

AN EXAMINATION OF THE DIFFERENCES IN MARITAL EXPECTATIONS OF  
YOUNG ADULTS FROM INTACT AND DIVORCED FAMILIES

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE DIFFERENCES IN MARITAL EXPECTATIONS OF  
YOUNG ADULTS FROM INTACT AND DIVORCED FAMILIES

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Prior research has been unclear about the effects parental divorce has on the attitudes toward marriage of young adults. This study aimed to clarify this past research by utilizing a more clearly defined sample to determine if there are statistically significant differences between their attitudes toward marriage based upon whether their parents divorced or not and/or the amount of conflict in their primary custodial home growing up. Additionally, within the divorced sample, this study examines conflict in parents relationship before the divorce, conflict in custodial situation after the divorce, conflict in parents relationship post divorce and age at time of divorce to determine which of these variables is most important in explaining the variance, in divorced families reported attitudes toward marriage? This sample consisted of 441 college students enrolled in introductory courses at a large southern university. Two regressions were

conducted. The findings revealed that although students of divorce did have more negative attitudes toward marriage than students from intact families, it was the level of primary custodial home conflict that accounted for those differences. These results can be interpreted as saying that whether parental figures have the ability to solve conflict with a partner is more important in affecting children's marital attitudes than whether or not parent's stayed married.

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## INTRODUCTION

It has been established that children of divorce have an increased likelihood to end their own marriages (Wolfinger, 2000, 2003), but it is quite possible that for some couples, divorce is a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is likely that many couples have relationship beliefs that predispose them to the idea of divorce as a suitable or appropriate way to resolve their marital struggles. By upholding the belief that divorce is an appropriate solution, some couples do in fact end up divorcing. Little research has been undertaken investigating the above assertions, with the findings being unclear. Very little research has focused on the relational beliefs of young adults from divorced families. Most researchers have examined married couples (Mathews, Wickrama & Conger, 1996; Wolfinger, 2003) while others have focused primarily on children. This is surprising considering that divorce is the break up of an intimate relationship, the very type of relationship in which young adults are usually involved. Specifically it seems that beliefs about romantic relationships are very germane to the understanding of young adult lives, especially in relation to whether they are the product of an intact or a divorced family. Although adolescent and young adult development is not a new area of study, very little is known about what possible affects parental divorce has on this developmental stage. Young adults have begun romantic relationships and are forming attitudes and making decisions about marriage and what they want or expect it to be like. Most of the existing

literature has either focused more on behaviors than beliefs or has not differentiated between the two. Beliefs specifically need to be examined more extensively to clarify past misconceptions (Tasker, 1992). The terms “romantic beliefs” and “attitudes toward marriage” have often been used interchangeably in the divorce literature. Most of the existing literature actually addresses attitudes toward marriage as will the present study.

A review of the literature reveals that there is controversy over the findings as to whether divorce affects young adult’s attitudes toward marriage. Some researchers have found parental divorce to have no or negligible effect on young adults’ attitudes toward marriage (Sinclair & Nelson, 1998; Bruce, Flora, & Stacey, 2004), while others report parental divorce to have a significant negative impact on attitudes toward marriage (Schaick & Stolberg, 2001). The literature seems to reveal that the most important factor contributing to the lack of clarity about possible effects of divorce is parental conflict before, during, and after the divorce. Although most research finds that children from divorced families have lower well-being and are at greater risk to have problems adjusting, some children seem to actually benefit from divorce because it allows them an escape from the conflict (Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995). When this occurs, these children adjust similarly to children in low-conflict, non-divorced homes and may be better off than children in high conflict, non-divorced homes (Hetherington, 1999). Conversely, children who considered their parents marriage to have low conflict levels had more trouble adjusting if their parents divorced later than those whose parents did not divorce (Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995).

Another variable often mentioned as important is the age at time of divorce. Age has been found to be a moderator of children's adjustment to parental divorce (Hetherington & Elmore, 2003), yet there are unclear findings about the long-term effects of parental divorce based on age. Amato and Sobolewski (2001) report that age at time of divorce is not related to young adult psychological well-being. With this in mind, these questions remain: What effect, if any does parental break up have on the attitudes toward marriage of young adults? Could it be that factors other than the act of divorce such as: level of parental conflict before the divorce (Forehand, Neighbors, Devine, & Arminstead, 1994; Kirk; 2002; Wallerstein, 1991), level of conflict after the divorce (Gabardi & Rosen, 1992; Morris & West, 2001), family structure/custodial arrangement (Shulman, Scharf, Lumer, & Maurer, 2001; Bruce, Flora, & Stacey, 2004), level of conflict in the custodial home (Amato & Booth, 1991; Kelly & Emery, 2003; Lopez, 1991), or age at time of divorce (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001) when considering the impact of divorce on future marital beliefs better explain any effects?

The current study aims to clarify past research examining the possible effects of parental divorce on the marital expectations of young adults. For these reasons, the present study will examine two hypotheses, as well as investigate one research question. This study hypothesizes that a) young adult's differences in marital attitudes will not be significantly affected by the marital status of their parents, and b) marital conflict (in the intact marriage) or primary custodial relationship conflict (in the primary custodial home) will explain a significant amount of the variance in young adult's attitudes toward marriage. The research question is: What combination of the predictor variables: conflict

in parents relationship before the divorce, conflict in custodial situation after the divorce, conflict in parents relationship post divorce, and age at time of divorce best explains the variance in subjects from divorced families reported attitudes toward marriage?

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Intact vs. Divorced

The amount of existing literature addressing attitudes toward marriage of young adults from divorced families is not extensive, and what does exist has yielded inconsistent results. Sinclair and Nelson (1998) hypothesized that students from divorced homes would hold more dysfunctional relationship beliefs than children in intact families as measured by the Relationship Belief Inventory. They enlisted the participation of 300 students from psychology classes who completed a packet of questionnaires including the Miller Social Intimacy Scale, (MSIS), the Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships Scale (PAIR), the Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI), and a demographic questionnaire. Results revealed that parental marital status was not a significant factor affecting young adult intimate relationships. The authors report that other factors are more salient than parental divorce in creating differences among students including family conflict before and after divorce and quality of parental relationships. With the exception of one relationship belief, (disagreement is destructive), young adults from intact and divorced families are more similar than different. Although not directly related to their hypothesis, they examined social support, level of stress and attachment to parents as possible mediators to divorce adjustment.

Bruce, Flora, and Stacey (2004) using a college student sample conducted their research under the framework that children reap benefits from having a mother and father in the home and that any deviation from this structure prevents children from fully developing into an adult capable of intimacy. Their findings results indicate no significant differences between students from divorced families and students from intact families. They indicate that divorce alone is not significant in determining intimacy levels in romantic relationships. They suggested that other factors such as parental conflict, parental attachment and outside relationships should be considered.

