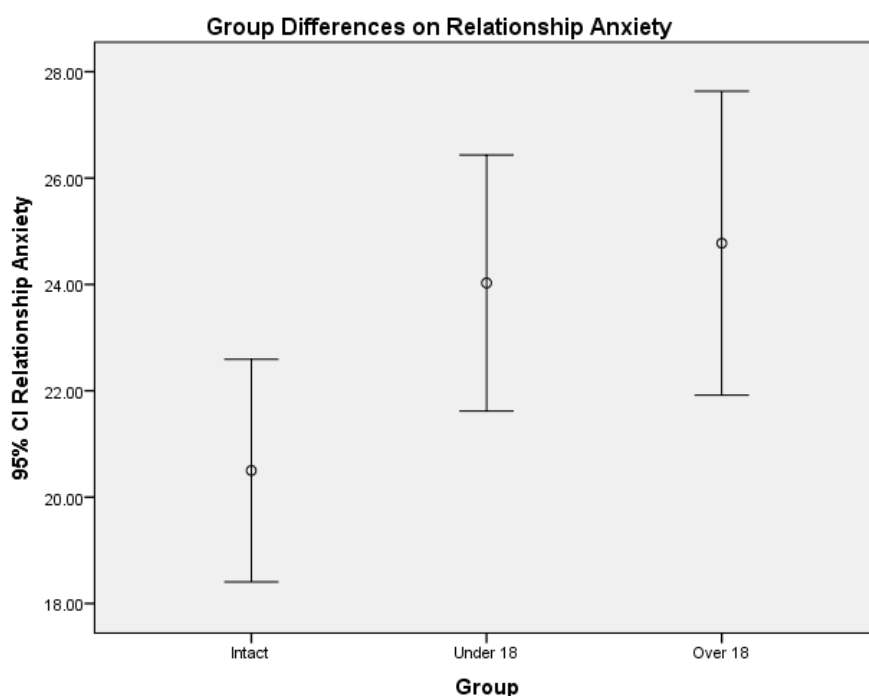
Figure 4



To test hypothesis five, which stated that those participants who had experienced parental divorce would have higher levels of relationship anxiety, a Kruskal-Wallis test was performed, which showed significant differences, $\chi^2(2) = 8.817, p < .05$ with mean ranks of 85.15 for the intact group, 106.08 for the under 18 group, and 114.11 for the over 18 group. To further examine the differences, two Mann-Whitney U tests were performed. The first examined the differences between the intact and under 18 groups, $U = 2439, Z = -2.237, p < .05$ with mean ranks of 71.24 and 87.48 respectively. The second examined the differences between the intact and over 18 groups, $U = 1140.5, Z = -2.727, p < .01$ with mean ranks of 55.41 and 73.99 respectively. Based on these findings, this hypothesis was supported. Both divorce groups reported having significantly more relationship anxiety than intact group participants.

The sixth hypothesis stated that those participants in the over 18 group would have higher levels of anxiety than those from the under 18 group. This was tested with a Mann-Whitney U test but was unsupported, $U = 1395$, $Z = -.617$, $p = .537$ with mean ranks of 56.60 for the under 18 group and 60.63 for the over 18 group. There were no group differences between the two divorce groups. Figure 5 shows the group differences on the relationship anxiety variable.