Another study investigating a possible relationship between divorce and attitudes and relationship beliefs towards marriage was undertaken by Gabardi and Rosen (1992). They questioned 300 students regarding demographic information, dating status, sexual behaviors, relationship beliefs, intimacy, attitudes toward marriage and self-esteem. Beliefs and attitudes were measured using the Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI) and an 8-item Attitudes Toward Marriage scale (ATM) (Gabardi & Rosen, 1991) designed to measure their current beliefs about marriage. Findings indicated that there were no significant differences between college students from divorced and intact families along these measures (intimacy, relationship beliefs, attitudes toward marriage and self-esteem). This supports the notion that parental marital status is not the most important factor creating differences among students regarding relationship factors. Just knowing whether or not someone comes from a divorced background or not is not enough information to determine and assess the differences among students regarding relationship beliefs.

Findings indicate that students from divorced families have more sexual relationships and desire more sexual involvement than students from intact families. For students from both divorced and intact families' parental conflict was a significant predictor of total number of sexual partners and negative attitudes toward marriage. In addition to this, parent's marital status was found to be a significant predictor of sexual involvement while going steady and negative attitudes toward marriage. Number of years since the divorce occurred was also a significant predictor of sexual involvement desired after several dates, relationship beliefs, and attitudes toward marriage for students from divorced families (Gabardi & Rosen, 1991).

While some believe divorce does not affect young adult relationship beliefs, there are others who believe that parental divorce has a significant impact on attitudes toward marriage. Further, they consider the experience of a parental divorce to be a loss of one of the most significant relationships in life, believing it to significantly affect other relationships formed later in life (Ensign, Scherman & Clark, 1998). This means that some people feel that experiencing the divorce of parents may likely have negative consequences on children's later relationships because it is a very important. Schaick and Stolberg (2001) examined the impact of paternal involvement on young adult intimate relationship. Their research provides two models for why intimacy, security, commitment, and trust in adult relationships are often threatened by the experience of parental divorce in childhood: 1) adult children of divorce have learned a maladaptive interpersonal style, which results in unsatisfactory interactions and relationships, and 2) young adults have a fear of commitment exhibited by two different types of behavior. First, is the belief that adult

children can enter a relationship and easily leave if they are not satisfied. Secondly, children of divorce are thought to avoid commitment. Four hundred and eight students from a large urban state university participated in the study and multiple regression analyses were used with the outcome measures. They found parents marital status to be a significant predictor for insecurity, trust, avoidance and anxiety.

Consistent with the belief that divorce significantly affects the attitudes toward marriage for young adults, Kirk (2002) compared students who had experienced divorce with those who had not with a sample of male ( $n = 56$ ) and female ( $n = 128$ ) undergraduates and found contradictory results. Contrary to her predictions and past research, she found that young adults from divorced families did not perceive their romantic relationships, self-esteem and issues with intimacy differently than those from intact families. Although both groups were considered the same with regards to their perceptions about romantic relationships, self-esteem and issues with intimacy, there was in fact support for the influence of parental divorce on the fears and expectations of divorce in their own lives (Those that experienced divorce reported more fears about divorce and had higher expectations to divorce themselves when compared to those in intact families). These variables were measured using a questionnaire that included The Self-Esteem Rating Scale (SERS), The Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS), The Family Functioning Scales (FFS), and additional questions that assessed family environment characteristics including demographics, size, parent's marital status, and an 8-item section for those from divorce that included age at separation, remarriage information, custody arrangements, frequency of parental visitation, as well as an open ended question for those

whose situation was not captured by the questions. This study supported the finding that young adults from divorced families are more fearful and less optimistic about marriages, even if they perceive themselves not to be. The authors suggest that a possible explanation for the negative attitudes and fears toward marriage may be due to their experiences of a negative view of marriage and the witnessing of a failed relationship. This finding must be carefully explained because it is possible that perceptions and what is actually the finding can and may have been misinterpreted in the literature.

As noted above, there are inconsistencies in previous literature as to whether or not parental divorce affects the attitudes toward marriage of young adults. Some researchers have found that divorce does affect the attitudes toward marriage of their offspring while others do not see significant differences between young adults from intact and divorced families. The current study aims to clarify these mixed findings.

### Family Influences

Although there are inconsistencies in the literature about the effects divorce has on young adults beliefs towards romantic relationships and marriage, there is evidence that past experiences of personal family life influence expectations. It is known that college students from divorced families are more likely to have lower educational attainment, have lower income, are more likely to go on welfare, marry at younger ages, and cohabit before marriage than children from non-divorced families (Amato & Booth, 1991; Feng, Giarrusso, Bengston & Frye, 1999). After being aware that the experience of parental divorce may predispose certain people to experience particular things in the future, it is

important to consider other influential factors involved that go beyond just the act of divorce itself.

Lee (1995) conducted a qualitative research study using a naturalistic paradigm to propose “a trajectory of influence of parental divorce on children’s heterosexual relationships” This study adopted an emergent design based on the constant comparison method using a sample of four based on the idea of a qualitative informational isomorph. The informants were two males and two females with one of each sex being married and one being not married. Each session was taped and fully transcribed. Two major aspect changes in life circumstances following divorce were identified in this study. One was the change in the socioeconomic situation of the custodial parent and the other was the change in family structure. The results indicate the influence of parental divorce on children’s subsequent heterosexual romantic relationships is not straightforward and direct. A general causal relationship between parental divorce and children’s subsequent heterosexual relationships was not supported by data from this study. Instead of a causal relationship, they believe divorce can be seen as a critical life event. The experiences of the four participants indicate the involvement of highly complex processes that are not static and evolve over time as new learning occurs. This was found to be especially true after the individual leaves the family of origin. Therefore, to best understand the “transmission of intergenerational stability,” it is important to consider each child individually and the impact and meaning to the person involved

Gabardi and Rosen (1992) found that there were no differences between students from divorced and intact families in intimacy, attitudes toward marriage, and dating

satisfaction. One year prior, Gabardi and Rosen (1991) did very similar research and found very different results. This research used a similar sample but added more measures including a parental conflict scale, a depth of sexual involvement scale, the Relationship Belief Inventory, and the Adult Self-Perception Profile. By adding more measures, the researchers were better able to control for possible confounding influences. These researchers' experiences belie the possibility that there may be many variables affecting children's adjustment to parental divorce that should be statistically controlled for or directly investigated when conducting research in this area (Gabardi and Rosen, 1992).

While some researchers have reported findings about the attitudes toward marriage of young adults that either show strong support that divorce does or does not affect these attitudes, other results have not been as clearly determined. Sprecher, Cate & Levin (1998) had a sample that consisted of 1043 Caucasian young adults from 5 universities in the United States who averaged 20 years old. They measured status of parent's marriage, attachment types, love styles, romantic beliefs (using the Sprecher and Metts (1989) Romantic Beliefs Scale and Kephart's Love Scale (1967) )Love as a basis for marriage scale. The researchers found only modest differences between young adults from intact families and young adults from divorced families on a variety of measures of attitudes and beliefs about marriage. They did not find that those from divorced families were less likely to believe love should be a basis for marriage. Those from divorced homes were also not generally less romantic than those intact families. Findings did indicate some associations between parental marital status and love beliefs, although the associations differed for

males vs. females. Females from intact families had more secure attachment styles than those from divorced families.

Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) provide evidence from a 5 year follow up study investigating children of divorce that family structure impacts expectations of marriage. They interviewed 131 adolescents from 60 families and reported that almost all experienced anxiety about issues of love, commitment, and marriage. They were all largely committed to the idea of a lasting marriage and fidelity, but they were immensely frightened about repeating the mistakes of their parents and were eager to avoid divorcing for their own sake and the sake of their children. Although most expressed a desire to marry, a considerable number of the women avoided commitment and were involved in short lived sexual relationships. After the 15 year follow up, it was noted that a significant number of the participants had entered therapy and were working on separating from the identification with the mother of father or the guilt of having obtained a successful relationship, which the parent failed to achieve (Wallerstein, 1991).

The act of divorce alone may not be the most significant factor affecting the attitudes toward marriage of young adults. Findings from previous research suggest that other family influences may be more likely to affect attitudes significantly than parent's marital status.

### Conflict

The current study aims to clarify past research looking at the effects of parental divorce on the attitudes toward marriage of college students. In order to understand the possibility of the "transmission of intergenerational instability," research needs to not look

at things from a causal approach, but consider each experience unique and as having different meaning to the individual involved. Wallerstein (1991) concludes a similar finding in her review of the long-term effects of divorce on children. She frequently found the critical importance of the custodial parent-child relationship as well as the detrimental impact of chronic interparental hostility on the child. She too stresses the importance for future research to focus on the particular child's feelings, sufferings, and experiences to better understand the effects of divorce.

As mentioned previously, it is likely that divorce itself is not the most significant determining factor in relation to the marital attitudes of young adults. Other factors should be investigated such as: level of parental conflict before the divorce (Forehand, Neighbors, Devine, & Arminstead, 1994; Kirk; 2002; Wallerstein, 1991), level of conflict after the divorce (Gabardi & Rosen, 1992; Morris & West, 2001), family structure/custodial arrangement (Shulman, Scharf, Lumer, & Maurer, 2001; Bruce, Flora, & Stacey, 2004), level of conflict in the custodial home (Amato & Booth, 1991; Kelly & Emery, 2003; Lopez, 1991), or age at time of divorce (Amato & Sobolewski, 2001) when considering the impact of divorce on future attitudes toward marriage. Conflict as a factor seems to appear over and over again in much of the work cited above, therefore conflict and its arc across marriage and divorce will be focused upon in conjunction with examining the effects of parental divorce on attitudes toward marriage.

In research by Gabardi & Rosen (1992) it is suggested that the quality of the parent's relationships and the degree of conflict between the parents, whether married or divorced, are more salient factors affecting the relationships of college students. This

study found parental conflict after the divorce to be a significant predictor of more negative attitudes toward marriage but that conflict prior to the divorce was not a significant predictor of relationship factors. The authors hypothesize that this may be true because the recency of the conflict after the divorce may be more threatening because the parents are no longer insulated by the marriage and the children may have a more conflictual relationship with the noncustodial parent. Kirk (2002) also found a main effect for family conflict. In her research those who reported higher conflict reported higher expectations for divorce than those reporting lower conflict. A significant interaction was also seen between parent's marital status and parental conflict with regards to divorce expectations. Young adults from intact families with low or high conflict had no significant effect on expectation for divorce, but for young adults from divorced families, those reporting higher levels of conflict were more likely to expect divorce than those from divorced families with low conflict. This suggests that conflict may hurt children in the long-term with respect to their romantic relationships with others. By looking at conflict research, it can be seen that conflict alone may be an important factor to consider when examining the attitudes toward marriage of young adults.

#### Conflict Following Divorce

Morris & West (2001) were interested in knowing if parental conflict following divorce was as detrimental as that which takes place when the marriage is still intact. Participants were 127 college students whose parents had divorced a minimum of 2 years prior when the student was at least 6 years of age. They examined the relationship between parental conflict post-divorce and young adults' willingness to be intimate in their

own relationships. They found that higher levels of post-divorce conflict correlated with higher levels of perceived risk in intimacy. Results also indicated that female subjects as well as those who encountered parental conflict at an earlier age were more likely perceive there to be risks involved in emotional intimacy.

### Family Conflict

Lopez (1991) looked at patterns of family conflict and their relation to college student adjustment in a unique way. He explored whether college students reported participation in one of four theoretically distinct family alignments was differentially related to their scores on a multidimensional measure of college adjustment. Students were classified into one of four family alignment groups (noncoalition, mother-coalition, father-coalition, and triangulation) on the basis of their comparative levels of conflictual independence from each parent. The final sample consisted of 815 students who rated their parents as currently married and living together. The marital conflict scale developed by the author was used to assess student self report of conflict, tension, and instability in their parent's relationship. Other measures consisted of the Conflict Independence (CI) subscale of the Psychological Separation Inventory (PSI) and the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ). Results indicate that both student sex and marital conflict were significantly related to college adjustment, but that in each case these relationships were limited to scores on the personal adjustment subscale: women and students who reported high levels of marital conflict in their current family had lower personal adjustment. On the other hand, the family alignment factor had a significant multivariate relationship to all four measures of college adjustment significant univariate relationships

to each individual adjustment measure. This suggests that the personal adjustment of college students may be negatively affected if there is a conflictual relationship with either or both parents.

### Interparental Conflict

Other researchers believe that conflict between parents has a greater negative effect than divorce and have found interparental conflict to be equally or more important than parental divorce in influencing young adults (Forehand, Neighbors, Devine, & Arminstead, 1994). In their research, they propose that the current level of interparental conflict at any given point in time in a family (intact or divorced) is a critical variable that provides more information about functioning than does the marital status of the parents. They uphold the belief that family environment (interparental conflict) is more important in predicting adolescent functioning than earlier interparental conflict. Participants were examined over a 4 year time span and included information from 227 Caucasian adolescents, their mothers and their social studies teachers. Although results indicated that both marital status and current interparental conflict independently influence adolescent functioning, the percentage of variance accounted for was very small. Current interparental conflict appeared to be at least equally important with marital status in that it was related to functioning across the first 3 years in all domains: externalizing problems, internalizing problems, cognitive competence, and social competence. Current interparental conflict was assessed not only in the first year post divorce, but annually for the next 3 years. Results indicate that the level of interparental conflict did not differ between married and divorced families in three of the four years assessed, which is

surprising because divorce is generally associated with high conflict. Overall, it found that interparental conflict, when compared to marital status, has at least an equally negative effect. Furthermore, it is the current level of conflict, not previous levels, which is most important. This leads us to believe that our current study will also yield similar results and find that the act or omission of divorce is not what is most important, but that conflict will be a more significant factor.