Figure 5

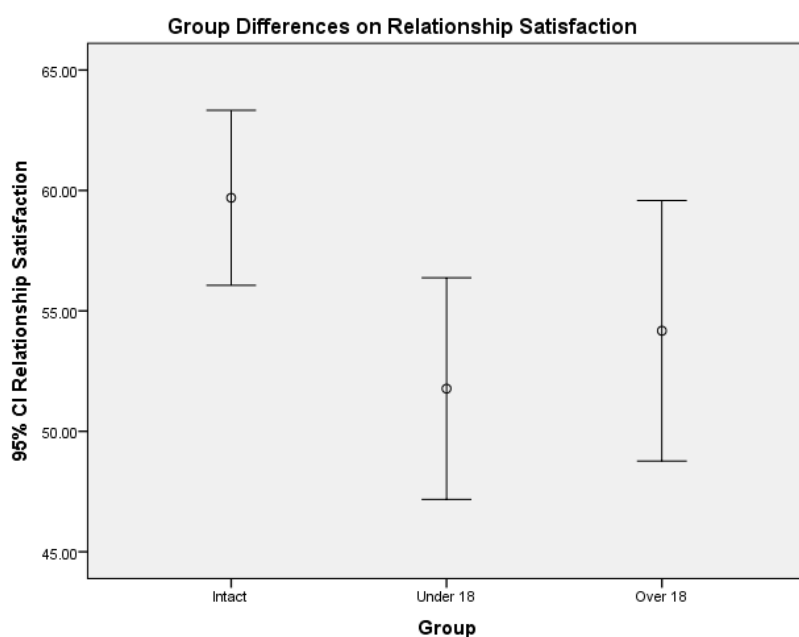


The final two hypotheses were related to relationship satisfaction. Hypothesis seven stated that participants with divorced parents would have less relationships satisfaction than those with married parents. This was first tested with a Kruskal-Wallis test, $\chi^2(2) = 7.481$, $p < .05$ with mean ranks of 112.07, 88.47, and 91.96 for the intact, under 18, and over 18 groups, respectively. To further examine the differences, Mann-Whitney U-tests were

performed. First, the intact and under 18 groups were compared, $U = 2371.5$, $Z = -2.473$, $p < .05$, with mean ranks of 87.58 and 69.62, respectively. The second compared the intact and over 18 groups, $U = 1272$, $Z = -2.008$, $p < .05$ with mean ranks of 65.99 and 52.30 respectively. This hypothesis was supported both divorce groups significantly differed from the intact group. The intact group was significantly more likely than the under 18 group to report having satisfying relationships.

The eighth and final hypothesis stated that individuals from the over 18 group would find their relationships more satisfying than participants from the under 18 group. Another Mann-Whitney U test was performed, which showed no difference between groups, $U = 1413.5$, $Z = -.508$, $p = .611$ with mean ranks of 56.85 and 60.16 for the under 18 and over 18 groups respectively. This hypothesis was unsupported, as there were no differences found between the two divorce groups. The group differences for relationship satisfaction are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6



To explore how the variables could be related to one another and predict relationship satisfaction, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed on each group individually. First, looking at the correlation matrix from Table 2 showed that current age, religion, participant marital status, if the parents had joint custody, and who the participants primarily lived with were all significantly correlated with at least one of the study variables. Hierarchical regressions were performed separately for each group, and included four steps. The significant demographic variables were included in step one (joint custody and primary residence were omitted for the intact group), the conflict subscales were included in step two, mother and father attachment included in step three, and relationship anxiety in step four. These steps were performed for relationship satisfaction.

For the intact group the third and fourth steps were significant. The first step accounted for 2.5% of the variance, $F(3,75) = .650, p = .585$. The second step accounted for

5.2% of the variance, $F(5,73) = 1.232, p = .303$. The third step, which included mother and father attachment accounted for 11.6% of the variance, $F(7,71) = 2.440, p < .05$. The fourth step, which included relationship anxiety, accounted for 2.2% of the variance, $F(8,70) = 2.407, p < .05$. These results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression Analyses for the Relationship between Conflict, Attachment, and Relationship Variables: Intact Group

Step Variables	β	R^2	ΔR^2	t
Step 1				
Current Age	-.099	.025	.025	-.800
Religion	.029			.250
Marital Status	-.155			-1.243
Step 2				
Conflict Frequency	.179	.078	.052	.727
Conflict Intensity	-.374			-1.518
Step 3				
Mother Attachment	.216	.194*	.116*	1.661
Father Attachment	.230			1.793
Step 4				
Relationship Anxiety	-.181	.126*	.022*	-1.396

Note. * $p < .05$

Table 4 shows the results of the regression for the under 18 group. The same four steps were used and the first step, which included the demographic variables, was significant, $F(5,68) = 2.665, p < .05$ and explained 16.4% of the variance. Once the conflict subscales were added in step 2, the total variance accounted for was 21.1%, $F(7,66) = 2.52, p < .05$.