### Perceptions

Another possible explanation for why some individuals have better outcomes after divorce than others could relate to their perceptions and reflections about the event, rather than the actual content of the experiences. Shulman, Scharf, Lumer, & Maurer (2001) hypothesize that a more integrative and resolved pattern of appraising paternal divorce would be related to more adaptive romantic relationships in young adulthood. Data was collected from 51 Israeli college students whose parents were divorced. None of the participants were married, but all had a romantic partner in a relationship that had lasted more than 3 months. Interviews were done and surveys were completed to assess their romantic relationship, parent's conflict, and current feelings about and reconstruction of the divorce. Unexpectedly, the results indicate that sense of loss and anger associated with parental divorce was not related to the quality of offspring's romantic relationships. An integrative perception of divorce was found to relate to higher levels of friendship, enjoyment, and intimacy and to fewer problems in young adults romantic relationships. Another factor that contributed to higher quality romantic relationships was the mother's marital status. Maternal remarriage was related to young adults' higher levels of

friendship, enjoyment, intimacy, and passion and fewer problems in their romantic relationships. The results of this study did not indicate a major role for parental conflict in young adult's romantic relationships. Actually, the significant findings showed that a higher level of parental conflict during divorce was related to higher levels of intimacy and passion with a romantic relationship in young adulthood. Although this finding is counterintuitive, it is possible that those exposed to high conflict make a point to leave the family and establish a different relationship with their partner. Overall, this indicates that those who experience maternal remarriage as well as those who have an integrative perception of divorce have better outcomes than those who do not experience these things.

### Age

Mentioned previously, there could potentially be a connection between age at time of divorce and the affect this may have on young adult attitudes toward marriage. Amato & Sobolewski (2001) used 17-year longitudinal data to attempt to explain the associations between marital conflict and divorce with children's distress in later adulthood. They considered age at time of divorce to be an important variable to study, and found that the age at time of parental divorce as well as time since the divorce was not related to the psychological well-being of young adult children. Parent-child relationships were found to mediate most of the associations between parental conflict and divorce and adult children's future outcomes.

After a review of the literature, the question still remains as to what effect parental divorce has on the attitudes toward marriage of young adults? This review concludes that

it is important to consider multiple factors other than the act of divorce and that just knowing whether or not a divorce occurred is not sufficient information when determining the impact on young adult future marital beliefs. This study hypothesizes that a) young adults differences in marital attitudes will not be based on the marital status of their parents, and b) the differences in marital attitudes will be based on parental conflict (in the intact marriage of the parents or in the primary custodial relationship conflict). The research question is: What combination of the predictor variables: conflict in parents relationship before the divorce, conflict in the primary custodial relationship, conflict in parents relationship post divorce, and age at time of divorce best explains the variance in subjects from divorced families reported attitudes toward marriage?

## METHODS

### Subjects

The sample consisted of 441 students enrolled in several introductory Human Development and Family Studies classes at a large southeastern university. These courses enroll a cross section of students from all majors on campus. Males accounted for 17% of the sample, while 83% were female. Of the 441 participants, 83.2% were Caucasian, 12.5% were African American, 1.4% were Hispanic, .7% were Asian and .9% were Native American. Seventy-two percent, (316 students) in the sample had parents who were still married, while 28% (125 students) had parents that were divorced. Because the focus of the study was on premarital attitudes, subjects whose parents were either deceased or separated were removed from the sample. Also, this study includes students from divorced and intact families, so those who reported their parent's relationship to be never married or widowed were removed from the subject pool. Of the 452 total surveys completed, 14 were missing data for the attitudes toward marriage variable, 4 were missing for the parent's marital status variable and 11 were missing from the current conflict variable, leaving a total of 29 with missing data. These 29 were deleted from the analyzed sample, leaving us with 441 total useable surveys. 316 were from intact families and 125 were from divorce.

## Procedure

Subjects were asked to complete a series of questionnaires regarding demographic information, attitudes toward marriage, parental conflict, and family structure. All subjects were informed that the survey information was completely confidential and that they would be identified only by subject number to maintain anonymity. Upon receipt of completed questionnaires, code numbers were matched to the master list and the subject's names were removed to protect confidentiality. They were then assigned consecutive numbers based on the order in which they were received. For analytic purposes, those who report their parent's marital status to be "divorced" were coded with a 1, and those who report their parent's marital status as "intact" were coded with a 0.

To complete the analyses, the total sample (n=441) was divided into two groups. One group consisted of 316 students from intact homes and 125 students from divorced homes. The second group consisted of 96 students from divorced homes. The N's utilized in the two regressions differ for students from divorced homes because the regression investigating the within divorced group only for the research question utilized subjects with no missing data for any of the predictor variables.

## Predictor Variables

Pre-divorce Conflict- This variable represents subject's reported level of conflict in their parent's relationship before the divorce. It was measured using the Marital Conflict Scale.

Primary Custodial Relationship Conflict- This variable represents subject's reported level of conflict in the primary custodial relationship after the divorce. This can include a remarriage as well as a long term relationship of the parent who is the primary custodian.

This variable was measured using the Co-Parenting Behavior Questionnaire.

Post-divorce Conflict- This variable represents subject's reported of conflict in their parent's relationship post divorce. This variable was measured using the Marital Conflict Scale.

Age at Time of Divorce- This variable was measured by self-report through one question on the demographic questionnaire.

Family Structure-This variable can best be explained as the primary structure or custodial arrangement after the divorce (single parent, multiple remarriages, etc). It was measured by a self-report item on the demographic questionnaire.

#### Definition and Measurement of the Predictor Variables

Demographic data sheet - Subjects were asked a series of questions regarding age, gender, marital status, racial/ethnic background, and family structure. Subjects were also asked about their parent's marital history (whether or not a remarriage occurred, living arrangements after the divorce, how long in a single parent home, etc).

Marital Conflict Scale- This 13-item scale was developed by Lopez (1991) to assess conflict, tension, and instability in parental relationships (Cronbach's alpha =.90). This scale has a score range of 13 to 65. Two versions of the instrument were used. The first version was given to students who reported that their parents were still married. The second version had the same questions but was worded in the past tense for students who reported their parents were divorced. Subjects from divorced families potentially completed this instrument 2 times. They reported on conflict between their parents for 1 year before the divorce and for conflict in the custodial arrangement after the divorce if

the custodial parent was/is in a relationship.

Co-Parenting Behavior Questionnaire (CBQ) – This 86-item scale was developed by Stolberg (1999) as a child reported measurement of parenting as well as co-parenting behaviors that are present post-divorce. The CBQ contains 12 subscales examining Parental Conflict, Co-parental Communication, Triangulation, Co-Parental Cooperation, as well as the following parenting skills for both mother and father: Warmth, Parent-Child Communication, Monitoring, and Discipline. The scales have good internal consistency with alpha coefficients that range from .82 and .93 as well as good validity when correlated with measures of behavior problems and self-esteem. Scores on these subscales can range from a minimum of 34 to a maximum score of 170. Subjects from divorced families will complete part A of the scale, which includes the Parental Conflict and Triangulation subscales, which refers to the ex-couples relationship. The Parental Conflict subscale has Community coefficients ranging from .42 to .76 and Factor Loading coefficients ranging from .65 to .87. The Triangulation subscale has Community coefficients ranging from .19 to .70 and Factor Loading coefficients ranging from .55 to .84. Subjects will be reporting on the conflict between the parents 1 year after the divorce. This instrument will be used to measure conflict in the intact home as well as measure conflict in the primary custodial relationship. For those students who have experienced the divorce of their parents, they will fill it out a second time and will answer questions based on their parent's relationship toward each other for one year after the divorce.

#### Measurement of the Outcome Variable

Marital Attitude Scale (MAS) – The Marital Attitude Scale is a 23-item scale designed to

measure current individual attitudes toward heterosexual marriage (Braaten & Rosen, 1998). This scale is used to determine self reported attitudes of adult children toward marriage. This scale's items ask to what degree the individual agrees with a certain statement. The internal reliability of the MAS has been reported to have an alpha coefficient of .82 and the 6 week test-retest reliability is reported to be  $\alpha = .85$ , with  $\alpha = .81$  for males and  $\alpha = .87$  for females. (Braaten & Rosen, 1998). Scores for this measurement range from a low score of 23 to a high score of 92.

## RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine what effects parental divorce has on the attitudes toward marriage of young adults, as well as clarifying if it is important to consider multiple factors other than the act of divorce. Two regressions were conducted to examine the relationships between parental marital status, parental marital conflict, age at time of divorce, and parental conflict (before and after the divorce) and attitudes toward marriage of the subjects. A discussion of the results of these analyses follows.

### Description of Sample

From the total sample of 441, the mean age was 20.47 with 83.2% of the sample being female. This sample was made up of 83.2% White students, 12.5% Black students, .9% Native American, 1.4% Hispanic and .7% Asian. Students reporting they have parents who were divorced made up 28.3% of the sample, while those reporting their parents to still be married made up 71.7% of the sample. The mean age for the 316 students from intact homes was 20.46 while 83.2% was female. The majority of this sample was White making up 85.4%, with Blacks accounting for 9.5%, Hispanics accounting for 1.9% and Asians and Native Americans accounting for .6% respectively.

The divorced group used in these analyses consisted of 125 and 96 students respectively. The 125 was used in the first analysis and was reduced to 96 for the second analysis in order to utilize those participants without any missing data for the within

divorced group question. For the 125 member group, the mean age was 20.5 with a mean age at divorce of 8.9 years old. This sample was 83.2% females. Whites made up 77.6% of the 125 subjects, Blacks accounted for 20%, Asians .8%, and Native Americans 1.6%.

In the 96 student group, the mean age was 20.63 with 82.3% of the sample being female. The sample was 75% White, 21.9% Black, 2% Native American, and 1% Asian. Of this group, 30.2% lived primarily with their biological mother and step dad post-divorce, 33% lived with biological mother only, 15.6% lived with biological/adoptive parents only, 5.2% lived with biological father only, 5.2% lived with biological father and step mom, 4.2% lived with biological father and his girlfriend, 4.2% lived with biological mom and her boyfriend, and 1% lived with other.

#### Descriptive Statistics for the Complete Data Divorce Sample

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Parental Marital Attitude	43.62	6.38
Marital Conflict	30.68	11.09
Conflict Before Divorce	101.41	19.60
Conflict After Divorce	108.23	28.75
Age of Divorce	8.61	5.61

When comparing these two groups (divorced and intact), you will see that there are few differences between them on demographic characteristics. The only significant difference is the increase in the number of Black students who report their parents to be divorced. Although different by percentage than the intact group, this finding is consistent

with what previous literature reports: a higher divorce rates among African Americans. In relation to the high percentage of study subjects who were female, due to the nature of the courses where this survey was collected, you would expect to find that females overwhelmingly outnumber males.

### Exploratory Analyses

As an initial exploration of the data, a t-test was conducted comparing the means of marital conflict in the primary custodial arrangement/parent's relationship to determine if they were significantly different. The means are statistically different at the .001 level ( $t=-8.320$ ). Students reported that the primary custodial situation they found themselves in following their parent's divorce (mean = 30.59) had higher levels of conflict in the home than did the students whose parents remained together (mean = 21.91).

Additionally, a t-test was conducted comparing the means of marital attitudes between the student's from intact families and those whose parent's had divorced. The mean difference is statistically different at the .001 level ( $t=-4.634$ ). Students from divorced homes marital attitudes (mean = 41.13) are less positive than are those of students from intact homes.(mean = 43.86).

### Tests of the Two Hypotheses

Our hypotheses state that a) young adult's differences in marital attitudes will not be significantly affected by the marital status of their parents, and b) marital conflict (in the intact marriage of the parents or in the primary custodial relationship) will explain a significant amount of the variance in young adult's marital attitudes. Initial analyses revealed a normal distribution. To test the two hypotheses, a simple regression was

computed using marital conflict and parents divorce status as the predictor variables and marital attitudes as the dependant variable. Specifically, this regression was undertaken to determine if either or both of the variables marital conflict and parents divorce status accounts for a statistically significant amount of the variance in subject's marital attitudes. The results of the regression indicate that the first and second hypotheses are accepted. The results of the regression including both predictors were:  $R^2 = .12$   $F(2,438) = 30.942$ ,  $p < .001$ . In Model 1, when controlling for only marital conflict, it emerged as the single significant predictor for marital attitudes ( $t = 7.71$ ,  $p = .00$ ). In Model 2, ( $t = 6.62$ ,  $p = .00$  and  $t = 1.50$ ,  $p = .13$ ) when both marital conflict and parent's divorce status were controlled for. With an  $R^2$  change of only .005 in Model 2, parent's divorce status did not account for a statistically significant amount of additional variance in marital attitudes explained above the amount explained by marital conflict (see Table 1).

Table 1

## Regression Analysis for the Hypotheses

Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	β
Marital Attitude Scores		
Model 1	.12***	
Marital Conflict		.35**
Model 2	.13	
Marital Conflict		.32**
Parent's Divorce Status		.07

\*\*p<.01, \*\*\*p<.001

The results reveal that 11.9% of the variance in marital attitudes is accounted for by the amount of marital conflict reported in the primary custodial relationship of the subjects ( $R^2 = .119$ ). Parent's marital status did not account for a significant additional amount of variance explained in marital attitude scores above the amount explained by marital conflict.