The third step, which was when mother and father attachment were added to the model, was not significant, $F(9,64) = 1.931$, $p = .063$, total variance explained 21.4%. Relationship anxiety was added in for the last step and accounted for 14.3% of the variance, making the total accounted variance 35.6%, $F(10,63) = 3.465$, $p < .001$. The best predictors of relationship satisfaction were participant marital status, whether or not the parents had joint custody, and the level of relationship anxiety.

Table 4

Hierarchical Regression Analyses for the Relationship between Conflict, Attachment, and Relationship Variables: Under 18 Group

Step Variables	β	R^2	ΔR^2	t
Step 1				
Current Age	-.078	.164*	.164*	-.675
Religion	.031			.280
Marital Status	-.270			-2.344*
Joint Custody	-.260			-2.281*
Primary Residence	-.138			-1.228
Step 2				
Conflict Frequency	-.144	.211*	.047*	.516
Conflict Intensity	-.088			.695
Step 3				
Mother Attachment	.216	.214	.003	.412
Father Attachment	.230			-.162
Step 4				
Relationship Anxiety	-.181	.356**	.143**	-3.735**

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .001$

Finally, the results for the over 18 group are depicted in Table 5. Only step one was significant in this model, $F(5,26) = 2.691, p < .05$ and it accounted for 34.2% of the variance. Step two accounted for 7.2% of the variance and was not significant, $F(7,24) = 2.415, p = .051$. Step three accounted for 2.4% of the variance, $F(9,22) = 1.901, p = .106$. Step four accounted for 4.3% of the variance, $F(10,21) = 1.945, p = .096$. The variable that best predicted relationship satisfaction in this group was the participant's marital status.

Table 5

Hierarchical Regression Analyses for the Relationship between Conflict, Attachment, and Relationship Variables: Over 18 Group

Step Variables	β	R^2	ΔR^2	t
Step 1				
Current Age	-.332	.342*	.342*	-1.947
Religion	-.310			-1.841
Marital Status	-.477			-2.768*
Joint Custody	.033			.199
Primary Residence	-.018			-.103
Step 2				
Conflict Frequency	-.144	.413	.072	.529
Conflict Intensity	-.088			-1.616
Step 3				
Mother Attachment	.216	.437	.024	.940
Father Attachment	.230			.586
Step 4				
Relationship Anxiety	-.181	.481	.043	-1.324

Note. * $p < .05$

Chapter 6: Discussion

In the present study, participants in emerging adulthood from divorced and intact families were assessed to examine the relationship between timing of parental divorce, interparental conflict, and measures of attachment, relationship anxiety, and relationship satisfaction. Three of the eight hypotheses were supported. These were hypothesis one, which stated that individuals from divorced families would have significantly higher levels of interparental conflict than individuals from intact families; hypothesis five, which stated that those individuals from divorced families would have higher levels of relationship anxiety than those from intact families; and hypothesis seven, which stated that the participants with divorced parents would report having less relationship satisfaction than those individuals with married parents.

It was shown that there were significant differences between the intact and divorce groups on reported interparental conflict. The intact group reported significantly lower levels of conflict occurring while they were growing up. This is not particularly surprising, given that in one group, the parents stayed married, while in the other they divorced. It is likely that those who divorced did so at least partially due to conflict. This finding is backed by the research done by Noller and colleagues (2008).

Father and mother attachment were both shown to be significantly different between the intact and divorced groups. The intact group scored higher on both measures, which indicates that these individuals have a stronger attachment to their fathers and mothers than do individuals who come from divorced families. Past research has shown that exposure to parental divorce can lead to a decrease in parent-child relationship quality (Amato & Afifi,

2006; Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993) and that divorce is associated with insecure attachment (Beckwith, Cohen, & Hamilton, 1999; Crowell, Treboux, & Brockmeyer, 2009). Therefore, it is not surprising that the intact group scored higher on the attachment measures. Their relationships with their parents are less likely to have suffered from the dramatic changes that are experienced post-divorce.