#### Tests of the Research Question

The research question asks: "What combination of the predictor variables: conflict in parents relationship before the divorce, conflict in custodial situation after the divorce, conflict in parents relationship post divorce, and age at time of divorce best explains the variance in subjects from divorced families reported attitudes toward marriage? To answer this question a regression was conducted using the students with divorced parents who completed a measure of instruments that allowed the following predictor variables to be

included: parent's marital conflict before the divorce, parent's marital conflict after the divorce and marital conflict in the primary custodial relationship and age at divorce. The dependent variable was the subject's current marital attitudes. The results indicated that marital conflict in the primary custodial arrangement was the only variable that accounted for a statistically significant amount of the variance in marital attitudes. When controlling for marital conflict in Model 1,  $R^2 = .049$ ,  $F(1, 94) = 4.827$ ,  $p < .05$  was significant. In this model marital conflict is a predictor of marital attitudes ( $t = 2.20$ ,  $p = .03$ ). In Model 4, when controlling for marital conflict, conflict before divorce, conflict after divorce, and age at time of divorce were all included,  $R^2 = .068$ ,  $F(4, 94) = 1.653$ ,  $p > .01$ . In this model the findings indicate that by controlling for marital conflict ( $t = .49$ ,  $p = .62$ ), conflict before the divorce, ( $t = -1.28$ ,  $p = .20$ ), conflict after the divorce, ( $t = .79$ ,  $p = .43$ ) and for age at time of divorce ( $t = -.169$ ,  $p = .866$ ), that these other variables added very little to the outcome than what was already explained by marital conflict (see Table 2).

Table 2

Regression Analysis for the Research Question

Variable	R <sup>2</sup>	β
Marital Attitude Scores		
Model 1	.05*	
Marital Conflict		.22*
Model 4	.07**	
Marital Conflict		.08
Conflict Before Divorce		-.21
Conflict After Divorce		.09
Age at time of Divorce		-.02

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01

The complete model accounted for 6.8% of the variance (R<sup>2</sup>=.068), with marital conflict accounting for 5% (R<sup>2</sup>=.05).

## DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the possible effects that parental marital status, parental conflict (either before the divorce, after the divorce or in the primary custodial arrangement) and age at time of divorce has on the subject's attitudes toward marriage. As addressed in the introduction, information in this area has either been lacking, misleading, or conflicting. Previous research has mixed married subjects with unmarried subjects or has not clarified accurately what they were researching. This study hoped to clarify previous misconceptions and shortcomings by specifically investigating the premarital attitudes of young adults who are single and whose parents are either divorced or intact as opposed to widowed or never married. These contributions are noteworthy for young adults from conflictual intact families as well as those from divorced homes.

Initial research efforts reported results that subjects from divorced homes have more negative attitudes toward marriage than those subjects from intact homes. This finding seems to be incomplete. As mentioned in Gabardi & Rosen (1992), they suggest it is the quality of the parent's relationships and the degree of conflict between the parents, whether married or divorced, that is more important towards affecting the relationships of young adults. While we did find that the amount of conflict reported affects marital attitudes, our research indicates that specifically, it is the current level of conflict in the home (the intact marriage or the primary custodial relationship) that is most important in

regards to marital attitudes. When other variables are considered, primarily marital conflict in the home, research reports that conflict variables are more important in explaining variance in marital attitudes than just knowing whether or not a divorce occurred. The results of the current study support the need to no longer isolate single variables. More complex data analyses need to be utilized that include multiple variables. Amato, Loomis, & Booth (1995) found that divorce was beneficial to children because it allowed them to escape from parental conflict. The current study found this not to be the case. Whether divorced or not, if the conflict experience in the home did not change, the attitudes toward marriage of the students was more negative than if parental conflict was reported at lower levels. Having current conflictual models of marriage in the home related to an increase in the negative attitudes toward marriage that were reported. This finding was unique to surprising based on past research. It did not come as a surprise for our results to parallel past research that indicates students from divorce report more negative attitudes toward marriage than those students from an intact home. What did come as a surprise was that the level of marital conflict in the home (intact marriage or primary custodial relationship) was in fact more important than if a divorce occurred. This outcome has major implications for problem-solving methods as well as parenting practices. In the present study, those parents who chose to use divorce as a problem-solving mechanism, or as a way to reduce conflict in the home, were unsuccessful. In those homes where the level of conflict decreased after the divorce, then the act of divorcing may have been the best decision for the sake of the child. In those homes where the custodial parent continued to be in a conflictual relationship, with post-divorce committed relationships or remarriages,

the act of divorce seems to contribute little to decreasing or eliminating conflict in the home. In some cases, the act of divorcing may have actually exacerbated conflict surrounding the child.

Parents who believed that divorcing would free their home from conflict or make parenting easier in this study seem to have miscalculated. Divorced parents still must deal with each other in order to do a good job of co-parenting their children. The added stress of post-divorce co-parenting may add an additional element of conflict to the family dynamic leading to an even greater level of conflict experienced in the family or between the ex-spouses/co-parents. The results of the present study may be very useful for understanding parenting practices. It can encourage parents to be careful about how openly they argue in front of their children as well as encouraging parents to be more realistic about what they expect divorce to really solve.

Knowing that it is the current level of marital/relational conflict that a student is most exposed to that significantly affects marital attitudes may have important implications for learning and teaching better methods for conflict resolution. For those parents who found themselves in one conflictual relationship after another, improving conflict management skills could truly alter the marital attitudes or expectations of their offspring.

#### Future Research

It would be interesting to investigate how students answer questions about the conflict that still exists between their biological parents who are now divorced as well as the level of conflict in their own romantic relationships. These findings lead us to believe that the negative responses on marital attitudes has more to do with one's ability to

resolve conflict than it does with parent's marital status. Those participants who had parents who were able to handle conflict whether in their first marriage or in a post-divorce relationship, reported more positive marital attitudes.

To simplify our findings, it appears that if your current living situation (regardless of if your parents are divorced, remarried or dating) has high conflict then your marital attitudes will be more negative than those young people from homes where there is lower conflict. In the present study, the act of divorce alone did little to increase or decrease marital attitudes. These results are in agreement with Forehand, Neighbors, Devine, & Armistead (1994). In their research, they propose that the current level of interparental conflict at any given point in time in a family (intact or divorced) is a critical variable that provides more information about functioning than does the marital status of the parents. By having students report on the conflict in their own romantic relationships, it would be easier to track conflict patterns and how they are resolved in healthy or unhealthy ways. By knowing how young adults are dealing with conflict in pre-marital relationships, future research could use this information to better prepare them and provide them with ways to improve on conflict management skills so that these young adults will be better equipped for their own marriages which will hopefully decrease their likelihood to divorce.

### Limitations

A sample of convenience was utilized in this study, though reflective of the majors and racial breakdown of the university, the percentage of females in the sample does not reflect the gender breakdown of the university. Studies with larger, more representative samples from more diverse populations would contribute important additional information.

A second limitation is the retrospective design of the study. These findings could improve in accuracy if a longitudinal design was implemented to track students and their perceived level of conflict before, during and after a divorce has occurred in the home. This would help portray a more accurate picture of what really goes on in the home during this hectic time period. Having a longitudinal design would allow the researcher to track attitudes toward marriage at different high and low points of conflict over time allowing to assess for fluctuations and patterns at different time intervals along the way.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that among those students who completed this survey, that it was the level of conflict as they experienced it, in their current and/or most longstanding model of marriage, which affected their reported marital attitudes. Whether or not your parents went through a divorce was not what was most influential. Those who had parents who divorced did have more negative attitudes toward marriage, but it was the level of conflict in their current/most longstanding model of marriage that actually accounted for a significant amount of change in the reported marital attitudes. The present study was specific in examining pre-marital attitudes toward marriage. This study did not include views from participants who had been married or divorced in the past or who had parents who were widowed or never married.

With research findings being mixed about divorce alone affecting marital attitudes, the second component of this study was to investigate what other variables would be more important than just the knowledge of parent's marital status. The current studies' findings were successful in determining that at least one additional variable is significant and should

be considered. Most importantly for this research, it was found that marital conflict or primary custodial relationship conflict should be included as an important variable when looking at martial attitudes of students from intact or divorced homes.

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APPENDIX A

TABLES

Table 1

Correlations Between the Study Variables for the Total Sample, N = 441

	Parental Marital Attitude	Marital Conflict or Primary Custodial Relationship Conflict
Marital Conflict or Primary Custodial Relationship Conflict	.345**	
Parent's Divorce Status	-.018	.234*

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01;

Table 2

Correlations Between the Study Variables for the Divorced Sample, N = 96

	Parental Marital Attitude	Primary Post-divorce Relationship Conflict	Conflict Before Divorce	Conflict After Divorce	Age of Divorce
Parental marital attitude		.20*	-.22*	.04	.01
Primary Post-divorce Relationship Conflict	.20*		-.74**	-.09	.18
Conflict Before Divorce	-.22*	-.74**		.32**	-.19
Conflict After Divorce	.04	-.09	.32**		-.29**
Age of Divorce	.01	.18	-.19	-.29**	

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01;

APPENDIX B  
QUESTIONNAIRE

**Marital Expectations**

Please answer each question as completely and honestly as possible. If a question does not apply to you write NA for Not Applicable.

1. Your age: \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Your Sex: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Your current relationship/marital status is:  
 A. Single/Never Married      B. Married      C. Divorced

4. Your current dating/relationship status is:
- |                  |                     |            |
|------------------|---------------------|------------|
| A. Casual Dating | B. Seriously Dating | C. Engaged |
| D. Cohabiting    | E. Not Dating       |            |

5. What is your racial/ethnic group? \_\_\_\_\_ (Please Specify)
6. Were your parents divorced? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
7. Please mark the category which describes the majority of your living arrangements prior to the age of 18.
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| A. Lived with biological/adoptive parents      | E. Lived with biological/adoptive mother only          |
| B. Lived with biological/adoptive father only  | F. Lived with biological father and girlfriend/partner |
| C. Lived with biological father and stepmother | G. Lived with biological mother and boyfriend/partner  |
| D. Lived with biological mother and stepfather | H. Other   |

8. If your parents are divorced, how old were you when this happened? \_\_\_\_\_ years old.
9. How many years have your parents been divorced? \_\_\_\_\_ years
10. Many people experience unfortunate events in their relationship history. Thinking back on your relationship history, have you experienced anything such as: Unwanted sexual contact, Violence, Infidelity, Verbal Abuse, etc. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
11. If you answered YES to # 10, how many major negative actions have been perpetrated against you by your dating partners? \_\_\_\_\_
12. If you have been in a committed relationship in the past, how long did that relationship last? \_\_\_\_\_ months

**Please complete the rest of this survey using the Scantron sheet provided.**

The following questions deal with experiences in current dating relationships.  
Please complete with the answer which seems most accurate

1 = Strongly Disagree                      2 = Disagree                      3 = Agree                      4 = Strongly Agree

1. My overall dating experiences have been positive.....1 2 3 4
2. It is important to me to be in a committed relationship.....1 2 3 4

**If your parents divorced, please answer the following 3 questions. If not, please skip to question # 6.**

3. I saw/heard my parents argue and yell often before they got divorced.....1 2 3 4
4. My parents have had physical altercations with one another before divorcing...1 2 3 4
5. My parents often appeared angry with each other or unhappy in the marriage...1 2 3 4

**Please indicate by circling how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding marriage. (please check only one answer for each item)**

6. People should marry.....1 2 3 4
7. I have little confidence that my marriage will be a success.....1 2 3 4
8. People should stay married to their spouses for the rest of their lives.....1 2 3 4
9. Most couples are either unhappy in their marriage or are divorced.....1 2 3 4
10. I will be satisfied when I get married.....1 2 3 4
11. I am fearful of marriage.....1 2 3 4
12. I have doubts about marriage.....1 2 3 4
13. People should only get married if they are sure that it will last forever.....1 2 3 4
14. People should feel very cautious about entering into a marriage.....1 2 3 4
15. Most marriages are unhappy situations.....1 2 3 4
16. Marriage is only a legal contract.....1 2 3 4
17. Marriage is a sacred act.....1 2 3 4
18. Most marriages aren't equal partnerships.....1 2 3 4
19. Most people have to sacrifice too much in marriage.....1 2 3 4
20. Because half of all marriages end in divorce, marriage seems futile.....1 2 3 4
21. If I divorce, I would probably remarry.....1 2 3 4
22. Marriage provides companionship that is missing from other types of relationships.....1 2 3 4
23. When people don't get along, I believe they should divorce.....1 2 3 4
24. I believe a relationship can be just as strong without having to go through the marriage ceremony.....1 2 3 4
25. My lifelong dream includes a happy marriage.....1 2 3 4
26. There is not such a thing as a happy marriage.....1 2 3 4
27. Marriage restricts individuals from achieving their goals.....1 2 3 4
28. People weren't meant to stay in one relationship for their entire lives.....1 2 3 4

**Please answer the following questions about the current relationship of your parents. If they are still married, answer the questions about that relationship. If they are divorced, please answer these questions about the predominant relationship of the parent in the home you lived in after the divorce (prior to age 18). For instance, if you primarily lived with your mother, please answer these questions about her remarriage or long term relationship, if she had one. If you lived with your father, please answer these questions about his remarriage or long term relationship, if he had one.**

DIRECTIONS: Using the scale below, respond to each item by indicating how true each item is of you and/or

your family situation.