There were significant findings on relationship satisfaction between the intact and divorce groups. Specifically, those from the divorce groups reported less relationship satisfaction compared to individuals from intact families. This may have happened because individuals who have a less secure attachment to their parents tend to have lower relationship satisfaction (Collins, Cooper, Albino, & Allard, 2002; Fraley & Davis, 1997; Madey & Rodgers, 2009). Because the divorce groups had a less secure attachment to their parents than the intact group did, this could explain why they tend to have less relationship satisfaction as adults. It is also possible that the divorce negatively impacted this group's progression through Erikson's sixth stage of psychosocial development. This stage occurs during early adulthood and is known as intimacy versus isolation. The primary objective of this stage is to learn to become intimate with somebody else (Crandell, Crandell, & Zanden, 2009). A consequence of not successfully doing this is that individuals may become isolated and too self-focused (Papalia & Feldman, 2012). It is possible that experiencing parental divorce before this important stage could negatively impact future relationship satisfaction if the individual did not properly learn how to become intimate with another individual.

There were significant differences between the intact and divorce groups on the relationship anxiety measure. Participants from the intact group tended to have less

relationship anxiety than those from the divorce groups. It is likely that the divorce groups reported having more relationship anxiety than the intact group because they are less securely attached to their parents. Previous attachment research has shown that those who are insecurely attached to their parents tend to act more anxiously in their relationships. They are needy, untrusting, and can avoid relationships because they do not know how to be in a relationship with another person (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, Wall, 1978; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Because of this, it is unsurprising that the divorce group, which reported feeling less securely attached to their mothers and fathers, would report feeling more anxious about being in an intimate relationship. There was no difference between the two divorce groups on this measure. Both scored relatively the same on the measure, but the over 18 group scored slightly higher.

There are a few possible reasons why no significant results were found between the divorce groups for interparental conflict. First, retrospective studies have been found to be relatively unreliable (Bradburn, Rips & Shevell, 1987; Henry, Moffitt, Caspi, Langley, & Silva, 1994). In particular, psychosocial variables have been found to be the least reliable when comparing prospective reports to retrospective reports (Henry *et al.*, 1994). It is also possible that the two groups both simply experienced similar levels of interparental conflict. Those participants from the under 18 group may have had parents who decided to leave the marriage sooner than those parents of the participants in the over 18 group.

With the exploratory portion of this study, which looked at which variables can predict relationship satisfaction, it was shown that depending on which group the participant was in, different variables predicted satisfaction. For the intact group, the third and fourth

steps were the only ones significant. The model was not significant until attachment was added, and then got stronger when relationship anxiety was added. It seems that these are important variables for predicting relationship satisfaction for the intact group. For the under 18 group, participant marital status, joint custody, and relationship anxiety all predicted relationship satisfaction. Finally, for the over 18 group, participant marital status predicted relationship satisfaction.

Though there were almost no significant differences between the two divorce groups, this study was still an important one. Too few researchers have acknowledged that adults can experience parental divorce and have neglected to examine them as a group. It is possible that children of divorce and CEDA do differ in some aspects and future research should endeavor to compare these groups on as many variables as possible.

There were multiple limitations in the present study. First, the Over 18 group was fairly small and it is possible that the results were affected by the small sample size. In the future, recruiting more CEDA should be a priority. There were also an insufficient number of males in the study, which made it impossible to look at effects of gender. A second limitation is that the study was conducted completely online, which likely isolated possible participants. In the future, accessing individuals who may not have internet access should be considered. A third limitation is that there was a wide range of ages at which the participants experienced parental divorce. There were some participants from the Under 18 group who experienced parental divorce when they were three-years-old but are now in their 20s. There are also individuals who were in the Over 18 group who experienced their parents divorcing less than a year ago. This wide range of age differences could have influenced the findings

for the first hypothesis. It is possible that recall of interparental conflict is less reliable due to the substantial amount of time that has passed for some participants. Unfortunately, this is a limitation that could be difficult to get around if future researchers want to look at an all-adult sample. It is important to be aware of this possible influence, however. A fourth limitation is that there were mistakes made during the construction of this study. For example, there was a question accidentally omitted from the father attachment measure. There were also no income or education questions asked in the participant demographics which could have led to interesting findings. A final limitation is that this was a cross-sectional study. Cross-sectional research does not allow us to look at change over time. Ideally future research should perform longitudinal research to examine long-term effects of parental divorce.