1 = Completely False  
4 = Mostly True

2 = Mostly False  
5 = Completely True

3 = Not Sure

- 29. My parents/stepparents argue a lot.....1 2 3 4 5
- 30. I worry about my parents/stepparents' future.....1 2 3 4 5
- 31. I wonder if my parents/stepparents will divorce.....1 2 3 4 5
- 32. I feel secure that my parents/stepparents can work out their differences.....1 2 3 4 5
- 33. My parents/stepparents seem to be drifting apart.....1 2 3 4 5
- 34. My parents/stepparents are in love with one another..... 1 2 3 4 5
- 35. There are matters my parents/stepparents won't discuss with each other..... 1 2 3 4 5
- 36. My parents/stepparents seem happier than they really are.....1 2 3 4 5
- 37. My parents/stepparents stay together for the children.....1 2 3 4 5
- 38. There is tension in my parents/stepparents' relationship.....1 2 3 4 5
- 39. I'm not sure why my parents/stepparents are together. ....1 2 3 4 5
- 40. My parents/stepparents can handle stress.....1 2 3 4 5
- 41. My parent's/stepparent's marriage is solid.....1 2 3 4 5

On the following pages, you will see sentences that have to do with you and your parents or stepparents (or **their long term partner**). Following each statement, there is a scale from 1 to 5

1 = almost never, 3=sometimes, and 5= almost always).

- 42. My parents/stepparents complain about each other.....1 2 3 4 5
- 43. My dad/stepdad tells me bad things about my mom/stepmom.....1 2 3 4 5
- 44. My parents/stepparents argue about money in front of me.....1 2 3 4 5
- 45. When my parents/stepparents argue, I feel forced to choose sides.....1 2 3 4 5
- 46. When my parents/stepparents talk to each other, they accuse each other of bad things.....1 2 3 4 5
- 47. My parents/stepparents talk nicely to each other.....1 2 3 4 5
- 48. My mom/stepmom asks me questions about my dad/stepdad that I wish she would not ask .....1 2 3 4 5
- 49. I feel caught between my parents/stepparents.....1 2 3 4 5
- 50. My dad/stepdad asks me questions about my mom/stepmom that I wish he would not ask.....1 2 3 4 5
- 51. My mom/stepmom wants me to be close to my dad/stepdad.....1 2 3 4 5
- 52. My parents/stepparents argue in front of me.....1 2 3 4 5
- 53. It is okay to talk about my mom/stepmom in front of my dad/stepdad.....1 2 3 4 5
- 54. My parents/stepparents talk to each other about my problems.....1 2 3 4 5
- 55. It is okay to talk about my dad/stepdad in front of my mom/stepmom.....1 2 3 4 5
- 56. My parents/stepparents talk to each other about my school and my health.....1 2 3 4 5
- 57. My dad/stepdad gets angry at my mom/stepmom.....1 2 3 4 5
- 58. When my parents/stepparents talk to each other, they get angry.....1 2 3 4 5
- 59. My parents/stepparents talk to each other about big choices in my life.....1 2 3 4 5
- 60. My mom/stepmom tells me bad things about my dad/stepdad.....1 2 3 4 5
- 61. When my mom/stepmom needs help with me, she asks my dad/stepdad.....1 2 3 4 5
- 62. My mom/stepmom tells me good things about my dad/stepdad.....1 2 3 4 5
- 63. My parents/stepparents talk to each other about the good things I do.....1 2 3 4 5
- 64. When my dad/stepdad needs help with me, he asks my mom/stepmom.....1 2 3 4 5
- 65. My mom/stepmom gets angry at my dad/stepdad.....1 2 3 4 5
- 66. My dad/stepdad tells me good things about my mom/stepmom .....1 2 3 4 5
- 67. My dad/stepdad wants me to be close to my mom/stepmom.....1 2 3 4 5
- 68. My parents/stepparents get along well.....1 2 3 4 5

69. My parents/stepparents yell at each other.....1 2 3 4 5

If your parents **are still married**, your questionnaire is complete. Thank you for your time. If you parents are divorced, please answer the following questions about their relationship **AFTER THE DIVORCE**.

DIRECTIONS: Using the scale below, respond to each item below by indicating how true each item is of you and/or your family situation.

On the following pages, you will see sentences that have to do with you and your **BIOLOGICAL/ADOPTIVE PARENTS**. Following each statement, there is a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = almost never, 3=sometimes, and 5= almost always). **Remember, you are answering these questions about your parents relationship 1 year after the divorce.**

**Circle the number that tells HOW OFTEN this statement happens.**

70. My parents complain about each other.....1 2 3 4 5  
71. My dad tells me bad things about my mom.....1 2 3 4 5  
72. My parents argue about money in front of me.....1 2 3 4 5  
73. When my parents argue, I feel forced to choose sides.....1 2 3 4 5  
74. When my parents talk to each other, they accuse each other of bad things.....1 2 3 4 5  
75. My parents talk nicely to each other.....1 2 3 4 5  
76. My mom asks me questions about my dad that I wish she would not ask.....1 2 3 4 5  
77. I feel caught between my parents.....1 2 3 4 5  
78. My dad asks me to carry messages to my mom.....1 2 3 4 5  
79. My parents fight about where I should live.....1 2 3 4 5  
80. My dad asks me questions about my mom that I wish he would not ask.....1 2 3 4 5  
81. My mom wants me to be close to my dad.....1 2 3 4 5  
82. When my mom needs to make a change in my schedule, my dad helps.....1 2 3 4 5  
83. My parents argue in front of me.....1 2 3 4 5  
84. My mom tells me to ask my dad about child support.....1 2 3 4 5  
85. It is okay to talk about my mom in front of my dad.....1 2 3 4 5  
86. My parents talk to each other about my problems.....1 2 3 4 5  
87. It is okay to talk about my dad in front of my mom.....1 2 3 4 5  
88. My parents talk to each other about how I feel about the divorce.....1 2 3 4 5  
89. My parents talk to each other about my school and my health.....1 2 3 4 5  
90. My dad gets angry at my mom.....1 2 3 4 5  
91. When my parents talk to each other, they get angry.....1 2 3 4 5  
92. My parents talk to each other about big choices in my life.....1 2 3 4 5  
93. My parents talk to each other at least once a week.....1 2 3 4 5  
94. My mom tells me bad things about my dad.....1 2 3 4 5  
95. When my mom needs help with me, she asks my dad.....1 2 3 4 5  
96. My mom asks me to carry messages to my dad.....1 2 3 4 5  
97. My mom tells me good things about my dad.....1 2 3 4 5  
98. My parents talk to each other about the good things I do.....1 2 3 4 5  
99. When my dad needs help with me, he asks my mom.....1 2 3 4 5  
100. My mom gets angry at my dad .....1 2 3 4 5  
101. My dad tells me good things about my mom .....1 2 3 4 5  
102. My dad wants me to be close to my mom.....1 2 3 4 5  
103. My parents get along well.....1 2 3 4 5  
104. My parents yell at each other.....1 2 3 4 5  
105. When my dad needs to make a change in my schedule, my mom helps.....1 2 3 4 5

Please turn in your survey to the examiner when you are done.

**THANKS FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!!**