TOWSON UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

THESIS COMMITTEE APPROVAL FORM

Student's Name

Jessica Blackwood

Chair, Thesis Committee

Kim Shifren
Signature

Kim Shifren, Ph.D.
Typed name

Member

Jonathon Mattanah
Signature

Jonathon Mattanah
Typed name

Member

Justin Buckingham
Signature

Justin Buckingham
Typed name

Member

Signature

Typed name

Note: Please attach a description of the affiliation and credentials of any non-Towson University members of the Committee, and the members' curriculum vitae.

Approved by

Graduate Program Director

JBS
Signature

10/29/13
Date

Department Chairperson

J. M. H.
Signature

11/13/13
Date

Dean of Graduate Studies

Janet V. O'Hara
Signature

11/11/13
Date

Note: It is the responsibility of the student to obtain all signatures before beginning the proposal.



EXEMPTION NUMBER: 14-X043

To: Jessica Blackwood
 From: Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human
 Subjects Stacy Spaulding, Member (15)
 Date: Wednesday, November 13, 2013
 RE: Application for Approval of Research Involving the Use of
 Human Participants

Office of Sponsored Programs
 & Research

Towson University
 8000 York Road
 Towson, MD 21252-0001

t. 410 704-2236
 f. 410 704-4494

Thank you for submitting an application for approval of the research titled,
*Does the Timing of Divorce Matter? Interparental Conflict, Parent-Child
 Attachment, Relationship Anxiety and Relationship Satisfaction*

to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants
 (IRB) at Towson University.

Your research is exempt from general Human Participants requirements
 according to 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). No further review of this project is
 required from year to year provided it does not deviate from the submitted
 research design.

If you substantially change your research project or your survey
 instrument, please notify the Board immediately.

We wish you every success in your research project.

CC: K. Shifren
 File

Appendix: Informed Consent

Dear Participant,

My name is Jessica Blackwood and I am a graduate student in the Experimental Psychology program at Towson University. You are invited to participate in a study to determine the effects of experiencing parental divorce on young adult relationships and well-being. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete some self-assessment questionnaires.

Because I am looking at both intact and divorced families, it is not necessary for you to have experienced parental divorce to participate in this study. Participants must be at least 18 years old to participate. If you do not meet this requirement, please exit the survey.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You do not have to participate in the study. If you choose to participate, you may discontinue your participation at any time without facing any penalty. You are welcome to skip any items that you do not feel comfortable answering.

All information about your responses will be anonymous. We will not be able to identify you from your responses. If you should have questions after today, you can email me at jblack7@students.towson.edu, call (443)-668-8113 and ask for Jessica Blackwood or call (410) 704-2236 and ask for Dr. Debi Gartland, Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants at Towson University.

Sincerely,

Jessica Blackwood

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS AT TOWSON UNIVERSITY.

Appendix: Demographics

1. What is your current age?
2. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Other
3. For statistical purposes only, what category below best describes your ethnicity?
 - a. Asian American
 - b. African American
 - c. Caucasian American
 - d. Latin American
 - e. Native American
 - f. Other
4. For statistical purposes only, what category below best describes your religious affiliation?
 - a. Catholic
 - b. Jewish
 - c. Protestant
 - d. Islam
 - e. Agnostic
 - f. Atheist
 - g. Other
5. What is your marital status?
 - a. Married
 - b. Single
 - c. Divorced
 - d. Separated
6. What is your biological parents' marital status?
 - a. Married
 - b. Separated
 - c. Divorced
 - d. Widowed
 - e. Other
7. If your parents are divorced, how long were they married prior to the divorce? If your parents are still together, how long have they been married?
8. If your parents got divorced, how old were you when they got divorced?
9. Was your primary residence with your mother, your father, or someone else?
 - a. Mother
 - b. Father
 - c. Other
10. How many times has your biological mother been married and divorced?
 - a. Married
 - b. Divorced

11. How many times has your biological father been married and divorced?
- a. Married
 - b. Divorced

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